

MAKING FOR THE LIGHT

**HOW TO UNDERSTAND YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS
AND DEVELOP ITS FULL POTENTIAL**

Donald B. Wright

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Brief quotations embodied in
critical articles and reviews are exempt.

REVIEWS

In this highly reasoned and very readable book, Wright informs us about our sensing and thinking, about reality and truth. But, most importantly, he shows us the inner path to enlightenment that each of us can take, thereby letting us live to our utmost.

General reader response.

“I’ve read your book with pleasure. It’s a delight to read. You can be proud of it. It shows much thought, long work, and crisp intelligence. I’m completely in sympathy with the direction of your work.”

Robert K.C. Forman, Ph.D., author and Professor of Comparative Religion, Hunter College, CUNY.

“If I knew someone in need of a self-help or self-improvement book, I’d certainly recommend yours. It’s guided by much common sense and an overall critical attitude toward many nonsensical ideas that contribute to dissolving our societies.”

Martin Mahner, Ph.D., author, philosopher, scientist, and Professor at the Free University of Berlin.

"This vital book is a wonderful and human doorway to a subject that has challenged humanity for thousands of years. Wise, learned and accessible -- and above all a useful tool for us as individuals ---and as a species."
David Bischoff, New York Times best-selling author.

"The least that can be said for this book is that if more of us followed the author's advise, the world would almost certainly be a better place."

Charles Wilder, Doctor of Social Welfare, UC

"In Making For The Light, Wright brings us an insightful interpretation of the nature of conscious experience in the most accessible terms. Using well-selected literary references in combination, he helps the reader to explore and recognize segments of their own consciousness. Self-knowledge and expanded awareness are gained from following the recommended exercises."

Ann E. Geers, Ph.D., author, Adjunct Professor of Human Development and Communication Sciences, School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences, The University of Texas, Dallas.

"Donald Wright has written an important book that is astounding in its clarity, simplicity and elegance of thought. It was through him that I discovered Zen Buddhism, red wine, and the beauty of a limitless personal horizon. This book is the perfect explanation of the timeless basics that can keep the human race balanced and sane."

Charles A. Mullen, Director of Boeing's Digital Design Group and Emmy Award winning cinematographer.

"This book inspired me to establish a regular pattern of simple meditation using Don's suggested technique. I am grateful that this book exists ... for many reasons. Read it yourself, and find out which gem speaks to you."

Donna Quinn, KMUN radio talk show host

"...it reveals many points of wisdom."

B. Alan Wallace, Ph.D., President,
Santa Barbara Institute of Consciousness Studies

Donald Wright has been an independent student of the psychology and philosophy of consciousness for over 35 years. He has attended four Universities, earning a Bachelor of Science, cum laude, and a Master of Fine Arts degree. Three Universities have utilized his abilities as a professor. He's an award-winning sculptor and a creator of outstanding gold jewelry. Among his skills are those of piloting an aerobatic biplane and skippering a sailboat more than 14,000 miles on the oceans. Wright was a Control Tower Operator in the Air Force, a professional photographer, architectural and interior designer, saxophonist, University drum major, public radio program host, and cabaret singer. He has been a volunteer fireman, special deputy sheriff, gold miner, restaurant owner and art gallery owner.

Wright says of himself that he's a scientific realist, ardent skeptic and committed iconoclast. He lives in Oregon, USA, and doesn't watch television.

“A human being is part of the whole, called by us ‘Universe’, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts, and feelings, as something separate from the rest — a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion, to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such an achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.”

Albert Einstein

“Compassion is the keen awareness of the interdependence of all things.”

Thomas Merton

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INTRODUCTION

“Our minds are finite, and even in these circumstances of finitude we are surrounded by possibilities that are infinite, and the purpose of life is to grasp as much as we can out of that infinitude.”

Alfred North Whitehead

IN Pennsylvania, circa 1960, the TV cameras and interviewers were gathered around a building that had collapsed on the workers inside. When, at last, one survivor struggled out, they asked him what had happened. He said, **“I took all that stuff that was on me off me and made for the light.”**

Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, it's time to do the same.

Making for the Light is about your consciousness, what it is and how you can direct it to your benefit and the ultimate benefit of our total environment. The term *Consciousness* in this book means the *Awake Awareness* of a person at any given time. When you wake in the morning and look out the window to check the weather, you are conscious, looking (sensing) and thinking (conceiving). This doesn't refer to sleep and dreaming, unconsciousness, subconsciousness (whatever that is), pathology, coma, or death.

You're going to learn how your consciousness works and how to place the spotlight of your sensory attention (*sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, tactual feeling including pain, and the position of your body in space*) on a direct, firsthand experience of the world around you and within you. Then you'll learn how your concepts (*your thinking*) about those experiences can be the most rational, reasonable, true and accurate.

Both of these sensory and conceptual aspects of our consciousness are *Dualistic* (based on contrast between two or more things). But there is another aspect that few of us use and one that you may not even realize you have, one we will call *Nondualistic* consciousness (where there is no contrast). Experiencing that particular one will help you to alleviate much of your stress and strain, guilt and fear, illusions and insecurities, even your phobias and irrational beliefs. It will give you the direct personal experience of the oneness of all things, giving rise to your compassion for all things. This process we'll call *Liberation* and is achieved by *Meditation*. The result

is your *Enlightenment*. In this book you'll learn to meditate in the most efficient and productive way.

Research by neuroscientists at the University of Wisconsin and the University of California San Francisco Medical Center indicates that meditation actually stimulates the brain's left prefrontal lobes, home of positive emotions and good moods, and quiets the amygdala, creator of, among other things, irrational fears.

Meditation practice will lead you to act in much greater harmony with your total environment, with people, trees, *everything*. I must emphasize that what you will find in this book has nothing to do with religion, though you may consider it spiritual because it involves meditation.

The first chapter tells you about some of the sad and disturbing things going on now in our personal lives and elsewhere on our planet. But don't despair: in the second chapter I'm going to explain how you, personally, and all of us collectively, can get to a better place in the future. Following that, you'll learn a simple overview of your consciousness. Then on to how you can proceed to that first hand experience of the oneness of all things.

This is your road to compassion and the source of a deep inner motivation to treat your total environment, including humans, in a kind, loving and harmonious way.

***Let's take all that stuff that's on us off us
and make for the light.***

“Boundless compassion for all living
beings is the firmest and surest guarantee
of pure moral conduct,
... May all living beings remain
free from pain.”

Arthur Schopenhauer

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Reasons to leave

“The world was old now.
Most of the unexplored territory left
was in the space between people’s ears.”

Thomas Perry
The Vanishing Act (1995)

Prejudice, cheating, lies, selfishness, greed, fear, hate, and violence are prevalent where we are now, in our world situation and in our daily lives. Does this have to be the unchangeable, everlasting state of our human character? Can we ever experience the universal love and mutual cooperation that resides deeply, but largely undiscovered, within each of us?

The Youngbloods, in their 1960’s song
Get Together, said:

It’s there at your command

come on people now
smile on your brother
everybody get together
try to love one another,
right now, right now.

If we don't learn to cooperate lovingly and compassionately with the planet which is our environment, it's likely we won't find a workable remedy for our personal and social, as well as our environmental, maladies. Sadly, our frustration over the stupid and destructive acts of other people contributes to more thoughtless hate and violence among us. But we can begin to eliminate that frustration and the resulting hate and violence by first reducing it in ourselves and then by helping others change their destructive ways.

This book will demonstrate that the warm feeling of love and compassion for all others—and not just the the few persons closest to us—is ultimately available to each of us.

Beyond our personal problems lie general social, economic and environmental disasters which love and compassion, coupled with appropriate action by us, can help to overcome. Here is a list of some of our problems:

- Global heating and climate upset
- Overpopulation (both humans and cattle)
- Wars of greed and ideology, pending totalitarianism
- Terrorism, genocide, imprisonment, torture
- Religious and tribal conflict, refugees
- Nonrenewable energy depletion:
 - oil, natural gas, coal, minerals, etc.
- Renewable resource destruction:

soil, forests, fisheries, water
Air, water and land and ocean pollution,
eroding top soil
Economic chaos, poverty, homelessness,
starvation
Expanding divide between the rich and poor
AIDS, malaria, plague, avian & swine flu, Ebola,
West Nile, Dengue fever, swine flu and
other
infectious diseases
Species extinction, both plant and animal
Invasive killer species

What have I left out? And what other problems will appear as human life, and all life, flora and fauna both, attempts to continue and thrive, to attain a sustainable level.

Let's briefly review one of these disasters: overpopulation. There are now about three times as many people in the United States as there were when I was born in 1930: 100 million then and over 300 million now with a net gain of one person every 13 seconds. If you're not an American, check out the numbers for your own nation.

Today the world population is over 6 billion. Although the birthrate has slowed somewhat, by 2050 the population of the United States could reach 500 million. The global population projection for 2050 is now at about 9 billion, a 50% increase.

If this is our population future, we're going to need to be pretty friendly with one another and tread very softly on the earth. And we'd better start now.

You've probably heard about people who think they're seeing signs indicating the beginning of the end of life on our small planet. You might even be one of them. Our incredible technology has given immense power to our shortsighted and uncaring ways that are causing the rapid destruction of our environment: the very environment we need to protect in order to sustain our lives and the continuation of all species. Almost all the big projects for economic development damage our environment: manufacturing, dams, electric generation, mining, and so on. Unfortunate but true!

For example, the evolution of technology has allowed us to replace hand saws with circular saws and axes with chain saws. These new power tools can probably do the work of at least 25 of the older hand tools in the same length of time. Taking into account the population increase, this means that we can now deforest the world nearly 75 times more quickly than we could 75 years ago. The forecast for the future indicates that the grinding of wood into paper pulp and the sawing of lumber might be done 100 times more rapidly and devastatingly in 2050 than in 1930.

