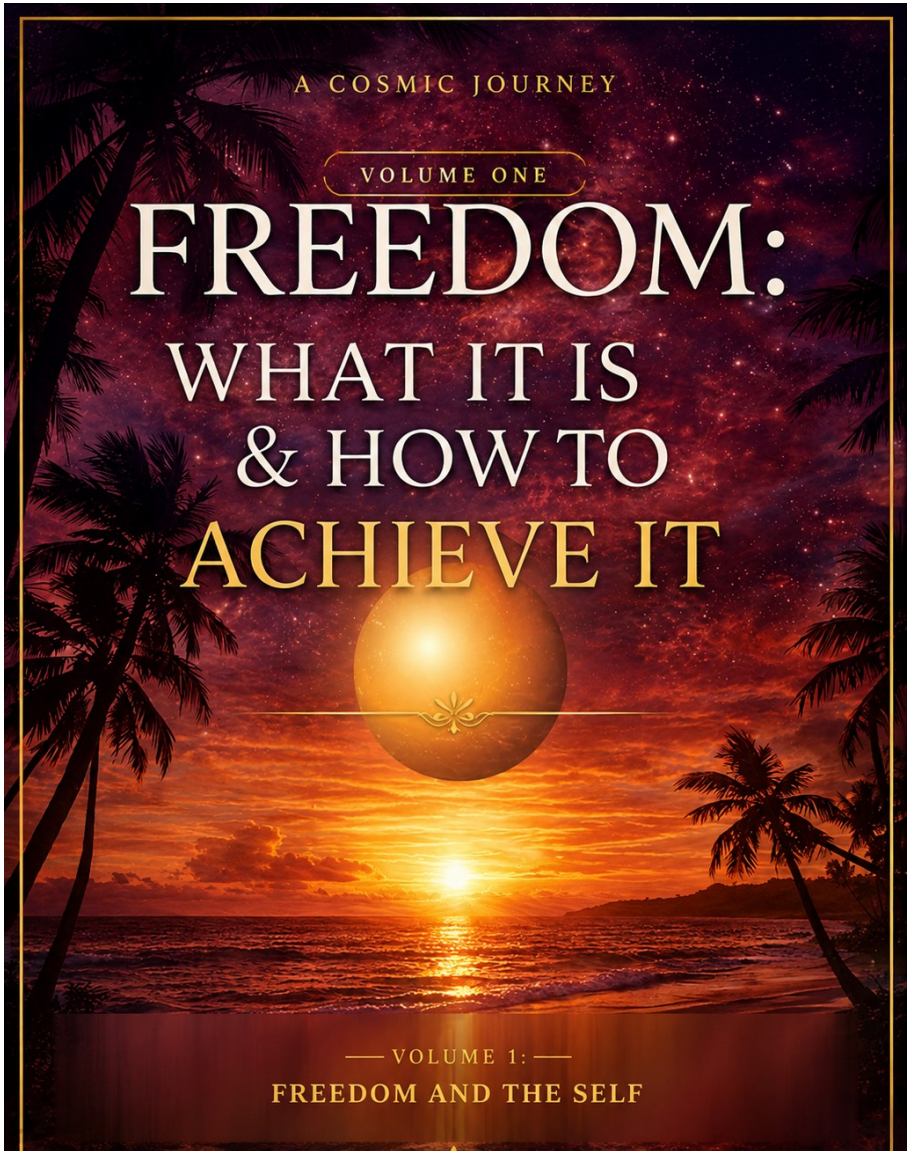




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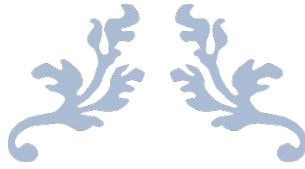
Chapter 5
**Self, Consciousness
& Relationship**

What is this ever-changing self, and how does consciousness shape the reality we share with others? This chapter brings together Eastern and Western psychology, philosophy and a little quantum speculation on the quest for self, perception as cosmology, and freedom East and West.

It formed part of the Psychology of Meditation course Richard E. Bradshaw taught for the Osher Institute at the University of Hawaii.

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

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Chapter 5: ***Self, Consciousness & Relationship***

The study of this ever-changing self from both Eastern and Western psychological, philosophical, anthropological and soteriological (study of religious doctrines of salvation) perspectives has resulted in academic foci upon *self-consciousness*, *self-esteem*,^{xciii} *self-awareness*,^{xciv} *self-concept*,^{xcv} *self-knowledge*,^{xcvi} *self-image*,^{xcvii} *ideal self*, *self-confidence*, *self-perception*, and *multiple other aspects of self*.^{xcviii} These varying perspectives of the ‘self’ help define the inner journey of the individual self in its ever-changing, never-ending conscious and sub-conscious pursuit of actualization.

The extensive literature behind these various perspectives tell us much that is useful for a detailed, day-to-day examination and understanding of our fluxing nature and experience within social, cultural contexts, but such complexity goes beyond our present needs here. What is needed for the purposes of the present study is a holistic picture of the ‘self’ journey, of the process by which we as conscious beings are constantly renewing our existence and experience, where we are going in our actualization and evolution, and why.

