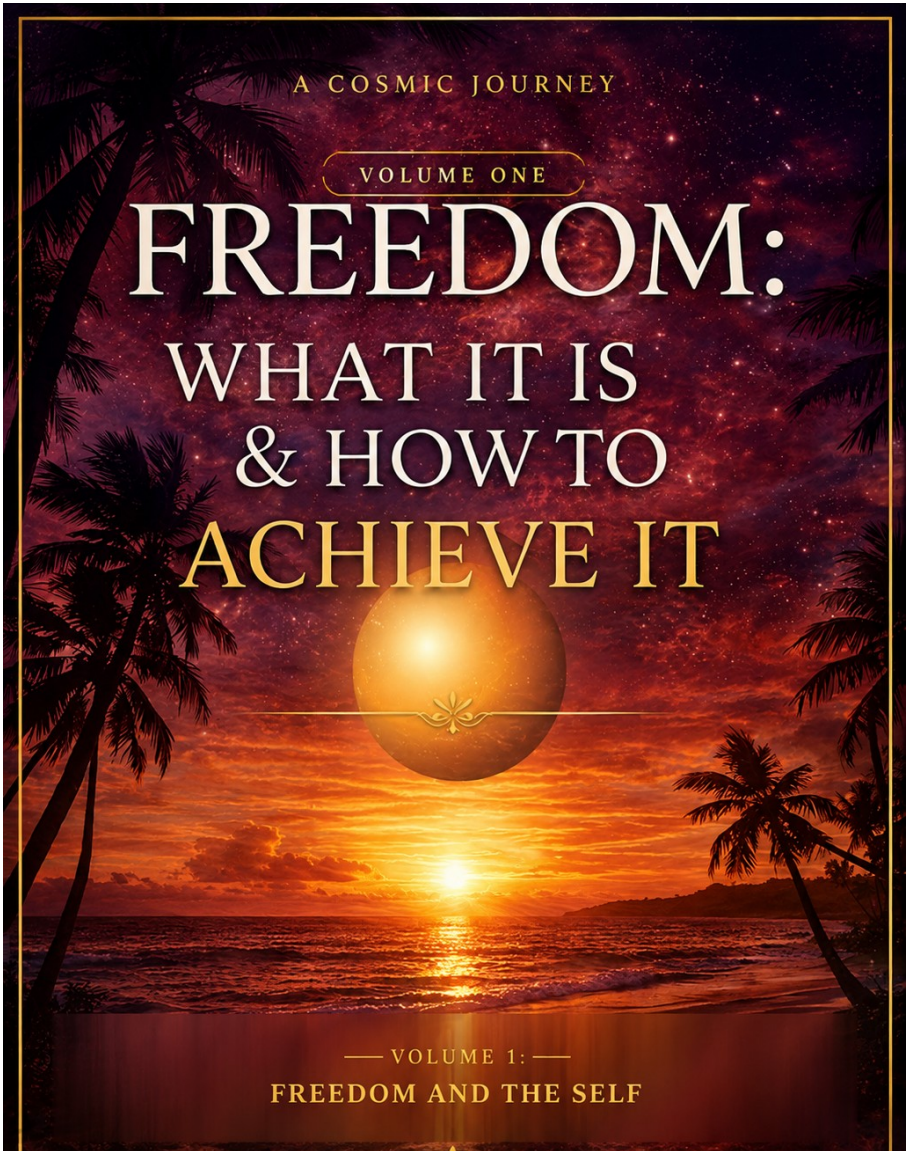




A FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

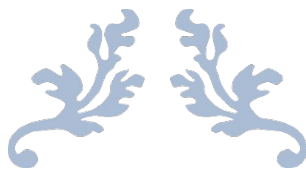
Chapter 4

Freedom and the Holistic Self

A short, pivotal chapter that draws the theories of self together into one holistic picture: a present-moment self and a narrative self shaped by its history. It shows why freedom, both inner and outer, is the condition that lets this self keep growing, and why our belief systems are best treated as stepping-stones rather than resting places.

It is one of five chapters offered free in the Psychology of the Self series at acosmicjourney.com.

Reference numbers in the text point to the notes at the end of the complete book.



Chapter 4

Freedom and the Holistic Self

From the theories of the ‘self’ described above, one can produce a holistic theory of two different foci producing two different states of consciousness within the ‘self’ process. First is the *existential self* which has an *objective* perception focused upon *only the present experience, within the present moment*. Secondly, there exists an *existential self* with a *subjective* perception born of a personal, historical narrative which gives an individual the conviction of a *self embedded in a history of experience*, a history which qualifies present ‘objective self’ perceptions, and experience and expectations toward a ‘future’.

Since most of us spend most of our time embedded in the second kind of self (as we work our way toward the ‘first’ kind of purely *objective self*, i.e., *objective perception*), let’s dig a little deeper into the character and process of that second kind of ‘self’, a self with a ‘subjective’, narrative, past and future-type perception.