Consider all the other technological advances that we use to "harvest", modify, rearrange and pollute the thin crust and atmosphere of our planet. Think about what those powerful bulldozers can do. With their help, roads, parking lots, strip malls, and housing developments are eating huge amounts of our farm land. Then think about the amount of electricity needed for air conditioning in the "developed" countries, especially the United States. Additionally, look at the amount of fossil fuel energy used to run the world's engines, motors, air conditioners and heaters and the resulting pollution

caused by all that burning and spilling of our nonrenewable resources. Someday, before very long, our oil is going to run out! So, eventually, will natural gas and coal. These resources are finite.

Without the slightest doubt, if we don't stop our destruction of the flora and fauna and nonrenewable resources of our world, we will make even humans extinct in the not too distant future.

It's vital to our survival to learn and know, absolutely, that we and our planet are one and the same thing; to understand that you and your environment are indivisible, and that nature, with perhaps the exception of humans, can be trusted to be just fine as it is.

We tend to think that the organization of things, living or not, cannot, however intricate, just be allowed to happen — that we must control it. But human controlling, with its greed and inevitable blunders, is what's destroying life on our planet. There's a physical limit to our poisoning and tearing of the earth's surface and atmosphere. And now, with space travel, we're taking our dubious ideas and control to other planets in our solar system. We'll probably also be taking our viruses, bacteria and other microbes, as well as our trash.

Why, if we humans are so intelligent, so creative and clever, are we screwing up our habitat so badly? Why, with all the information out there for us to glean, are we still so shortsighted?

Many of you do know, at least intellectually, if not from direct personal experience, that we and our environment are mutually connected. The dilemma is

that we've only learned about that connection from outside ideas, *conceptually*, from science, for example. Our situation is being *taught* to us, communicated to us. We have "book knowledge". Nothing wrong with that but it's pretty much like knowing the "rules" for harmonious behavior, the social ethical precepts that have been taught to us. Unfortunately, ethical rules are easily broken by intention, carelessness, ignorance, stupidity, or the power of greed.

You've perhaps heard about some of the programs and pieces of legislation people have created in an attempt to halt our environmental self-destruction. Try as they might, nothing seems to be working any better than the alcohol-prohibition laws did to prevent drinking or the anti-drug laws do to prevent drug use. The so-called solutions to both of these social and individual problems have inadvertently caused more serious problems like theft and murder. More laws won't stop us from aggressively destroying each other and our surroundings.

We're looking here at what's wrong with where we are now, and later in this book we'll see what we, as individuals and then as groups, can start to do to set things right with ourselves, our society and our natural world. Each of us can, individually and without dependency on or permission from others, begin to learn how to solve our planet's problems. At the same time we can dispel our personal fears and phobias.

To reiterate, least part of what's wrong at this moment is that we're not searching inside ourselves, not exploring and utilizing our own astounding mental capabilities, not learning from a deep firsthand experience that we humans and our environment are

indivisible, one. We're not doing this because seldom (and usually only at the cultural fringe) has anyone ever given us the merest hint that this inner source exists, or if it does, how we can most effectively employ it. And, if we've heard any of these hints at all, they've probably been judged just odd beliefs by odd people.

Beyond that cultural fringe, we have tended to rely on answers to our questions about consciousness from philosophy, the behavioral sciences (psychology, sociology) and the physical and life sciences (biology, neuroscience, physics, chemistry, medicine), plus all their offshoots. With some profound exceptions, it appears that it's almost impossible for people to acquire the massive amount of ever-expanding specialized information that's available in their individual fields. It's very difficult to be widely-read and broadly-educated enough (because of our very broad base of knowledge) to encounter the more remote and esoteric, but still rational, information that might bear on the subject. Rational information is that which is consistent with and based upon reason, one that attempts to omit pseudoscience and beliefs by explaining and predicting only from existing evidence. Most of our scientific and philosophical educational orientation has been derived more from the Western world than information from the wider world, so we tend to overlook a lot of important global thinking resources.

Added to this is the specialist's tendency to not access information from disciplines other than his or her own and to talk and write in a jargon almost incomprehensible to the rest of us.

Our theologians, and others who would preach to us, are having difficulties because they are relying only on their *ideas*, divorced from experience. They may even

ask us to *believe* in something. Although, to be fair, some of them attempt to make a reasonable case for their positions. An ever-expanding mass of precepts and beliefs isn't going to help us. And there are even people trying to motivate us by instilling guilt and fear.

Our philosophers are dedicated to the task of asking and then seeking answers to our most fundamental questions. Many of them are offering us valuable information about our consciousness.

Psychologists specialize in the study of our minds and behavior, producing much new and helpful material. But many of them are concentrating almost exclusively on cognition and neuroscience, leaving the broader areas of consciousness studies to others. It may be that many psychologists and psychiatrists are involved in studying only the most minute aspects of their field, rather than attempting to find an all-encompassing perspective of the kind you'll find here.

Some physicists are trying to understand consciousness and are having impressive success. Out in the wider world more credulous people are just inventing answers without regard to any evidence.

With rare exception, the education of our children and college students is centered almost entirely on thinking: on learning and manipulating a thought or idea formed in the mind, on what are called *concepts*. Thinking is certainly the great and wondrous ability that signifies our unique humanity, but *it's only one of three identifiable functions of our total consciousness*.

We ignore almost entirely the education of the second, our *senses*, and don't seem to even know that there is a third, equally vital, aspect of consciousness

that can be developed, *Nondualistic* consciousness, to be fully explained later in this book.

To summarize, we find ourselves lacking a clear, comprehensive, evidence-based *overview* of human consciousness from any reliable contemporary source. Most likely this is because, as the saying goes, we can't see the forest for the trees.

But now we're going to rise above the trees to see the entire forest. What we're going to do is to survey all our natural, inborn, waking awareness, our human consciousness, and at last provide that long-needed comprehensive overview.

There's been a lot of trouble in thinking about and communicating on the subject of consciousness because, for one reason, the words we need to use have been so poorly defined. Even dictionaries of philosophical or psychological terms don't help enough. How can we possibly think and communicate without clear meanings to our words?

Starting in the Understanding Your Consciousness chapter, you'll find words defined in the text nearby. *These definitions are for the way I'll use that word in this book.* I hope this will be the way you will use them henceforth, teaching them to others with whom you talk on this subject. They're meant to help refine your thinking, understanding and communication. My task is to describe our human consciousness in the clearest, most well-defined words and structures I can find.

More than 30 years ago, in an isolated cabin in the wintertime mountains of New Mexico, I wrote my first manuscript on this subject. I wanted to test my ability to be alone for an extended period and to see what my

reaction would be. I planned to avoid any distraction from my reading, thinking and writing. At about the middle of my six weeks I had the single most instantaneous creative experience of my life. It was almost like a flash of light. An insight somehow appeared that crystallized my thinking into a sparkling new concept: the fundamental difference between what I now call *duality* and *nonduality*; between contrast and the absence of it in our consciousness. I immediately started my manuscript all over again according to this new and clarified idea.

Since that winter in New Mexico, I've been studying and testing and refining the results of that insight and I've continually found them to be valid. I've verified this thesis over and over again as objectively as possible. I hope that you, too, will find the results valid, valuable and useful in your life. Then, emanating from you, they may improve the lives of others and the health of our planet.

This book's existence was motivated by the desire for each of us to take all the culturally-learned nonsensical superstitions and beliefs off of us, and to Make for the Light by way of personal psychological freedom guided by knowledge, reason and understanding. Getting on the path toward an understanding of our consciousness and developing its full potential is what we'll undertake here. This is how we can successfully move on from where we are now.

Here's a sentence from my old manuscript: "Put the spotlight of your attention ... into any of the forms of consciousness that are available in your individual

consciousness, and thereby experience the ultimate in what it means to be human.”

With practice, you'll be able to do it.

WHERE WE CAN GO FROM HERE

Finding the route

“If your train’s on the wrong track
every station you come to
is the wrong station.”

Bernard Malamud,
Dubin’s Lives (1979)

“IF it were up to you, how would you create positive change in the complex systems woven into the fabric of the modern world? How would you begin to close the desperate gulf between rich and poor? What would you do to relieve our stressed ecosystem? Or solve the problems of depleting energy resources, the widespread contamination of the water supply, or the flourishing AIDS pandemic? These issues defy the capacities of our existing systems.” Elizabeth Debold in What is Enlightenment March-May 2005

To get to where we want to go from here, we just have to get on the right track. Here's that track:

Learning about ourselves and our relationship to our environment from direct, inner, personal experience.

That's good news because there *is* a way that, down in our deepest core, we can feel our real and totally natural connectedness to ourselves, to all other persons, and to everything in our total environment, to the universe, and to the cosmos. Each and every person can realize that he is part of a unified whole, not separated: at one with all. If we do that we have a good chance to straighten out the mess we're making. And we *can* do it!

The first step toward solving our social and environmental problems is to look inward. You're going to learn right here in this book how to accomplish that. We're going to delve into the workings of our consciousness. The solutions to our more worldly problems will naturally follow.

Here's what J. Krishnamurti had to say in his book, Education and the Significance of Life (1953): "To transform the world, there must be regeneration within ourselves. Nothing can be achieved by violence, by the easy liquidation of one another. We may find a temporary release by joining groups, by studying methods of social and economic reform, by enacting legislation, or by praying; but do what we will, without self-knowledge and the love that is inherent in it, our problems will ever expand and multiply. Whereas, if we apply our minds and hearts to the task of knowing ourselves, we shall undoubtedly solve our many conflicts and sorrows."