From both East and West in our search for understanding of who we are, we ultimately return to a view of the self as a platform of awareness within which an ‘I’ as perceiver, perceives its experience as a ‘me’, a me which appears to the ‘I’ as a ‘self’ consisting of a number of attributes and tendencies through which the ‘I’ interacts with and learns from the world around it, a world consisting of relations between beings similar to itself and other life forms^{xcix}.

All the concepts of self and self-actualization described above entail sets or bundles of attributes embedded within and forming out of a platform of awareness/consciousness. These attributes are constantly going through a process of being reinforced and re-molded in response to experience on this physical plane of existence. It is the ‘process’ of change

that molds the dynamic 'self,' the ever-changing 'bundle of attributes' from which consciousness or self-awareness acquires the sense of self. This on-going transformation of beliefs and attitudes in the face of experience is the 'self' in 'self-actualization'.

Viewed from this perspective, the only 'self' there is, is an actualizing self. The process, the *act* of actualization is the 'self', a dynamic, ever-changing 'self'. That which gives life and continuing existence to this self is the underlying, innate impetus toward actualization, an impetus found within the need for each of us to find *meaning in and through connection* in life. Thus, the experience of 'self' or 'selfhood' is the act of actualization within a quest for meaning, an ongoing adventure in consciousness that produces a moment-by-moment transformation of beliefs and attitudes by which individual 'selves' continuously define, redefine, refine and find validity for their momentary realities within a complexity of both animate and inanimate relationship.

Mental life is an effort after meaning. For human beings, selfhood arises through making this effort within a cultural context. Selfhood is thus not a structure but a process in which biological, psychological and cultural levels of order form an ecological system based on the exchange of meaning...a process embedded in a web-like system...arising and passing away over differing time scales from seconds of the species present to millions of years of biological and cultural evolution.

Everyone has their own way of guiding the self-actualization process. Some blunder through life, learning through haphazard kneejerk emotional and mental reactions to life's interactions. Some resist change or are unable to cope with it, missing out on the growth potential within it, and ultimately leading to various kinds of neuroses as well as physical states of unease and subsequent disease.^c Those at the other end of the spectrum carefully analyze their experiences in life, consciously guiding the inner growth process toward greater awareness and capability.

If we look closely at our daily lives and listen to the internal dialogue or monologue constantly going on inside our minds, we soon realize that the inner dialogue is a running commentary on our current beliefs and realities, as they reinforce or introduce change into our view of ourselves in the face of new experience and information. If we watch this inner dialogue carefully it could provide invaluable insights into the nature of

the bundle of attributes from which we derive our sense of self and help us gain a greater understanding of our individually unique ‘self-logic’. This in turn might show each of us how to self-actualize more effectively, leading to greater success in the pursuit and clarity of personal goals and harmonious relations with our environment, social and physical,^{ci} resulting in a more viable ‘platform’ for the achievement of more continuous, moment-by-moment states of self-fulfillment and happiness.^{cii}

As our maturity grows we may ultimately be able to go beyond the ‘self as attributes’ toward a self based within the experience of ‘awareness only’, an awareness devoid of the conceptual content that continuously hypnotizes and imprisons our awareness within the self-made and perpetuated boundaries of limited realities; realities more often as not biased by habitual self-concern, leading to unrealistic assumptions or downright illusions in relation to the world around us.

What is the advantage of dwelling within an ‘awareness only’ state? Awareness devoid of content is forever free to more spontaneously merge with and more fully perceive whatever it is focused upon, enabling a deeper perception of the nature of that ‘object’, whether that ‘object’ be a physical object, a living organism, a situation or a thought. Put more simply, when an individual is quiet inside, and awareness is in a state of rest, not constantly reacting to an individual’s inner mental monologue and sets of emotional predispositions, one is much more able to react to momentary situations with spontaneity and an openly objective perception, seeing the ‘object’ of perception as it truly is; seeing it more *deeply* as it truly is.

This state of ‘awareness merged with awareness’ while simultaneously focused upon the contents of the immediate moment is a state of freedom and awareness akin to that of meditation. Such a state of *open* awareness optimizes human capabilities and the human experience.

We turn again to the words of Theosophist Annie Besant who described this state exquisitely:

The concentrated intelligence, the power of drawing outside the turmoil, mean immensely increased energy in work...steadiness, self-control, serenity: The man of meditation is ever the most efficient man in the world... (he) is the man who wastes no time, scatters no energy, misses no opportunity...such a man governs

events, because within him is the power whereof events are only the outer expression.^{ciii}

How *quietly open* we are within each moment determines our capabilities within that moment. ‘Quietly open’ does not infer passivity; on the contrary it describes a state where one is forever ready for action because one’s awareness is not burdened with obsessions or attachments that prevent it from moving freely in any direction.

