

Spiritual and Material Pragmatism

My Actions Began with My Thinking

Growing up in Pittsburgh in the forties and fifties in a family of ten children, a tyrannical, absentee father and a mother who worked her fingers to the bone trying to care for us, I never considered myself to be materialistic. One of the rules in our family was that we gave half of everything we earned to my mother just to make ends meet. There was very little left over. I learned early in life how to cheat, connive and cut corners and never considered how that behavior would wear on my conscience as I grew older and realized how much I lacked in character when I was around other people. As long as I was in that family environment of neediness, and pre adolescence, I didn't know any better. It was when I was exposed to, so called, normal people that I realized how dysfunctional I really was. Just knowing that didn't stop the scandalous behavior since I had nothing to fall back on, so I just proceeded to get tougher and tougher, and formed an identity that was unsustainable, bolstered with alcohol. At the age of thirteen, a friend and I talked a drunk into buying a few quarts of beer for us. We got drunk and for the first time I could remember, all the guilt and shame that I was living with was immediately removed and everything was right with the world. Needless to say I returned to the bottle every time that I could muster up enough money to buy some more beer and that type of behavior, and much more, continued until I was twenty eight years old. Up to that time my only plan was to sustain my alcohol intake as it was the only thing I could do to mask my guilt and shame. I had no clue what the word "Spiritual" meant until I ran out of options, Called Alcoholics Anonymous and surrendered to the program. Up to that point I thought it meant "religious" but I discovered that much of my past thinking about this issue, and many other issues, were wrong. I feel very fortunate to have discovered that, with the help of the A.A. program, I could free my mind of the faulty perception and from the guilt and shame caused by what I thought were my only options. It took time to get through the early steps and to stop making the mistakes of the past and to make amends for all of that faulty alcoholic behaviors but I'm happy to say that most of all the guilt and shame are gone from my life and it has been replaced with what I have come to understand is a "*spiritual agenda*". One of the most important things that I've come to understand is that all of my actions begin with my thinking. The actions are the "*material*" results of my thoughts. The spiritual part of my makeup resides in my Conscience, my Mind, My heart, and my Soul, for lack of a better description, and material part of my makeup is the behaviors that stem from my thinking and from my motives. If my motives are kind and unselfish, my action will begin to change to compassion and empathy and in time, all, or most of the discomfort we experienced in the past will shrink into nothingness. This is just a simple definition of how this spiritual-v-material approach to life will occur if you are willing to test it out. Try to develop a habit of examining your motives on every decision you make, reject the selfish ones, and replace them with unselfish actions, (I didn't say generous, I said unselfish) and do it just long enough to see if it works for you. If you are anything like me, all of the guilt and shame, and the like, will, in time, become a distant memory. This seems so simple, but sometimes we over complicate these things. Bet-Ya can't do it! LOL