There's no limitation about who can accept this information about consciousness, achieving greater self-knowledge and environmental harmony. You can be a Christian, Jew, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, spiritual seeker, agnostic, atheist or whatever.

Former nun and author Karen Armstrong wrote this in The AARP Magazine (Mar-Apr 2005): "... all the great world faiths... agree on the supreme importance of compassion. The early sages and prophets all taught their followers to cultivate a habit of empathy for all living beings...the word compassion does not, of course, mean to feel sorry for someone. Like sympathy, it means to feel *with* others, to enter their point of view and realize that they have the same fears and sorrows as yourself."

It doesn't matter what your gender or skin color is, whether you are liberal or conservative, capitalist or socialist, old or young: you can Make for the Light by developing your total consciousness potential. It's an ability each of us has.

The ideas this book is based upon have existed for a long, long time. Their essence has been available in many cultures and many languages for perhaps 3,500 years and possibly many more. They're from the murky texts of the past and from other more recent, usually equally murky explanations of them. My job here is to interpret, synthesize and condense this information and make it easy for you to understand.

You won't have to wade through the accumulated cultural gibberish that has usually surrounded the central theme of these wise, old messages. It won't be necessary for you to peel off onion-like layers of vague words and struggle through dull and confusing passages in order to reach the central core.

Eckhart Tolle had this to say in an interview published in Utne (Jan-Feb 2004): "Those ancient teachings pointed the way, but not many people got the message. As a whole, mankind was not ready for it. But it could somehow sense that there was truth in those teachings, so they were not forgotten. Then the human mind, with its tendency to conceptualize, obscured the original truth of these teachings and built on top of them superstructures of religious beliefs, which became part of peoples' identities: total delusion."

Beware, beware! Before you accept what I have to tell you, you need to adopt a skeptical approach. Use your most critical thinking, beginning now. Claims to knowledge require *evidence* before being accepted. No matter what you read here, no matter how truthful it may sound, your only ultimately convincing evidence for interior experiences lies purely within the realm of your personal observations. That's one reason why "hard"

science is missing out in this quest. It's found unscientific to accept individual, interior, personal data as evidence because it's so fraught with possible error when conceived and communicated. Also, it's very difficult to devise an objective scientific test for it. Many philosophers and psychologists appear to not allow soft, personal data to enter the equation.

What all this means is that for you to find evidence about your own consciousness, you can't rely on anyone else. You'll have to seek it within yourself by examining your own experiences. This is the only way you can, or should, completely convince yourself of the accuracy of the following explanation of consciousness. Otherwise, you'll just have to see if what other people say about their experiences stands to reason.

That being said, this handbook can guide you safely and surely onward to the comprehension of your consciousness abilities. It may sound like an exaggeration, but by learning to use these abilities, your life will be more joyfully fulfilled and your relationship with yourself, other people and your total environment will become much more clear. We each have this wisdom hiding deeply within our natural selves. It's reachable regardless of what our culture, intelligence or education may be. Think of yourself as a kind of miner, digging down through the overlying rock for the gems beneath (as you'll see in the diagrams).

Since you're still reading this, there can be little doubt you're interested in finding out more about yourself and hoping, as most of us do, for a fuller, more satisfying life. But be alert for the person who asks to be revered or wants you to join his group and believe as he does. He's pushing a belief system onto unwary and

uncritical people and will try to trap them into a continuing worship of him and his authoritarian ways. As a self-serving substitute parent-figure, he won't prepare you to leave his nest. He'll bind you to him as long as possible, until your adoration or money runs out.

On the other hand, a genuine teacher, one who wishes you to be an independent critical thinker, needs financial support from somewhere: a university, the state, his students, other work, or publishing, in order to live.

It's important to realize that in the light of the astounding intellectual heights to which we humans have evolved, there's still much more of our consciousness available to us that is *not* intellectual. Discovering and learning to develop that kind of consciousness will, as I've said before, give us an inner strength and equilibrium that might be called the ultimate stress reducer. We can achieve a state of mind that will allow us to live our lives to the very fullest, without fear and hesitation, with love and compassion.

Again from the Utne Eckhart Tolle interview:
Question: "Why is this new state of consciousness arising now?" Tolle: "I'd say the change is happening now – or, at least, a real possibility of change is arising – because it has to happen now. There's an urgency that wasn't there before, because the survival of humanity wasn't threatened. There was human madness, but not so much that humanity could destroy itself. Now the madness has been magnified, amplified by technology and science, to the point where humanity can destroy itself."

I once had a student who said she didn't like a partial moon. Only a full moon could please her. Further interviews revealed that she felt she had become an alien in a hostile world. It became apparent that she thought of herself as a separate entity from her environment, caring for and accepting the nature of neither. She was in emotional pain because of the position she had conceived for herself in the world.

Self-limiting choices like this don't have to be made. We can appreciate everything, full or partial, with perhaps one exception: a person's inharmonious, destructive behavior. Humans are the only species capable of fundamentally inharmonious behavior because much of our action is based on wrong or false concepts.

Ethics, the study of right and wrong behavior, is becoming popular. Many idealists and reformers are at work trying to return honesty, truth, justice, equality and common decency more solidly to our society. An increasing number of people are deeply concerned that our moral standards are slipping and that our sense of integrity is lacking. Few would disagree that lying, stealing, cheating and even killing are prevalent in our society.

These efforts are centered on teaching young people right from wrong and discussing ethical behavior and the importance of acquiring a personal sense of morality. The question being asked by these individuals and organizations is, "How can we change things for the better; what can we do?" Their efforts are geared toward solutions through education and preaching, that is, toward following old precepts, forming new precepts and following rules.

Unfortunately, in the broad scheme of things, this method doesn't have much chance of working any better than it has ever worked in the past. The idea of compassion learned from other people is not powerful enough. It must be learned from direct, personal, inner experience to have the necessary impact.

Conflict is the essence of drama. Therefore, the lessons about conflict our children are getting from movies, television, computers, games and other sources, found right in their own homes and neighborhoods, can be too strong to be successfully countered by trying to teach them the precepts of cooperation and compassion.

What will work is for each individual child and adult to find his own uncompromised source of goodness. It's already there, within our own consciousness, ready to be developed: the innermost root of love and compassion.

Shame, guilt, and remorse follow the inappropriate behavior of someone who knows better, who has learned the rules and tries to follow them, whose asocial actions were accidental and who means for them not to happen again. These are the responses to having made an error in known culturally-demanded behavior. Nobody wants those terrible burdens of shame, guilt and remorse if there's a truly natural way to avoid bad or inharmonious behavior.

Punishment, if used on a social offender, may sometimes force him, through fear, not to repeat a particular wrong action. But it most certainly won't help him to find his inner source of wisdom where "bad" behavior is hardly possible, except accidentally. It won't help him to trade-in his old inappropriate role for a more socially acceptable one and to enjoy his new one by

seeing it as a fulfilling role on the magnificent stage of life.

So, ultimately, our efforts in educating and moralizing, reward and punishment won't help us as much as we'd like in effecting the development of sound personal characteristics. We can also recognize that punishment won't work for much more than changing a person's one specific behavioral pattern for awhile, if even that.

You're probably aware that new and different ideas are unwelcome in society at large. But here in this book is your chance to hear a relatively different message and see how it applies to every facet of the diamond of your life. There's nothing in it to cause any trepidation. We'll simply uncover the track to ethical behavior in any cultural matrix.

You'll be able to achieve full use of your three always-existing, innate, ready-to-be-used segments of your total consciousness potential, as explained in this book. You now automatically (rather than intentionally) use an intermix of two of them (sensory and conceptual), but the third you probably don't use at all (nondualistic). I expect to hear you say something like, "After all these years of life and all that time in school, you've gotta be kidding." Your skepticism is welcome. I'm taking on the job of convincing you that nondualistic consciousness does exist, using logical reasoning.

As you become convinced that you truly do have a greater consciousness potential, you can learn to make full and intentional use of that potential. Your reward for doing so will be to find your life vastly improved each and every day. But even if you only gain an intellectual understanding of the existence of these three basic

segments of human consciousness, you'll still change your life for the better. You'll enter a new portal giving you an accurate survey of yourself and your surroundings to apply to all your thoughts and actions.

The key to your entry is here in this book; you simply have to reach out for it and turn it in the lock.

Your eventual understanding and development of your full consciousness potential may well be the single most important endeavor you'll ever undertake.

In order to get a bit of background on what we are and how we operate, let's take a look at it now.

We humans are unique in that we can create and interweave symbols into symbol systems like our languages, mathematics and other means that we use to think and communicate. We'll call these systems "concepts". Symbols are created representations of the real world. No other creature can think, that is, conceptualize, as well as we humans can. But this is the most highly significant difference between us and "them". Animals, plants, fungi and all the other organisms are just as precious to the world as humans are. We humans are the only creatures that kill from purely ideological motives, setting us apart from all others.

Humans, too, are the only organisms, with the possible exception of viruses, in the history of our earth who, by themselves, have the capacity to change their environment so rapidly that they might not be able to adapt to the change quickly enough to survive. Our species, though having adapted slowly to changing environments over thousands of years, is now highly

specialized and therefore very fragile within our self-induced very rapid rate of environmental destruction. New technological space suits won't sustain us for long in a hostile environment.