This state of ‘quietly open’ is a state of serene freedom in which one is *content* with the present but *forever open* to new experience and possibility. The contentedness comes from two sources. It comes first from the serenity inherent in quietly open states of awareness. Secondly, we are *patiently content* because we are deeply aware that our world is forever changing, and whether our current situation is desirable or undesirable, the next moment *if we are open to the potential within it*, will provide opportunity for intelligently guided change toward that which *fits* the potential of the moment and most aptly.

Thus, 1) serenity, 2) a quietly open state of awareness to any potential within each present moment, and 3) the freedom of movement to take advantage of any potential are reciprocal elements within this state of awareness. Each of these ‘elements’ supports the other, and all three together create a coherent, stable state of awareness able to exist within each moment in an effortless manner, freed from the ‘anchors’ of restrictive belief systems, and the obsessive inner monologue that comes from and reinforces restrictive belief systems.

Whatever state of awareness we inhabit however, and whether we intelligently guide the change or let it flow unhindered by us, we continue to experience and through our ongoing experience, we continuously transmute the ‘momentary bundles of actualizing attributes’ that make up our present ‘reality’, i.e., our present ‘self’, our present *sense of self*. The present moment is a gift to you from the ultimate reality that you may fill with the present uniqueness of your being, of whatever character that presently consists of.

If we do decide to ‘intelligently guide’ the ongoing change toward something more compatible with our perceived needs, *will* and *motivation* come into play. Will and motivation are important toward being *willing*

within each moment to ‘break’ our current mode of experience, to break out of our ‘everyday induced hypnotic trance’, and experiment with new possibilities of awareness and action, of experiencing and becoming something *more than before*. Will and motivation are necessary for the *expression* of freedom, and it is through the expression of freedom that self-actualization takes place.

The Quest for ‘Self’

On the deepest levels the urge toward self-actualization is colored by the ‘existential tension’ between the need for the safety of hanging onto the past in the form of limiting, but comfortable ways of believing and behaving which make life predictable, and that of a life of inner and outer freedom, a life with little predictability, thus little safety, yet filled with adventure and potential for personal change. The moment by moment choice within this ‘existential tension’ is the foundation from which one finds meaning in one’s daily life and one’s strategy for finding this meaning.

Thus, the choice between safety or freedom impacts heavily on how meaning is found, and what kind of meaning one brings into their life. It would be simplistic to say that each individual is either of one or another ‘existential orientation’. Each of us make that choice within each moment and the range of choices is a spectrum of choice ranging from conservatively, totally safety-orientated to an awareness filled only with freedom. Most of us are probably bunched together around the center of this spectrum of existential possibility, sometimes going one way, sometimes the other, while the rest are the ‘outliers’, totally conservative or totally open. The process of self-actualization is to grow toward the open side of the spectrum, welcoming life as an adventure, if a slightly precarious one at times.

Regardless of one’s ‘existential orientation’ certain existential questions beg for answers as one progresses through life. ‘Who am I?’ ‘What is this universe and how do I fit within it?’ ‘Why am I here?’ and ‘How can I find that ever-elusive and ever-transitory state called ‘happiness’? These are the existential mysteries that forever surround us and suspend us in a state of wonder amidst our day-to-day struggle for existence. They sit restlessly somewhere deeply within and pop up at the most unexpected times or in answer to those unexpected events that

sometimes come swiftly into our lives, transforming us through new realizations to meet new realities.

These are the questions many of the psychological, philosophical and spiritual traditions in the world try to answer or provide means and strategies for pursuing the answer. They are the questions which we will find most compelling as we progressively evolve as a species and as individuals, as each of us strive toward our ideals while on our Earthly journey.

Is it possible that the answer to at least some of these questions is in the *act* of self-actualization, that the value of self-actualization is not so much the goal as the *process* within which we find so much fulfillment and satisfaction? Are the imagined ‘end goals’ or ultimate goals of self-actualization mere illusions that disappear when they come close to being fulfilled, simply because they are no longer useful to propel us onward, and *new* goals are needed which better fit the now more progressed, more enlightened state an individual has become as a result of pursuing the previous ‘goal’ in the quest for fulfillment? Is it possible that the process of self-actualization *is* the goal; that searching for who we are *is* who we are *and* why we are here?

If so, how can we hone ourselves toward being truly efficient tools of personal and species evolution, able to most effectively accomplish our continuing and continuously rewarding goal of *self-actualization and more expansive modes of freedom and awareness*?