We described this ‘second’ self, i.e., the *subjective self*, (which we can also call the *conditional self* because it is conditioned by past experience) as consisting of the following processes: 1) The existence of awareness or consciousness, 2) This awareness is divided into two parts producing a dual foci, which is focused toward A) the historical ‘self’ and B) toward an ‘objective’ world the ‘self’ interacts with within the present moment. 3) A perception of the objective world through the conditioned ‘lens’ of the subjective self, 4) The focus of the subjective self is *discriminatory*, in that it is attracted to the mentally and emotionally-laden ‘phenomenal objects’ within the objective side of focus that reflect the ‘objects’ within the subjective, narrative, historical focus. (By ‘phenomenal objects’ here I refer to all phenomena from microbes to people to relationships to physical and natural structures.) 5) All of this happens within a momentary time frame but is given subjective continuity

by memories of past moments filled with personal experiences within social and cultural contexts and the emotional, mental reactions to those experiences. The result of this holistic experience is one of constant change, change which continuously challenges the self toward greater clarity of perception, insight into the nature of experience, and therefrom, self-actualization.

The self, then is consciousness or awareness engaged in experiential activities and subsequent learning which condition it into increasingly expansive ways of viewing and expressing itself. But, and at its most basic, the self is an awareness of being, an awareness of personal existence going through constant transformation of its own content, which, in turn produces its *experiential sense of self*.

The structure of this 'dual self' is thus seen as a dynamic *process* going through fluctuation and transformation, an ever-evolving dance of increasing awareness as it interacts with and learns from the *objective side of itself* with its physical, social, and cultural environs. Thus, this dual self is more than just awareness interacting with an objective world; if it were only that, there would simply be awareness of what it meant to be a tree or a mountain or whatever else this awareness permeates and takes on as its own. The 'self' has something more than just perception. It has a separate 'I' that perceives and *reacts to that perception in a relational, hedonic, qualitative way, and from that reaction comes deeper realization, which constantly expands its nature, its reality*.

For this dance of expansion to occur however, there must be freedom; freedom within the mind from over-attachment to past ways of thinking and emoting which allows one to explore radically different approaches and responses to experience. There must also be 'outer' freedom because the 'outside' is where much of an individual's inner creativity takes form. Without that free environ the inner impulse toward creative expansion is muted, thwarted and frustrated, and slowly withers and dies within the individual as well, leaving only frustration, and a darkness of the soul.

Thus, just as there are 'subjective' and 'objective' modes of consciousness, there are also 'subjective' and 'objective' spheres of freedom that either enable and enhance or restrict and smother the self-experience and self-expansion of consciousness. The level of freedom within the subjective, inner sphere is determined by how well one can 'let go' of previous mindsets, i.e., systems of belief, to progress toward more

‘progressive’ mindsets. The level of freedom within the outer mode of freedom, is a product of how freely individuals can outwardly express their creative impulses within societal and cultural restraints.

Both inner and outer levels of freedom are further defined by individual and societal *existential tensions* between 1) instinctively reminiscent, fear-based *attachment* to what has proved safe in the past, and 2) the exhilaration and possibilities of *letting go and expanding* toward a more ‘enlightened’ state of consciousness and experience, now and in the future. This *existential tension* is the result of *attachment* to what has become familiar and safe to us resisting the world of constant, challenging change constantly bombarding that attachment, an attachment created from mental and emotional predispositions toward a specific ‘safe’ reality.

Consciousness and the ‘self’, whatever their origins are transformed (conditioned) by contact with the content of experience. Consciousness, hypnotically focused and structured in the form of belief systems, becomes its experience, i.e., takes on the character of what it is experiencing, and *identifies* with that experience resulting in the creation of the ‘self’ within consciousness. Thus, this expression of consciousness as an ever-changing bundle of attributes embedded in an experientially changing world is the ‘self’ of self-actualization.

Self-actualization takes place within the interaction between ever-changing experience and belief systems as belief systems are transformed by new experience and insight. Belief systems (i.e., ‘realities’) are mental stepping-stones on the way to more expanded states of awareness. To become attached to any one belief system is to become attached to a stepping-stone on the path toward one’s ‘goal’.

This ‘attachment’ is alien to the spirit because the innate nature of spirit, i.e., consciousness, is one of constant, unrestrained expansion. That which restrains individual consciousness is the identification with, thus attachment to one’s belief systems, belief systems that delineate one’s reality. The natural state of spirit, our basic essence, is that of *movement through experience*, and expansion as a result of learning from that experience. Inhibition toward movement in the form of attachment to any one state (as embodied by a specific belief system/reality) is antithetical to the *process of who we are and the nature of consciousness*.

Continue the journey

This chapter is one of fifteen in *Freedom & the Self*, the first volume of *Freedom: What It Is & How to Achieve It*. The complete book follows the thread from the evolution of consciousness to the nature of the self, the experience of freedom, and how to live it day to day.

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