Human evolution has provided us with the tremendous ability to think, while letting us retain many of our basic animal instincts and responses. No creatures other than humans are known to be self-aware, capable of questioning where they came from, what they should be doing now and where they're going. No other organism is capable of being aware of being aware, of thinking about thinking, of worrying about worrying. Our ability to form thoughts in our minds is our greatest asset but has also become a serious addiction, resembling a compulsive habitual need. We can't seem to let go of it even to permit our senses to take a front row seat more often, although we would find that doing so is appropriate and beneficial. This is doubtless because of our astounding ability to make and use symbols so very, very well. Our concepts, and the artifacts that result from their use give an incredible advantage to our species. It's little wonder we're so attached to our thinking, leaving the other two aspects of our consciousness behind in the dust. Here's a poem that will illuminate that point:

FLOWERS AND WREATHES

by Jacques Prevert, Translated by Lawrence Ferlinghetti
Paroles, (1949,1958)

Man
You beheld the saddest the dreariest
of all the flowers of the earth

And as with other flowers you gave it a name
You called it Thought.
Thought
It was as they say well observed
Well thought
And these foul flowers which neither live nor ever fade
You called them immortal...
That served them well...
But the lilac you called lilac
Lilac it was exactly that
Lilac...Lilac...
To the daisies you gave a woman's name
Or else to women you gave the name of a flower
It's the same.
The main thing was that it be pretty
That it give pleasure...

Finally you gave simple names to all the simple flowers
And the tallest the most beautiful
The one that sprouts straight up out of the manure of misery
The one that stands up next to old rusty springs
Next to old damp dogs
Next to old gutted mattresses
Next to the shacks where the undernourished live
This flower so alive
All yellow all brilliant
The one the learned call Helianthus
You you called it sun
...Sun...

Alas! alas! and lots of times alas!
Who looks at the sun eh?
Who looks at the sun?
Nobody looks at the sun anymore
Men have become what they've become
Intelligent men...

A cancerous tuberous meticulous flower in their buttonhole
They walk around looking at the ground
And they think of heaven
They think...they think...they don't stop thinking
They can't love real living flowers anymore
They love faded flowers dried flowers
Immortals and thoughts
And they walk in the mire of memories in the muck
of regrets...
They drag themselves along
With great difficulty
In the swamps of the past
And they drag...they drag their chains
And they drag their feet in step
They advance with great difficulty
Bogged down in their Elysian fields

And they sing funeral songs at the top of their voice
Yes they sing
At the top of their voice
But they won't root out for anything
All that's dead in their head
Because
In their head
Sprouts the sacred flower
The sick flower
The bitter flower
The always faded flower
the personal flower...
...Thought...

Nowadays, the search for knowing ourselves
seems be a fairly popular quest, judging from the
relevant books being sold. At least it's not just a whim

relegated to a few philosophical old fogies. Even teenagers seek self-knowledge, usually futilely. Maybe it's futile because our educational system focuses almost exclusively on the rote memorization of conceptual information, on thought. Schools offer us only the tiniest bit of training for our senses and rarely encourage creativity.

Einstein said, "What we learn up to the age of twenty is taken for primordial truth, accepted once and for all and inviolate; what we meet after that is pure speculation without form or weight."

Our addiction to thinking creates a further problem, one we may not even realize we have: our appalling inability to distinguish the symbols of our concepts from reality.

What is symbol? What is real? It's imperative that we understand.

The symbols that make up our language and mental image visualizations only stand for real things.

It's awfully easy to think that symbols themselves are real, or that a symbol can exist prior to the object it represents. But is there any rational doubt that the word *tree* was invented after some person's experience of a real tree? The word tree, a hieroglyph or a picture of a tree is merely a symbol of an actual, real, objective tree. The word stands for the object. Words or pictures may give us a kind of experience, but not the unique experience of first hand reality. Not clearly knowing the difference between symbol and reality is a fundamental cause of confusion and possibly even mental illness.

When a teacher holds up a picture of a tree and asks what it is, the kids will say, “a tree”. Does the teacher then say, “No, it’s a picture of a tree?” Hardly! But she should recognize that part of her responsibility as a teacher is to point out the difference between symbol and reality as part of the lesson.

There’s a short, simple answer to the question, “What is reality?”

Reality is the raw, unnamed, uncategorized, nonsymbolized impressions we take in through our sensory receptors.

It’s the sights, sounds, tactile feelings and so on that have entered our brains without further neural involvement. That’s the cutoff point to reality.

A symbolization of reality is an abstraction existing in our thoughts. It’s not concrete. It’s NOT reality. Watching someone get shot on TV isn’t at all the same as watching it in person on the street. The words of our language have no reality other than that they are the physical sights of reading and the sounds of speaking.

We continually wallow in the realm of language without having paid very much attention to the sensory reality upon which it is ultimately based. Consider, for example, a city kid who has never seen an actual cow. But she has seen a picture or movie of a cow (both symbols of a cow) and uses the word-symbol “cow”. Unfortunately, she may well think she has experienced a real cow because of all the secondhand information she has received but, of course, she hasn’t. She certainly hasn’t had the opportunity to touch or smell it.

But, cow or not, what is real and what is symbol is going to be of incredible importance to that child, as it is to all of us. We *must* positively distinguish between symbol and reality.

The reason is that our direct personal sensory experience of reality is mainly where each of us obtains the self-confidence we need to behave spontaneously. It's how we can know instinctively to trust our immediate response, be it physical, emotional or intellectual. Otherwise we have to follow a more deliberately thought-out and therefore delayed, and possibly inappropriate, plan of action. If, however, we have enough time to contemplate our response before taking action (if it's not an emergency and rapid action is not required), especially in a complex situation, it can be the better route.

Indecision, self-consciousness and lack of spontaneity are just some of the results of not directly and fully knowing what is real and what is not. We very often have no other recourse than to base our new concepts on other, previous, concepts, some of which may be quite wrong. This results in a continually reduced ability to distinguish reality from conceptual symbols.

The picture of the cow is *not* the cow! And neither is the word. In 1914, in the Arctic of Canada, the Eskimos were not yet changed by our own western civilization. An example of confusing symbol with reality occurred when one of the Eskimos was shown the picture of a toy dog in a book. He tried to pick up the animal with his fingers. Of course, this is a very simplistic example of a very complex problem. But, because of our not being absolutely sure about what is real and what is symbol (and we very often aren't), we stand the chance

of finding that our reasoning and behavior tend to be inappropriate. The concepts we use to think and take action may even be occasionally based on symbols that have little or no accurate relation to reality, a very unstable foundation for the building of our lives.

Insecurity can follow which can easily lead to being afraid, angry and, at the extreme, violent. We experience a lack of emotional and intellectual balance.

The dividing line between symbol and reality (as it did for the Eskimo) can become very indistinct. An example is when we see pictures (symbols) of Mars sent to us from a spacecraft. This is quite a different thing from seeing the planet through a telescope, which is only helping to magnify our vision. This latter view is reality. It's like looking through a microscope to see a bug: again a view of reality. But just seeing a *picture* of Mars or a bug means we still haven't seen it first hand: not in "real time" reality. This is not to denigrate the value of the symbol-picture. It's just to establish the difference between the two. But could the picture have been man-created, modified or manipulated? Could the lecture we just heard be total BS? A skeptical approach won't hurt us.

There *are* ways to firmly distinguish symbol from reality. The method is to learn what aspects of our consciousness we habitually use, how we use them, and then how we can use them much more effectively. Following this path, we can fully rely on our very own perspective of the reality upon which our concepts are based. Learning to know how we receive what is real permits us to distinguish symbol from reality.

The well-known phrase, "Know thyself", certainly includes knowing thy mind. One of the most productive ways to know our minds is to do a quiet introspection that will reveal to us more of who we are. The resulting knowledge can begin to show us the negative forms of conditioning imposed on us by our various social institutions in our local culture. Consider some of these negative forms: prejudice against other tribes, races or religions, xenophobia and rigid belief systems. Examples of cultural conditioning include the creation of dangerous authoritarian personalities, the time-honored use of makeup off-stage, or even the simply amusing wearing of clothes with writing on them.

Further, our own culturally-developed conditioning is the source that dictates that we involve ourselves in thinking almost constantly. Some other cultures go about this quite differently with different results. Almost all of us use our senses only superficially. And, as I've told you before, we've had little inkling about our other incredible aspect of consciousness, the *Nondualistic*, waiting within and available for us to use.

From experiencing our nondualistic consciousness we can find freedom from our conditioning in an even more fundamental way than by self-examination. The track we want to get on is that of experiencing this third segment of our consciousness that we haven't been taught to use. It will take some of our time and attention and might not happen quickly or even completely. No matter, it's the starting and continuation of the process that's important. That alone is a giant step forward.

Plus, and this is a very important plus: from the beginning and the continuation of your experience of

nondualistic consciousness, you can learn to discover, for yourself, your oneness with the universe.

Then, from your very personal experience of oneness, explained in detail in the Nondualistic Consciousness section of the Understanding chapter, you will see that you can realize first hand, deep inside, that you and your environment are not separate things, and that understanding and caring for your surroundings is exactly the same as understanding and caring for yourself. You and everything are truly one and the same thing. Separateness is an illusion! Once again, it's from this realm of consciousness that compassion and loving kindness for all things comes directly. We can't gain this kind of depth and sureness from some idea or belief, nor even as a value or an ethical or moral position we were taught.

The chapter called Developing Nondualistic Consciousness tells you how to do just that. You'll learn how to personally experience this aspect of your consciousness by employing a simple mental exercise, *meditation*. It can even be fun, as well as hugely rewarding. No more is required of you than to sit quietly and comfortably and direct your attention onto one single thing. Consistent practice is all it takes. Like most new endeavors, learning to play a musical instrument for example, you'll need the willpower and self-discipline to stay with it. The result is well worth it.

This technique isn't new; it has been used for many centuries, but we'll simplify and refine it here. As you continue your practice and gradually acquire its benefits, your life will change, and you'll like that change very much. You'll know from the center of your being

how to trust yourself to act spontaneously and to be in greater harmony with your environment. Harmony means acting and reacting with loving kindness and compassion for all things. "All things?" you ask. Yes: yourself, other humans, nature, all things. Doesn't it stand to reason that if each of us could reach that glorious condition where we know we are not separate from all else, our problems in the world might be more clearly seen? Then reasonable, workable solutions could be invented. That's how we can begin to set things right with ourselves and our universe, through firsthand knowledge of indivisible oneness.