Ideation and a Bit of Quantum Speculation

How might this creative process happen from a more purely ‘empirical’ scientific perspective? According to quantum theory, (which, as we have seen, describes things on a very, very small scale in our universe), the foundation underlying physical ‘reality’ consists of ‘quantum waves of probability’. It is theorized that within these ‘waves of probability’ all potential ‘events’ reside in their nescient, potential form. Each wave of probability thus has within it the ‘primal resources’ from which any ‘event’ might be fashioned. However, it is speculated that these ‘events’ do not come into being until the living blueprint of the ‘event’ is imposed upon the quantum wave by some kind of individualized, focused awareness or consciousness.^{civ}

Now the thing about personal, individualized consciousness is it is filled with the structures of personal realities, of belief systems containing expectations about the world one has been born into and grown up within, expectations and beliefs based on prior experience or the prior experience of those who influence one's present 'reality' (other life, society, culture).^{cv}

Is it possible that these belief systems as dynamic structures of mental energy may impose themselves via the information-carrying quantum level photons emitted by the brain (Persinger above) on the extremely minute sea of quantum waves of probability an individual is immersed within? If so, this imposition of information-carrying photon energy could transform the quantum waves of probability into the expectations contained within the imposing consciousness, producing the world the imposing consciousness expects to see. The consequent quantum reflection of the individual's imposing consciousness would then be 'perceived' by the individual physical 'being' housing that consciousness through its sensory organs as its 'reality'.^{cvi}

In this way, the level of quantum waves might serve as a screen which is innately able to reflect back in very realistic ways, what the imposing consciousness is projecting through its expectations, upon the screen of quantum probability. This 'reflection' is what we perceive as 'reality', keeping in mind, that we ourselves are part of this projection, and that this projection is made of conscious, living energy, just as the quantum waves are. This, of course assumes the validity of a *totally* conscious universe from the minutest particle to the grandest structure imaginable in which we are all (regardless of our level of sentience) constantly *ideating* our reality, a theory described earlier in the sections on *Idealism*.

Sir James Jeans, English physicist, astronomer and mathematician describes the *Idealist* reality on a more basic, if grander scale. In an interview with *The Observer* (London) he replied to the question: 'Do you believe that life on this planet is the result of some sort of accident, or do you believe that it is a part of some great scheme?' in the following manner:

'I incline to the idealistic theory that consciousness is fundamental, and that the material universe is derivative from consciousness, not consciousness from the material universe... In

general the universe seems to me to be nearer to a great thought than to a great machine. It may well be, it seems to me, that each individual consciousness ought to be compared to a brain-cell in a universal mind.^{’cvii}

Thus, assuming some validity of the above theories, who we are and who we can become from whatever stage of development within a persistently developing universe is forever a product of our own creative expectations and projections as creative neurons in a universe of mutual ideation.

Consciousness, Will, and Perception as Cosmology

The theory of our material reality being a product of initially pure consciousness expressed and taking structure through the conceptual content of our own mind is a common theme found in both Western and Eastern traditions of enquiry going back thousands of years. From Plato and the Greek Neoplatonists to the *Ideation* theories of both Hindu and Buddhists, to such nineteenth and twentieth century Western *Idealist* philosophers, as Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Descartes and George Berkeley, to twentieth century science, in the form of James Jeans^{cviii}, Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg and Max Planck, ‘reality’ is progressively being seen as something *ideated* through one process or another out of consciousness.

These themes or theories of both Eastern and Western *Idealism*,^{cix} derive from diverse epistemological^{cx} approaches but point repeatedly to consciousness expressed as energy through the structures of our minds. The result of this process is the perception of a material world; that it is through the projection of consciousness on individual and collective levels through everyone’s current *belief* systems that create the world individuals see around them through the process of *ideation*.

From these many versions of *Idealism* a generic version might include the following stipulations: that the entire process of creating reality, and the reality itself, exists within each one of us, and that collectively ‘we’ (all ‘creatively willing’ entities in the cosmos) create the world and the cosmos we live in. This suggests that the above-described quantum waves of probability constitute on one very fundamental level at least, the nature of the sea of consciousness through which we as

individualized fields of consciousness are traveling and from which we are creating our reality. We transform the sea of quantum probability as we travel through it, not as something separate from the 'sea' which 'molds' reality through the imposition of outside forces, but as the energy within a wave flowing through water transforms the shape of the water as it moves through it.

Our beliefs are powerful expressions of uniquely, conceptually 'shaped' fields of consciousness, pregnant with expectation, and as these conceptually 'shaped' fields of consciousness flow through the sea of quantum probability, they transform the sea temporarily into that which we believe ourselves and our realities to be; to whatever our mental concepts and paradigms dictate; to that which we *expect* to see, for as observed above, expectations are a powerful, if subtle form of *willing*. Thus, our individualized realities are born, moment by moment as momentary transformations of, and within a sea of consciousness. This transformation of the sea of consciousness through the interface or medium of 'quantum particles' in a quantum probability state, gives expression to our individual worlds. The infinite *relationships* between all individual realities and the *information* contained in those relationships create the fabric of the cosmos we exist within.

These 'transformations' created by our passage through the sea of consciousness are, however, not random. Though there is infinite variation in the quantum probability we interact with within the sea of consciousness that allows us to go in many creatively differing directions, the creativity itself follows specific expressions of the 'natural' structure within our world. This 'natural structure' is in a constant state of flux reflecting individual differences and collective similarities of the creative forces within it, all of which are in a constant process of interaction and integration, of dynamic relationship. This process of flux is one constantly endeavoring toward *equanimity, beauty, balance, relational integrity and coherency* within itself and between any one creative force and other 'forces' whether they be events, phenomena or sentient beings.