My wishful thinking tells me it might even be possible, if enough of us were to experience nondualistic consciousness, to discover ways to slow or halt the terrible trend toward destruction of life on our planet. It's surely correct that if we want to know what's *really* going on, we must go to where it's happening. Fortunately we don't have to go far from home: there's a whole continent of "where it's happening" right inside each of our minds. All we need is a map of our consciousness, the one you're about to uncover right here in these pages.

This map will guide you in exploring the way our human consciousness works: what the three distinct aspects of our consciousness are, and how we can fully experience each one. Practice in voluntarily achieving them will lead you to participate in the world in a compassionate, harmonious, productive, sensitive, and ethical way. Even your thinking and sensing will improve. You'll be able to directly approach reality and distinguish it from symbols. You can become refreshed and renewed, more appropriately and intensely active and

energetic, and have increased physical as well as mental health.

This is the way to transcend our limitations, the way to take off all that stuff that was on you and make for the light. That route is *Liberation* and our arrival is *Enlightenment*. Enlightenment offers peace and contentment. Reaching and continuing it by way of the daily mental practice of meditation, is described later on in this book. It will transform your life. It can alter a person's character from the squalid and mean to the noble and selfless. You can acquire a new point of view, independent from what we've been taught, in your dealings with life and the world. By approaching Enlightenment via the practice of meditation, your life will assume a fresher, deeper and more satisfying aspect. It will uplift your ideals and revolutionize your life, giving to it new meaning and purpose. From the nondualistic experience you'll acquire a dignified inner poise, outwardly shown as self-confidence. Your internal life will begin to flow more serenely and more sweetly. You'll feel the flow like a quiet stream, even though raging storms still flood the outside world. You'll learn to be the master of your mind instead of its slave. The sense of exultation, of immense joyousness, followed by a knowledge of the truth, is quite impossible to describe in mere words.

This is where we can go, the track we can get on.

"In the hills there are two trails. One lies

along the higher sunlit fields where
those who journey see afar, and the light
lingers even when the sun is down;
and one leads to the lower ground,
where those who travel, as they go,
look always over their shoulders with
eyes of dread, and gloomy shadows
gather long before the day is done.”

Harold Bell Wright

The Shepherd of the Hills (1907)

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS

Explaining the route

“You do not need to leave your room.
Remain sitting at your table and listen.
Do not even listen, simply wait.
Do not even wait, be quite still and solitary.
The world will freely offer itself to you
to be unmasked, it has no choice,

it will roll in ecstasy at your feet.”

Franz Kafka

consciousness, in the way we'll define it here to avoid any psychological tedium, is *simply **the awake awareness of a person at any given time.*** This awareness is composed of three separate aspects: Sensory, Conceptual and Nondualistic. Your normal, everyday, run-of-the-mill consciousness is a combination of your own sensing and thoughts. Your eyes and ears are your most significant sensors; thinking (concepts) is what's also going on in your mind right now.

William James, in his book The Varieties of Religious Experience, told us almost one hundred years ago that, "Our normal consciousness is but one special type of consciousness, while all about it lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different." Oddly, those potential forms have remained not only obscure, but almost as though they've been purposely hidden away from us.

We know now that there's only one potentially "different" form, the Nondualistic. And not only can we learn what it is, we can learn to experience it. Not that our undifferent, usual, awake, normal human consciousness isn't superb. But why not use them all as fully as we can, especially when this third form is so enlightening? To understand the essential difference between the forms, it's necessary now to comprehend the terms **dualism** and **nondualism** in relation to our consciousness. Then we'll have the first key to unlocking our understanding of three forms of consciousness.

Dualism, or dualistic, is the situation where one thing is in contrast to another. Consider UP contrasted with DOWN or RED with BLUE. Contrast is one thing set

in opposition to another, one thing different than another. Dualism is the essential nature of how our senses and concepts work.

Nondualism is the state of our consciousness where no contrast exists. But it doesn't imply that there is nothing. Nondualism is the intrinsic nature of that "different" form of our consciousness, which is most certainly something.

So, beginning now, you can regard both your senses and thoughts as dualistic and your other, different, form, as nondualistic. That will get us started in the right direction.

THE CIRCLE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

A view from above

“We carry with us the wonders
we seek without us.”

Sir Thomas Browne,
Religio Medici (1642)

The *brain*, part of the central nervous system, is the primary center for the regulation and control of the human organism's activities: receiving and interpreting sensory impulses, and transmitting signals to the muscles and body organs which then respond. It is also the physical seat of the *mind*, where consciousness is created. Brain is stuff; mind is the collective conscious and unconscious processes that are a function of the brain. Erich Harth, in his book The Creative Loop (1993), says, “... physical processes ultimately must account for mental phenomena.” John R. Searle, The Mystery of Consciousness (1997), said, “It is just a plain fact about nature that brains cause consciousness.”

It appears, then, that this materialistic approach is correct.

A graphic description of all the forms of consciousness is shown in Diagram ONE on page 42. This is probably the best way to begin demystifying the forms of consciousness available to each of us.

The Circle of Consciousness is composed of three distinct aspects or forms that we'll now name *segments* of the circle in the diagram: *Sensory* (all our senses), *Conceptual* (concepts, our thinking) and that special, “different” segment, *Nondualistic*.

Note again that the first two are dualistic; they can only exist by means of contrast. And too, remember that contrast signifies a difference between two things. The third segment that you can learn to develop we'll call *nondualistic* because it's not based on contrast. I keep emphasizing this because it's the basis for understanding your consciousness.

Here, on the next page, is the graphic representation of our total consciousness:

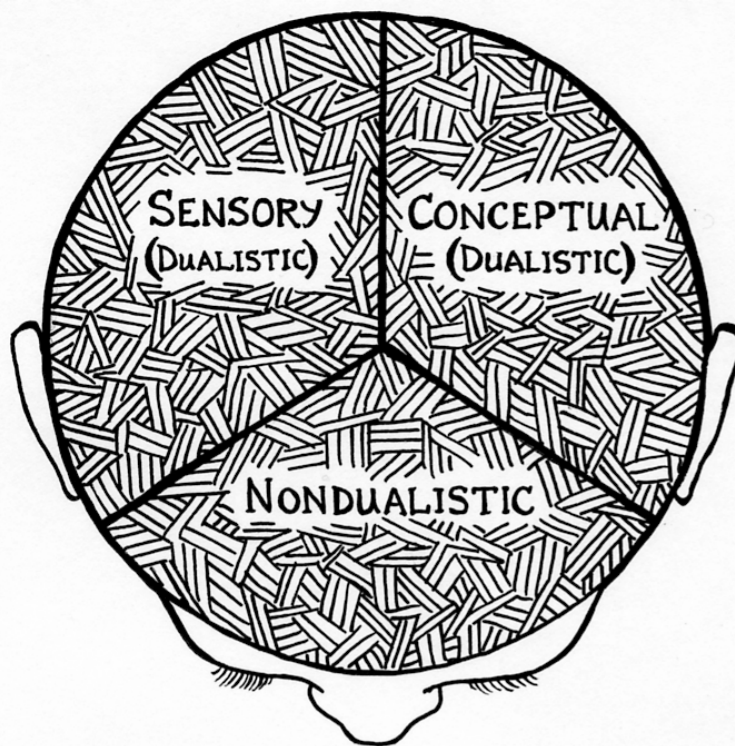


DIAGRAM ONE
THE CIRCLE OF CONSCIOUSNESS
THIS IS NOT A VIEW OF THE BRAIN

It is (or at least can be if we choose to learn how) our decision which single segment of our consciousness to use at any particular instant. Most of us haven't used the Nondualistic segment at all because we may never have been told about it and because most of us are literally addicted to the Conceptual segment and only necessarily but superficially connected to the Sensory segment.

Even though the diagram of the Circle of Consciousness shows the three segments in certain fixed positions, that position means nothing, nor does its area. They just had to be located somewhere for graphic purposes. There are no higher or lower levels or positions of consciousness, no segment that's better or worse, no one that's more or less important, none that's bigger or smaller. The three segments of consciousness are just those that already exist within our minds, always ready for us to use. All of them are inherent to having a human brain and mind, and all are equally vital, equally innate.

Imagine that you're shining the brilliant spotlight of your attention on your Circle of Consciousness. When you're awake, that is, conscious, you can either just accidentally or purposefully shine your spotlight on whatever single segment of the Circle of your Consciousness you choose. The next page shows the diagram:

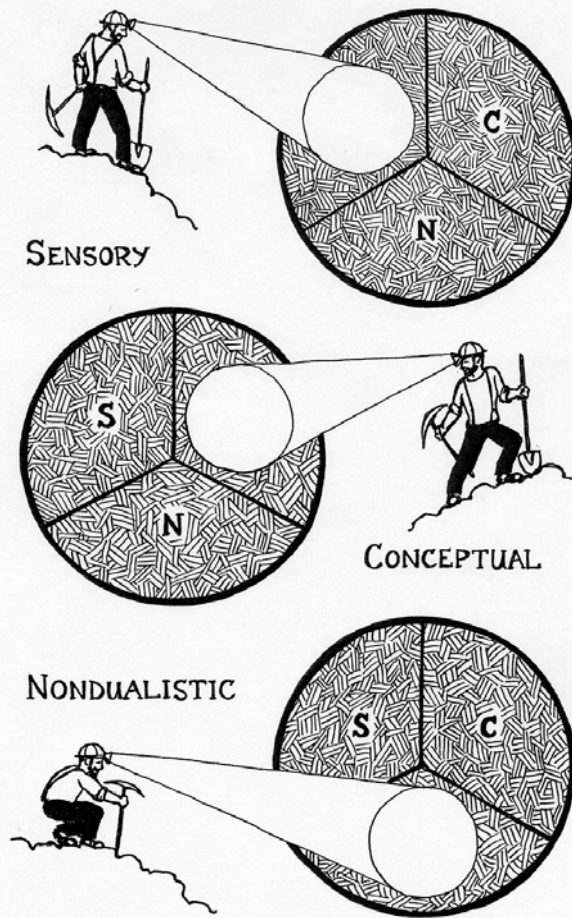


DIAGRAM TWO
THE SPOTLIGHT OF ATTENTION

We can maximize our involvement with any one segment of our consciousness by focusing our spotlight of attention entirely on that segment. With practice, we can become capable of doing this whenever we want to, and for as long a time as we want (unless a distraction occurs from outside). This practice will put the control of your consciousness under your own, personal command.

In everyday life, the beam of our spotlight usually shifts back and forth between any two adjacent segments of the circle, ordinarily between the Conceptual and the Sensory segments.

In Diagram THREE, the width of each of the beams illustrates roughly the amount of time that our spotlight of attention normally shines into each of the two segments. We spend more time thinking than we do sensing; fifteen minutes in Conceptual, say, compared to five minutes in Sensory.

An important thing to understand is that the beam of your total attention can't shine into any two segments at the same moment. You might think you can, but your spotlight of attention is actually jumping back and forth between the segments as shown by the arrows in Diagram THREE on the next page. We'll call this *Divided Attention* because the spotlight isn't continually steady in any one segment.

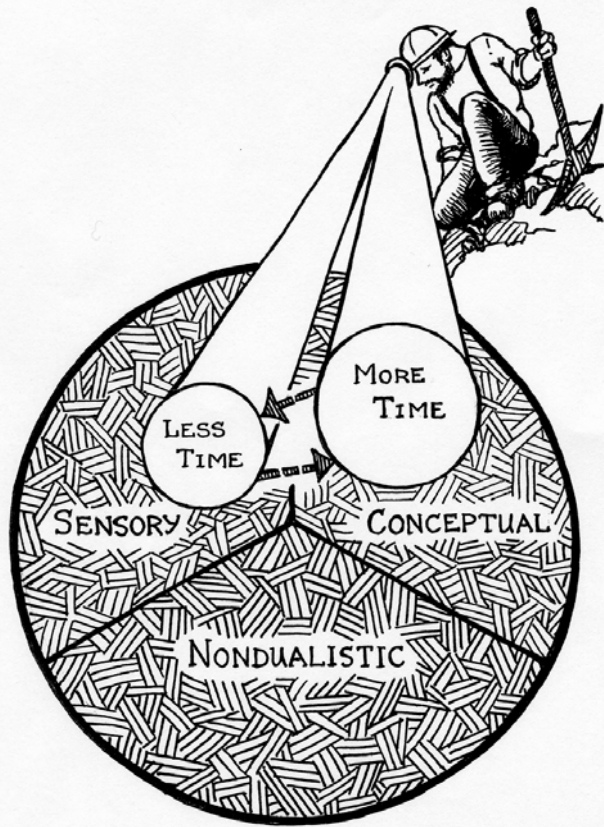


DIAGRAM THREE
PERCEPTION - DIVIDED ATTENTION

PERCEPTION

Our everyday consciousness

“It is the eye which makes the horizon.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson,
Experience, Essays (1844)

In order to better understand Diagram THREE it would help if it were a moving picture because we need to see the spotlight skipping back and forth between the two segments as shown by the arrows. Your spotlight beam flashing alternately onto the sensory and conceptual segments is called *perception*.

Perception is a sensory experience which our minds almost instantly convert into symbols; into concepts, thinking, into naming, describing, categorizing and into visualizing. Whatever we conceive is highly influenced by our past experience, our memories, our purpose and instincts, and even by our imagination. The resulting concepts and at least some of our sensory impressions become an additional part of our memory.

Perception is our ordinary, everyday mode of consciousness.

There are genetically imprinted (hard wired) neural pathways that are an integral part of perception, like automatically seeing a scene right side up although the image on the retina of our eyes is inverted, or seeing depth in the visual field although the image on the retina is essentially flat. (Discounting binocular parallax, overlapping, etc.)

Our senses are the faculties through which we receive impressions and stimuli from outside and inside

our bodies. They are our use of sight, hearing, touch (or feeling, as in pain), taste, smell, and the position of our bodies in space. These physical receptors receive the phenomena, or data, of the objective world.

Our concepts are ideas or thoughts formed in the mind and derived from numerous sources, all of which originally entered our minds via our senses. Concepts are both invented and learned by humans. It's all that happens in consciousness that's *not* either Sensory or Nondualistic. Concepts are composed of *symbols* that represent, or stand for, first, objects or events (objects in motion) in our environment and, later, for complicated combinations of them, called symbol systems, an example being our language. Visualization of images (another symbol system like thinking in language) is the pictorial representation of our objective world, one that can be drastically modified by imagination. Drawings and photographs are examples of how we nonverbally communicate our visual world.

A symbol is an abstraction representing a concrete object or event. Spoken and written language, sign language, mathematics, art, hieroglyphics, visualization and other symbol systems permit the forming of concepts, communication between individuals and the formation of a connection to larger groups, called society. Don't forget that symbols only represent the objective world and are, in themselves, completely arbitrary and possibly fraught with error. Even so, symbols existing only in the mind can become so important to some people that they are willing to die for them.

Our concepts are dependent not only on their origination through our senses, but are influenced by our

intelligence and our ability to learn and use language or other symbol systems. Of course, we also learn most of our concepts from other people's concepts, hopefully rejecting ones not supported by evidence or our own personal experience, and making creative syntheses of others. This is one of the things our education should do: teach critical thinking with a lot of help from firsthand sensory experience.

Intelligence is defined as the capacity to acquire and apply knowledge, to use thought and reason. The commonly used tests of intelligence are primarily for a person's conceptual ability.

It's by perception, our normal, ordinary, everyday employment of our consciousness, that we're able to function in the world. We make our decisions, use our will and judgment, and choose our behavior (other than perhaps that arising from our primitive instincts) from our perceptions.

We ordinarily sense only a small part of what we confront in the world. But, however much or little it is, it comes in through our sense receptors and combines with whatever we have stored away in our minds at that moment, completing our perception. We take action based on that perception or continue to passively think, sense and perceive. For example, we tend to instantaneously "see" a chair as a concept, something to sit in or not trip over, rather than as a pure visual experience. We've put it in a category. Then we either sit in the chair or pass it by.

Ordinary perception is the mind-state of Divided Attention because our spotlight wants to automatically

bounce back and forth between sensing and thinking. But we can stop this process by concentrating on one of them only: thinking, reading, looking, listening and so on.

You probably remember that when you were a student, you tried to study and listen to the radio at the same time. Now you may try to balance your checkbooks while watching TV. You probably think you're doing both at the same time, but if you carefully test it out by self-examination of your attention, you'll find that when you're listening to the radio you aren't comprehending the page and *vice versa*. The same goes for the checkbook and TV. This is because our spotlight of consciousness can shine on one segment of consciousness or another, but not on both at the same time (so called multitasking).

What actually happens when we think we're doing both at the same time is that our spotlight shifts rapidly between hearing and reading or adding and watching; neither getting our complete and constant attention. This is the meaning of Divided Attention. Only by concentrating on one single segment do we stop the alternation and get full use and information from it.

It's time to confess that I dearly love to read and eat at the same time, or at least to attempt it. But I do know that I'm not doing either one continually, without interruption. You'll probably remember those occasions when you had a fine dinner with great conversation, and afterwards could hardly remember what you had eaten or how it tasted. That's because most of your divided attention was on the talking and listening.

Have you ever read an entire paragraph or page of a dull book (how about a required textbook?) and suddenly come to the realization that you didn't have any

idea what you'd just read? The spotlight of your attention had wandered to something else: thoughts, sounds, a pleasant mental image, perhaps a worrisome memory.

No wonder people talking on the telephone while driving a car quadruple their odds of having an accident. Eating while driving is dangerous, too. Divided Attention! In heavy city traffic, I don't even want to hold a conversation with a passenger; too many hazards for having divided attention. Driving while just thinking of other things is possible because of having had considerable practice at driving. If we afterward find we weren't aware of the drive itself, we had what psychologists call rolling consciousness, or swift memory loss. It appears superficially that we were doing two things at once but it was just like eating and talking, which also may appear to be doing two things at once. But it's not. It's still divided attention.

My view is that the so-called subconscious is a dubious concept. We are either conscious or not! But we are actively conscious or passively conscious with blends between the two extremes. If well-practiced, we can let ourselves be passively conscious of driving while actively talking, perhaps too confident that the sudden appearance of brake lights in front of us will be a signal returning us to the active consciousness of driving and to stepping on the brakes. We tend to rapidly forget our passively conscious acts. This is the "rolling consciousness" syndrome.

Unfortunately, the concepts resulting from our intermittently spotlighted sensory experiences have a very good chance of being quite inadequate or just plain

wrong, for reasons we'll examine later in the Conceptual Consciousness section. Even so, according to our purpose at the moment, if we want our concepts to be as correct as humanly possible, we need to collect the most accurate information available to our senses or, failing that, from people who have used their own senses to construct concepts. The latter is our usual learning method. Ernst Mach recommended to William James that we study observables, using the simplest means, and excluding everything not perceived by the senses. This implies that we should spend much more time paying attention to what we sense. When we learn our concepts from other people, our most critical thinking is required as a filter in order not to just lap up dumb and wrong ideas.