How can it be otherwise when we can describe the rules guiding these infinitely possible creative transformations and the structures through which the transformations take place with *mathematical precision*?^{cxix&cxxii} Layer upon fractal layer of increasing complexity and energy density, layers within layers, all mathematically precise, manifesting from the infinitely small quantum level to larger and larger

‘realities’, realities we moment by moment creatively evolve within our minds and imprint upon the sea of consciousness we flow through like waves flowing across or within an infinite ocean of consciousness.^{cxiii}

One must ask then, does this mathematical precision with which we can describe the observable universe suggest a preordained outcome to universal, cosmological evolution? If so, how does that jive or coincide with the incredible amount of variation in *experience* brought about through the creative *willing* of sentient life? Can creativity be mathematically defined?

One answer to these questions might be that there are two levels or stages to the continuous, creative ‘process’ of our ‘reality’. The first stage of reality might be a template which is both highly mathematically structured yet infinitely malleable in terms of its laws of transmutation. These laws of transmutation may be applied in a near infinite number of combinations to produce the incredible variety of structure and experience evident in today’s universe or multiverse.

The second stage or level is the filling of this template with the creative impulse residing innately within consciousness. On the individual level it is the play of creative ideation born of individual willfulness, which thrives on the new and innovative expressing itself within the first-stage mathematical framework of reality. Every instant this momentary creative impulse coalesces into a new mathematically defined expression of consciousness as energy finding cohesive structure within the mathematical precision of the of the *ever-evolving* template of universal ‘reality’. Thus, the ‘template of mathematical structure’ evolves as the creative structures within it evolve, structures created by collective and individual ideation.

Thus, every instant, within the infinite stream of consciousness, momentary creative impulses of consciousness coalesce into new mathematically defined expressions of conscious energy. In other words, the energy behind this momentary creative impulse finds cohesive structure within the mathematical precision of the *ever-evolving* template of universal ‘reality’. Thus, as the ‘template of mathematical structure’ evolves so evolves the creative structures within it...and vice-versa... and so evolves the reality we, who are embedded within it, perceive our reality to be.

I know this is pretty ‘heady’ stuff, especially since the world around us and we ourselves appear so *solidly real*, complex and unpredictable, with a diversity seemingly outside our own creative responsibility and capability, but that just emphasizes how potent a creative force consciousness is; that we^{cxiv} could create an evolutionary ‘game’ where we could be both the creators and the created and still be oblivious to our true role in the game, an obliviousness necessary for the whole process to work. For if the nature of the ‘game’ were obvious to us, would we play it with such creative intensity; as if our very existence and the quality of that existence depended directly upon our efforts within this ‘play’ we call physical life?).

Evolutionarily, this reality, our realities *must* appear totally real to us, regardless of their actual ephemeral nature, for if they did not, how then could we believe in them, and belief is of utmost importance in having deep experiences, the kind of experiences we can grow from and self-actualize through. Thus, *belief* has a very subtle double role in this game of reality creation. Belief itself is a form of creative expectation that serves as the blueprint for what our mental energies imprint upon the conscious quantum ocean we reside within. Once our beliefs are imprinted upon this conscious quantum ocean of possibility, we then *perceive* what we have created as real, and through that perception reinforce the beliefs which serve as blueprints for our next ‘pulse’ of creative actualization. Within this process the *experience and creative willing* lead to insight and learning, which in turn transform our beliefs. Our transformed beliefs then transform the next ‘pulse-like’ imprint upon the conscious quantum ocean we reside within to reflect our ‘updated’ or ‘current’ reality and guide our future actions accordingly.

All of this *does* seem so *ephemeral*, so *insubstantial* when seen in relation to the apparent *solidity* of us and our environment, but our solidity is a *partial perception* of forces that are to a large extent beyond our ability to perceive with our human sensory organs or instruments. We really *are* solid in relation to each other and all other ‘phenomena’, simply because we are all made up of energy force fields with specific boundaries which resist the boundaries of other force fields, thus the impression of solidity. The entire universe and everything within it are ‘bounded’ states of energy fields of varying density and quality that resist the ‘intrusion’ of other bounded states of energy fields.^{cxv}

Within the ‘bounded force field’ we refer to as a human being, there are many types of energies of differing vibration and character that make up the total *gestalt* that we perceive as the unified human experience. One of those energies, the one we refer to as mental energy, houses beliefs, the set of mental paradigms that delineate, i.e., ‘sets the boundaries’ of our personal realities. *Belief* is an active energy which plays multiple roles in the creation and transformation of reality. It is the energy of beliefs and the expectations they contain that actively transform the sea of quantum potential we reside within toward taking on the form of what is in our beliefs, which we then perceive as ‘objective’ reality, ‘believe in’ and accept as reality, furthering the cyclical creative transformation of quantum potential into humanity’s (and other ‘beings’, sentient and otherwise) realities.