Taking more time just sensing allows for much more intensified reception of the various sights, sounds or whatever's coming through to us. We can get astounding sensory information about the world by smelling, tasting or touching it. Shake the tree and listen. Feel it bend. The more sensory information you receive, the more correct your concepts can be about what you sensed, even given the natural physical limitations of our sensory apparatus (like not being able to see beyond infrared).

As an experiment, pay complete visual attention to an object close to you. Look at it long and hard. Stop thinking! Now close your eyes and feel the surface with your fingertips at various pressures and speeds. Stop thinking! Stop thinking about thinking! Let go! This is the way to have a full-blown sensory experience. Don't you now have a new and different impression of that object?

During my work as a control tower operator in the Air Force in Casablanca, I was required to hear several messages at the same time over various loudspeakers. Some were in French and others in English. At first I thought no one could possibly do what was needed to keep all those planes from crashing into each other.

But after seeing other people do it, I knew it could be done. I learned to do it myself.

What I had to do was put the spotlight of my attention quickly from a part of one message on one speaker to a part of another message on a different speaker. That was enough to get the “sense” of the communication in order to respond sequentially over my microphone to one message at a time or ask that it be repeated. This may sound like a case of a divided mind but it was actually a purposefully directed spotlight of attention.

Another example of intentionally directed attention is when flying an airplane. Learning to momentarily shift your attention from outside the aircraft to the flight instruments and back is imperative. Modern jet fighters have a “heads-up-display” so that the pilot’s most important instrument and weapons information is within a single line-of-sight and he doesn’t have to look far away from his view outside the cockpit, although he must still momentarily refocus his spotlight of visual attention.

Let’s not get the idea that the divided attention of perception isn’t a perfectly normal and wonderful way of using our consciousness to get along in the world. We all function because of our perceptions. But now you’re going to learn how to get off your automatic, everyday

habits and, when you choose to do so, put your consciousness under your very own control.

DUALISM

What contrast means to us

“Bad is never good until worse happens.”

Danish Proverb

You’ve already read an explanation of the meaning of dualism and contrast, a few pages back. All our senses function because of dualism. They require contrast to function. Take vision, for example. In order to see a figure in the visual field, it must contrast in some way with the value, hue, intensity or texture at its edge. In the real world, not a two dimensional illustration, that contrast is with those visual elements in the background behind it. That’s called figure/ground contrast. For sight to occur at all there must be contrast of some kind.

An almost incredible disappearing act happens when you put on a pair of goggles that produce an homogeneous vision of, say, a uniform red, with no other contrasting elements in the visual field. Homogeneous means uniform in structure or composition. The red simply disappears because there’s no contrast with anything else in your visual field. No contrast, no red. Remember this phenomenon when we get to the Developing Nondualistic Consciousness chapter.

For our hearing, there can be no noise without contrasting silence, or no note of a certain frequency without a contrasting note of another frequency. Contrast makes hearing possible.

Consider your sense of smell. Do you remember ever having entered a room that had a strong and

distinct smell? Can you also remember that after you'd been in the room for awhile, you no longer smelled the odor? We're assuming it was a simple odor, not in complex competition for superiority with other contrasting odors. What happened was that the odor disappeared because of lack of contrast with any other odor. No contrast, no odor. The smell disappears just like the red did when we put on the goggles.

In his book Jailbird, Kurt Vonnegut says that: "Noses are merciful that way. They will report that something smells awful. If the owner of a nose stays around anyway, the nose concludes that the smell isn't so bad after all. It shuts itself off, deferring to superior wisdom. Thus it is possible to eat Limburger cheese..."

In The Emperor of Scent by Chandler Burr we read, "In vision, there's something called 'sensory overload': get a sudden burst of car headlights in your eyes at night and you're blinded for a moment. We always think of sensory burnout in visual terms. We take it for granted. But smell burns out just like vision: Smell a marigold (marigolds have a hugely strong odor). Inhale the smell deeply. Now wait a second. Now try to smell it again. You can't. It's gone. You've burned out on it. You can smell anything else, but not marigold. You're 'blinded'. Walk into a bakery, and the smell of baking bread is overwhelming. Hang out a bit, and suddenly you realize you can't smell it even if you try. And you can't smell your own house. The sense of touch doesn't desensitize. (The reason, evolutionarily, seems pretty obvious: it mustn't – we have to get away from the thorns or fire.) But the sense of hearing does; try listening to your wristwatch after leaving a nightclub."

Our thinking as well as our senses work on the basis of contrast. There's no **up** without a contrasting **down**, no **good** without a **bad**, no **right** without **wrong**, no **hot** without **cold**, no **beginning** without the antipodal **end**. Unlike our senses, language is made up of symbols. A noun is the symbol for some object we've seen, heard, touched, smelled or tasted or even heard about, like atoms or electrons or unicorns. The word tree is a symbol representing a real tree that we can receive through our senses. The word tree can only exist in contrast to a word for something that is *not* a tree. A word is an abstraction, no matter whether it's a noun, a verb or any of the other parts of language. We use these abstract word-symbols to form the concepts we use for thinking and communicating.

Language is the symbolic echo of our direct sensory experience.

Further, the information we obtain from reading and hearing speech is received only through our senses. Helen Keller couldn't see or hear from the age of nineteen months. She had the ability to smell, taste, feel, know the position of her body in space. She had the ability to think but no symbols to think *with*. Not until her teacher found a way to communicate with her did she have the input to permit her to formulate symbols and concepts. Later she explained the experience of that early period as being conscious, yet with a consciousness of nothingness. This illustrates how we learn concepts about our sensory world. We learn to use the descriptive symbol RED for a visual impression of a certain wavelength of light.

So, we're able not only to sense because of contrast; we're able to form language concepts because

of contrast. Contrast is also the basis of computer function: on and off, zero and one.

Understanding dualism can be improved by thinking of a straight stick that has two ends: opposite ends. If there are ends, there must be a middle. And, of course, without a middle there are no ends. All these parts of the stick need to be there for it to exist, although to exist they don't have to be given a name. The interdependence of the ends of the stick are like the interdependence of opposite words: beauty/ugliness, difficult/easy, long/short, high/low, before/after, with a middle like "during" between each pair of ends. Even the middle of the "stick" called life must have both ends: birth and death.

We always have the option of testing our senses for tricks and illusions. I urge you to actually do that testing. There are numerous ways to test. For example, asking several other people if they saw or heard something similar to what you did. It can't be exactly the same thing because that can never happen since you are two or more different people. The process is called verifying and validating your sensory input. It's to your benefit to exercise this option.

SENSORY CONSCIOUSNESS

Discovering reality

“What can give us surer knowledge than our senses? With what else can we better distinguish the true from the false?”

Lucretius, On the Nature of Things
(1st C.B.C.)

OK, so our senses are the routes through which we take in the world. They're our only means of obtaining information about anything at all. Remember Helen Keller's situation. Even directly unobservable entities like electrons and magnetic fields are made knowable by their effects on entities that *are* observable to our senses, like the pattern of iron filings on paper induced by a magnet.

In perception, with our spotlight flicking between our senses and our concepts, we've seen that we usually give only a small amount of attention to our senses, like the use of your eyes to read this. We think most of the time. It's what you're doing now. But we also memorize our ever so limited sensory images, sounds, smells and so on, in the same way we might memorize a concept.

This is important: *we can voluntarily have a total sensory experience without letting our thinking interfere.* You can switch from automatic to manual. This means that the doer (you) and the done (watching the ocean at the shore) are not interrupted by your thoughts and that you and what you sense can become subjectively unified. Your mind will no longer be divided and won't

jump around like it does in ordinary perception. You'll be able to do this when you focus your spotlight of attention solely on what you are sensing. You've most likely already done it accidentally: times when your thoughts took a vacation and you and the scene became one. Can you recall this thrilling experience?

Or how about a situation like this? You're at a concert. Nearby someone coughs loudly and you find yourself distracted from the music. You think "Quiet!" and then find that during the interruption and our response to it, you had stopped listening to the music. The spotlight of your consciousness was temporarily turned away. Eventually it refocused on the music. Once again your thoughts stopped. You and the music were unified again.

It's not possible to think our way back to completely hearing the music because thinking stands in the way of hearing, or in the way of fully experiencing any of our other senses. If the centipede thought about which leg to move next, he'd fall into the ditch. We must learn to *let go* of thought — a letting go that we can actually practice and become good at. Letting go means *allowing* something to happen rather than *making* it do so stop trying. Trying leads to thinking. Trying *is* thinking.

When a baseball coach tells the trainee to concentrate on the ball when he's batting, what he means, (though he may not know it), is for the batter to stop thinking, to focus on the ball with his senses only. It requires an extreme amount of practice in the athlete's sport to produce the coordination and equilibrium necessary for natural, unconstrained, unstudied and non-thinking action. But this is what's required of the player who wants to be good at batting. Then, at the

plate, with full sensory alertness and no thought interfering, he can hit the ball successfully. The batter “becomes one” with the ball. Anyway, he has only about 15 one-hundredths of a second to decide whether to swing at the ball after it’s pitched – not a lot of time for thinking.

Another example is the archer who becomes one with his target and looses the arrow when the target is ready. If he thinks, “NOW”, he’s not going to hit the bulls eye.

Coaches may not use these same words but they know that both lots of practice and turning off thinking are necessary to act. Full sensory attention is equally important in any sport. Thinking must only go on before and after the moment of extreme effort, not during it.

It’s important to know, however, that our senses can’t give us absolutely perfect error-free reception. One of the reasons why is that our receptors are such coarse and limited receiving instruments. Human hearing receives only about 20 to 20,000 cycles per second, compared to a wider range for dogs, for example. As for our vision, it’s limited to a band between the infrared and ultraviolet wavelengths, with other animals being able to see a different range.