Seen from this perspective, we are each individually ‘perceiving’ our reality into existence, for what we expect to see is what we have habitually perceived, and it is our ever-expanding expectations *on a collective level* that shapes what we *collectively* create for our own perception from the quantum possibility we reside within; thus, *perception itself is an active not passive endeavor* on the individual as well as collective level of experience. It is as if we project upon a living screen of pure consciousness what we expect to see, what we are comfortable seeing, comfortable because we have taken in this experience we are projecting with our beliefs and made it part of *who we are* for that moment in our actualizing journey. It is this ‘projected reality’ which is our ‘field of learning’, and learning is the impetus behind changing expectations which slowly evolves the reality we create moment by moment.

Depending on the nature of the experience, varying levels of *intensity* accompany this constant change over ‘evolving moments’ for each individual. In turn, it is this intensity of life resulting from the constant change within our lives that generates the impetus to transform our beliefs to include newer realizations, helping to answer the deep need and desire toward self-actualization and greater freedom. So, while habit and habitual belief systems help delineate our on-going creation of personal reality, new experiential insights are constantly expanding those belief systems, leading to a more expanded reality, which we then

impose on the quantum waves of potential, thereby creating our next momentary reality.

A Short Synopsis and Conclusion

We see here some possible analogies or similarities between the ‘cosmologies’ of Whitehead, de Chardin, Persinger and Chaisson and the *Idealism* of Yogacara Buddhism. The two phrases, ‘consciousness as an ever-flowing current whose homogeneity of motion has neither perturbation nor aberration’, from Buddhist *Idealism*, and ‘radiation (light) in a state of symmetry, equilibrium and energy entropy’, from Chaisson’s description of the early universe, sound remarkably analogous. If one were to assume Chaisson’s radiation to be conscious as teleological theories of cosmology do, they could both refer to the same *living* content and process.

As well, remember the Persinger electromagnetic field correlation between the energy density of the human mind and that of certain ‘natural’ phenomena of a cosmic nature. This correlation supports an innate evolutionary connection between de Chardin’s ‘Omega Point’, the stream of consciousness of *Idealism*, and Chaisson’s ‘radiation (light) in a state of symmetry, equilibrium and energy entropy’, a connection which may continue through the process of evolution to its final (if there is one) epiphany.

As well, the processes of *willing* (injecting) content (conceptual structures) into the stream of consciousness found within the cosmology of *Idealism* correlates well with the imposition of belief systems (with their expectations) upon a sea of quantum waves of probability, consequently ‘observing’ these expectations into one’s personal ‘reality’.

Thus, from varying methodologies, both deductive and inductive, intuitive, meditative, and empirical come similar paradigms of the nature of our world, of who we are and where we might possibly be going in our slow progression toward more expansive realizations and states of freedom.

We end this section with two remarks, the first by Max Planck (1858-1947) a Nobel Prize-winning German physicist and the father of quantum theory who stated: *‘I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind*

consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness.' ^{cxvi}

The second is from R.C. Henry, Professor of Physics and Astronomy at Johns Hopkins University, and author of *The Mental Universe*, an article published in the journal *Nature* in which he writes that the 'new physics' asserts the role of the observer in the creation of personal realities and the universe: '*A fundamental conclusion of the new physics also acknowledges that the observer creates the reality. As observers, we are personally involved with the creation of our own reality. Physicists are being forced to admit that the universe is a "mental" construction.*' ^{cxvii}

Consciousness, Evolution and Uncertainty

The connection between consciousness, the quantum level of reality with its uncertainty, and the manifestation of the material world around us moment by moment, pulse by pulse remains yet an intriguing mystery. However, one thing is for certain and that is that in the process of evolution *uncertainty is essential*. Without uncertainty there would be only certainty, which means only that which already exists or is preordained to exist by some 'higher order mandate' will ever exist, and if everything in our cosmos, our reality is preordained, how can individual or collective creativity exist? Certainty and creativity are exact opposites, where one exists, the other does not. With uncertainty comes the possibility of creativity, of the novel and the new because uncertainty means there is a choice to be made, and in the ability to choose lies the freedom and ability to be *willfully* creative.

The existence of the wave/particle nature of quantum physics in which only *probability* resides, ^{cxviii} probabilities that manifest and solidify only in the presence of a *conditioned* consciousness, provides that uncertainty on an absolute, continuous scale. From that uncertainty, and the freedom of choice that uncertainty provides, we, from within our world and our reality, moment-by-moment gain the ability to express our innate urge toward creative expansion. Through that creative expansion we both evolve toward higher, more expansive states of awareness, and collectively help create the universe around us, which is also in a constant state of actualization, an actualization in which each of us, and all

‘conditioned’ consciousness in whatever form, from miniscule to gigantic play their creative parts.

This is a process that has evolved from the first elementary particles, toward greater and greater complexity, energy density, and sentience creating the world we see around us of which we are evolutionarily *intimately related... no... intimately embedded*. It is a process of living, conscious creativity as true for the level of elementary particles as it is for sentient beings. It is a process that creates inherent, relational coherency between all parts and aspects of our world or cosmos and everything in it as it slowly develops and evolves.

Because of our intimate relation to all the other numerous differing creatures and physical landscapes we have slowly evolved with within ‘our pulse-like wave of being’ it stands to reason that any impact upon this wave of being whether created by ourselves or other forces presently beyond our control, will have a forceful impact upon who we are and how well we can continue to exist in this world.

This intimacy born of our mutually related evolution is also the nurturing platform created from time immemorial upon which, and from which we may aspire and experience ‘upward’ toward more expansive ways of being and greater freedom. May we come to know it well and use it wisely.

Teleology, Soteriology^{xcix} & Freedom, East & West

In the section above, I have briefly described some of the ‘cosmological’ theories within ‘Western’ as well as ‘Eastern’ philosophy, psychology, religion and cosmology. I urge the reader to not take what has been written here as the complete story by any means. Religions and philosophies from both East and West contain a rich diversity of cosmological theory which come down to us through many ‘authors’ and interpretations embodying comprehensive bodies of philosophy, religion and psychology that have developed over thousands of years. Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism in particular, have deeply profound and thorough explanations of the human condition and methods for attaining higher states of consciousness leading to deeper understandings and insights into the nature of ‘reality’.

Two excellent sources of the cosmological story of humanity from an Eastern perspective focusing on the origin of consciousness, of the material and immaterial worlds that make up our reality, of the psychological states underlying that reality, and finally of the path toward ultimate freedom are the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and the *Buddhist Abhidhamma*.

The *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* describes in detail the origin and nature of consciousness and the various states and stages of consciousness on the path toward *Nirvana* (enlightenment, i.e., *awakening*, a state of complete insight and freedom). The *Buddhist Abhidhamma* is a comprehensive set of teachings describing the various expressions of consciousness, mind, and form, particularly from an ethical or moral perspective and prescribes ‘noble’ ways of life that lead toward enlightened states of awareness. The *Tao Te Ching* of Taoism, a small volume filled with simple, yet profound wisdom is worth reading repeatedly throughout life as a guide toward higher states of social and personal awareness.

There are numerous other texts and teachings from the East, most of which have a soteriological (to be saved or released from bondage, to be freed) orientation which speak pointedly and eloquently of the goal of human experience, personal involvement and self-actualization. These traditions invariably describe the ultimate goal of self-actualization as one of total emancipation, of unqualified freedom.^{cxx}

To try to describe in detail these Eastern teachings is well beyond the scope of this volume, but a simplified summary would contain the following; that life after life for an individual is spent slowly working toward freeing oneself from *attachment* to this physical world, of going beyond the ego and its desire nature; of realizing that this brain and the conditioned mind it contains is a tool for easing our way through a physical environment. As such, the conditional mind is limited in its perceptive abilities to this physical environment; yet with certain meditative practices, *mind* itself can also become *unconditioned* (free from conceptual ‘preperception’ and expectation) which enables it to perceive on a much broader spectrum of reality than just the physical plane of existence. Thus, unconditioned mind is a far more powerful perceptual tool which may be used within its broader capabilities to actualize oneself more quickly toward increasing realization, a state of equanimity and

expanding inner freedom through much deeper understanding of the lessons obtained from this Earthly experience.

At the end of this process, when one becomes ‘enlightened’, or as the Buddha says, when one becomes ‘awake’, one continues to live in this physical world (until the physical ‘sheath’ or ‘vehicle’ fails), but the experience one has is one of complete freedom from desire^{cxix}, and freedom from the need for acquisition of material things (beyond basic sustenance) as a strategy for satisfying inner yearnings for fulfillment. This in turn increases the amount of ‘outer’ freedom available to an individual, because the fewer egotistical ‘needs’ one has, the less dependent and demanding one is upon others, *which both increases your freedom and theirs*.

At the same time, the complete freedom inside this state of ‘enlightened’ awareness enables an open love and compassion for all life, for one is no longer concerned with oneself over others and can thus see others through a clearer lens and not the warped lens of egotistical, you-me, win-lose self-concern.

This state of complete inner freedom is a state of awareness where differences, paradoxes and contradictions are seen not in hedonic terms of good and bad, desirable, and undesirable which must be played off against each other, but as part of the natural flux of the multifaceted universe we have physically and spiritually evolved from and within.

Again, it is this flux that has made our very evolution a possibility by offering up, moment by moment a variety of evolutionary choices that, in their variety, have created the complex universe surrounding us and within which we have found the evolutionary ‘sustenance’, i.e., the moment-by-moment creative choice and freedom we have needed to evolve.

Although there may be some ‘ultimate’ enlightenment and enlightened states of awareness as many have come to understand the term,^{cxix} for most of us enlightenment is something that occurs progressively, within each moment as we go through the process of experiencing, learning from that experience, and seeing and perceiving a more expanded reality because of that learning. Thus, enlightenment may be more realistically viewed as an evolving process which occurs moment by moment within an ever-expanding process of self-actualization rather than a static, state-in-itself. This understanding is important because it emphasizes how crucial continuously focusing upon the lessons that life

offers us is, for each of these lessons is unique in the lifetime of each individual and contain valuable insights into one's spiritual, mental, and emotional growth that brings greater self-understanding, joy, and compassion for oneself and others. These, in turn lead to greater inner freedom and outer relational connectedness.

The importance of this gradual process of evolution is emphasized not only in the theories described above but in the writings of such contemporaries as Ken Wilber with his Integral Theory^{cxxiii} (*Atman Project*, and later books leading to *A Brief History of Everything*), which describes the slow ascent of human awareness toward an ultimate freedom. From a western psychological perspective, Abraham Maslow^{cxxiv} and Carl Rogers'^{cxxv} theories of *humanistic psychology* emphasize self-actualization and the positive potential of humankind, while Maslow, Roberto Assagioli, Stanislav Grof and Anthony Sutich^{cxxvi} accent *transpersonal psychology*, the development of the spiritual aspect of humankind, peak experiences, and self-actualization toward transcendental states of consciousness. All the above assume a slow evolvment toward higher states of actualization and enlightenment with the ultimate goal still a nebulous thing, for one aspect of evolution is that it is unending, as perhaps enlightenment itself is.

Finally, the journey that we are on, of continuously expanding our understanding of ourselves, each other, other life and the cosmos in general will require that we all, sooner or later pay heed to E.T. Hall's^{cxxvii} ideas of everyone going beyond their own culture and its hidden constructs that so condition our minds and rule our thinking and our lives to be able to perceive another culture, another reality, realistically and without bias, and thus expand our own reality and culture (i.e., freedom from cultural conditioning) in our next stage of evolvment. All the above theories reflect varying aspects of humankind and human potential evolving toward transcendent states of being and greater freedom as an innate (teleological) 'goal' of both spiritual and material evolution.

There are persistent themes that run though most of the theories of cosmology and/or human evolution described above. 1) Most of the theorists mentioned above developed their theories of human evolution through both 'outer' empirical approaches/sciences (of their day) and the introspective analysis of their own life experiences, mundane and

spiritual; 2) There is a consistent theme throughout these theories that the body and brain are simply vehicles for the evolution of consciousness, and the mind is the interface between body/brain and spirit; 3) many of these *teleological* theories describe from varying perspectives the entire experience of humankind from an individual's birth, life and death, to the rise and decline of 'states' and civilizations as Earthly manifestations of an innate, creative 'impulse' of consciousness, a natural inborn impulse that leads slowly, progressively to the expansion and increasing sophistication of awareness for humankind, and increasing states of both inner and outer freedom; 4) In most of these theories there is within even the minutest aspect of the cosmos a 'cosmic memory' which contains all knowledge which becomes increasingly accessible through progressively higher states of consciousness and awareness;. 5) Most of these theories predict in one way or another, an ultimate state of freedom and 'super expansive' states of consciousness for all sentient life.

Even though this short introduction cannot do justice to the huge body of knowledge and literature, both East and West, embodying humankind's ideas on the origination, evolution, purposes and goals of sentient life in the universe and on this Earth, it is clear from just this small sampling that some of the greatest thinkers down through the ages have concluded that the evolution of humankind is essentially a teleological evolution occurring through a holistic interplay of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual experience.

The results of this teleological, evolutionary experience are an ever-increasing depth of perception, increased ability to exercise the will, a deeper understanding of freedom, and the active use of that freedom to self-actualize more intelligently and compassionately. The final 'goal' if it is not the process of self-actualization itself, may lie in the liberation of the individual from the chains of self-concern, a liberation that results in a sense of infinite freedom with which to relate to the rest of 'reality', and within that process of relating from a state of infinite freedom, find ever-increasing 'enlightenment' through one's *increasingly lucid* relations with others.

Finally, even though I speak of the 'goal' of evolution above, in truth the presence of a 'goal' in this evolutionary process, and what that goal might be is obviously beyond the capabilities of anyone of present 'normal' awareness to ascertain, nor does it matter. What matters is the process itself and what is coming out of it.

In truth, this creative endeavor of self-actualization has no goal until we create it, collectively and individually, so you might say the goal is something that happens every moment and is the goal for that moment. The adventure lies in not knowing what the next moment's goal might be; and in not knowing the next moment, the Ultimate Moment's goal also remains a mystery. Suffice it to say that we are forever in a process of expansion, sometimes joyful, sometimes painful and sad, but always learning and expanding.

As such it is important to note that all the theories described above have at least some logic and credence in helping explain the phenomena of complexity-driven, teleological evolution as a process of becoming which *harbors no stagnation* but marches onward and upward toward denser states of energy, higher complexity, higher states of awareness and more expansive states of consciousness.

Thadeus Golas, described the universe and our role within it very simply a half century ago in his short book, *The Lazy Man's Guide to Enlightenment*^{cxviii} by saying, 'We are all equal beings and the universe is our relations with each other'. In creating our relationships we are creating the universe around us. We must be careful in what we create, moment by moment, to always ensure that we create with intelligence and compassion as well as exuberance.

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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