Even though we form a concept representing something “out there”, brought to us by our perfectly working senses, a contradiction in the perception of objects appears in that there are *really* no abrupt edges to matter in the universe. What our unaided eyes see as solids and spaces are really gradually merging entities. Outsides and insides are merely an illusion contributed

by our limited, unaugmented senses. An illusion is an erroneous concept about reality. There are many, many sensory illusions, a famous one that of seeing a nonexistent oasis in the desert. It's derived from a limited or imagined sensory source or an hallucination, a false or distorted perception of objects or events accompanied by a compelling sense of their reality. When lying below at rest while sailing the ocean, I could hear a choir singing very beautiful music – music that was actually the sound of the water passing the hull. An illusion can also be learned and perhaps produce a belief. Both our concepts and senses can contain myriad illusions that can throw us off our reality footing. But, in the end, what we sense is what we sense: it's the best we can do without somehow verifying it.

We perceive objects as solid and having edges because they have molecules dense enough for our eyes to distinguish them from the widely scattered molecules of air or from the different molecules of another material. This is contrast.

Everything flows into its surroundings. The object and its environment are actually one. Approach a fire to test this out. Quantum theory tells us that nothing can be precisely measured because of the lack of those distinct boundaries. Even the act of measuring interferes with what we're trying to measure. The little particles are reacting to the measuring instruments, running around and merging, repelling and colliding. They're impossible to stop or catch. We can measure their position or momentum but never both at the same time. There's never any stopping; everything is always in motion, always changing, always was and always will be. Time is

merely our recognition of the sequence of these changes.

Our naturally-limited sensory receptors are also very underemployed by us. We grab whatever has the most contrast, what's in motion or what feels good. It takes *intention* to pay attention to lower-intensity stimuli, to "listen to the grass grow." But we can learn to use our senses much more often and much more intensively.

We have what are called thresholds on the doors of our sensory input that lower or rise to protect us from phenomena that could produce a psychological or physical overload. All the gateways to our brains have these thresholds, below which we ordinarily don't receive sensations. Another helpful image is to think of thresholds as iris (not the flower!) diaphragms that open and close like the iris in your eye or behind a camera lens, bigger diameter to permit more light to enter and smaller for less light.

When one sensory receptor doesn't work (vision, for example), the the remaining senses automatically have their thresholds lowered (or irises opened) to permit more information to pass from them into the brain. This tells us that our sensory thresholds are adjustable. If they're automatically adjustable, it's worthwhile to find out if they can be intentionally adjusted and, if so, how we can learn to do it.

Sometimes a person's normal automatic sensory threshold protections don't work properly. This can be caused by various things such as the chemical imbalance that may lie behind schizophrenia or the use of psychedelic drugs (which are renowned for lowering the thresholds of our senses). One of the symptoms of

schizophrenia is a massive lowering of all the sensory thresholds to a point where the victim is unable to bear what, to him, is a terrible overload of stimuli. The ticking of a clock can become horrible. Confused concepts and wildly warped reasoning are often derived from these overwhelming sensations.

Perhaps this is why Vincent van Gogh was able to paint his visual world with such intensity and the reason he cut off his earlobe and, not long after, killed himself.

Because our senses are the only way for us to receive the phenomena in and around us, we now have instruments like the electron microscope that can hugely magnify the teeniest objects so that we can see them. Radio telescopes can receive electromagnetic waves way beyond our natural physical limitations and translate them into the reach of our human sensory range. These machines are only a couple of the many instruments that technology has given us to augment our senses.

What comes to us through our senses, however sharpened or dulled, magnified or blurry, intentional or not, warped or not, is our **reality**.

As we mentioned in the proceeding chapter, reality is the data about the objective world that enters our awareness through our sensory receptors. It's *raw*, unnamed, undescribed and uncategorized. Each person necessarily has a different take on it from her or his unique space/time location, and will therefore have her own distinct perception of that reality. Reality isn't a dream, a vision or a thought although, sadly, some people think it is. *Reality is what we see, hear, taste, touch and smell, without adding in our concepts.* This explanation of reality is very, very important for us to understand and remember. Don't confuse what

we “know” with what we sense.

Only our senses provide the route to learning about the reality of our environment and ourselves. The environment is all that surrounds a person including other persons and all other matter and energy that influences or modifies the development of that individual. You are part of our environment. You and your environment are inseparable.

To reiterate, each one of us senses our unique, individual, personal, one-of-a-kind reality. It belongs only to you; no one else can experience exactly the same thing that you do. Because each person's receptors are at their own unique time-space location, each person's senses take in a different “scene”. In any single instant of place and time you can't see what my eyes see and I can't see what yours do. And, too, each person has his personal physical sensory limitations and his unique filters (sunglasses?) or augmenters (eyeglasses?) in place.

It's easy, then, to understand why our impressions of reality and our eventual representation of it are different from those of any one else; they must be different. Consequently, each of us will not have a complete, accurate impression of the entirety of reality; we'll only have our personal “view”, or perspective of it. Following that, we each form our own unique conceptual structure about it, that structure modified by our past experiences and other characteristics.

There is only one Reality!

We might think there are other realities because we get so many decidedly different descriptions (concepts or representations) of the one reality from

other people. Many of us are suffering under the illusion that there's more than one reality. It's no wonder we're confused: it's not possible for any two people to describe the one reality in exactly the same way. That's a reason some of us tend to think (or imagine) that there must be multiple realities. There is only one reality.

Be assured that there *is* a way for us to obtain as much information as is humanly possible about our individual sensory reality. We can turn off our thoughts and sense reality fully. Our ordinary perceptual mode of consciousness can be transcended by learning to use our senses without immediately making what they give us into concepts. This is the best way, actually the *only* way, to thoroughly receive reality. Imagine that you hear the sound made by the oboe at a concert — but you don't identify or otherwise describe the instrument in your mind as an oboe, or anything else. No thinking. That's Reality.

Here's an experiment: put on a disk of classical music and just listen to the concert the first time through. When thinking interferes, gently bring your attention back to the sounds. There's plenty of time in the future for conceptual categorizing and critical analysis, if that's important to you. But, without a complete sensory experience beforehand, the categorizing and analysis will be less than comprehensive because you haven't thoroughly heard the music. Or try this: close your eyes and feel with one finger the fabric of your shirt. Don't think things like smooth or rough and so on. Focus on the sensation only — just feel. As an aside, wouldn't it be nice to be able to close our ears like we close our eyes?

So, thinking can be, and must be, silenced for us to have a full-blown sensory experience, that is, for us to have full and complete awareness of any of our senses like tasting wine or feeling fabric or smelling burned toast. In everyday consciousness (perception) our senses receive only enough information to classify and categorize that thing conceptually and then do something about it: smell (sense) burned toast (concept), go to the kitchen (action). We can learn, at will (but only after practice), to occasionally halt this automatic sequence of perception that we know now is our usual state of consciousness.

Consider this. At the moment you're thinking or saying, "I love you," you're not completely feeling the emotion of love. You're doing some thinking or some verbal communicating, which interrupts your full-tilt emotions (the powerful responses triggered by your sensory experience). There's nothing wrong with that, but your spotlight of attention does not have to jiggle around between thinking and feeling. You can learn to have, any time you wish, a total, continuing sensory experience. Feeling an emotion can be called a sensory experience, emotion being a *response* to our perceptual situation.

The whole idea is that we can be other than perceivers, with perception's mixture of concepts and sensing. We can just be sensors, only. You and whatever you're sensing can unify, without runaway concepts galloping through your consciousness. Your dualistic sensory consciousness can be the sole focus of your spotlight of attention. It follows that in order to perfect our conceptual knowledge, to find what is closest to the truth, we and the reality that we sense must be

intensely united without interruption, for at least some length of time. The intelligent agent (you) and the thing you want to later conceptually understand (sensory reality) must be intimately experienced.

Our purpose now becomes one of being able to have a fully developed sensory experience, in which our concepts are turned off. The result is a state of awareness, the focus of our spotlight of attention, wherein the scene and the viewer, the sound and the listener (and so on with our other senses) become subjectively one, undivided. A regular practice of concentrating on your sensing is worth your time if you want to know what's real. Besides, it's an interesting game, lots of fun and very informative.

When we have a totally sensory experience of reality, it occurs without our being aware that time is passing. Time, a sequence of events, is a concept that we can only have while thinking.

You'll find more about sensory attention later in the Developing Nondualistic Consciousness chapter. After adequate practice, you'll find yourself feeling that you're merging with the visual object or the auditory sound or the tactile surface. You'll get a wonderful reality fix. Then, afterwards, you can do your thinking about it.

The eventual memories of our full-blown sensory experiences are our signposts to sanity and the guide through our concepts.

“The intellectual life of man consists almost wholly in his substituting a conceptual order for the perceptual order in which his experience originally comes.”

William James

Some Problems in Philosophy 1911

CONCEPTUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Our search for truth

“Thinking is the endeavor to
capture reality by means of ideas.”

José Ortega y Gasset,
The Dehumanization of Art (1925)

The segment of the Circle of Consciousness called *Conceptual* indicates where our thinking happens. It's everything that goes on in our awareness except Sensing and Nondualism. We use this superlative segment to its maximum, often blocking out our other segments entirely. Nothing wrong with that; it's a good thing, like having a full-blown uninterrupted sensory experience is a good thing. Creating, learning and using symbols and complex concepts that most closely represent reality comprises conceptual thinking. This is the special thing humans do better than any other organism. But we're so good at it that we've become very badly addicted to this segment of consciousness. Concepts, like our senses, function because of their inherent contrast.

What we should seek in all our concepts about reality is truth. The search for truth is one of our most vital motivations.

But what then, is truth?

Truth is a person's most accurate description of reality.

It's the mental representation of sensory input. Truth can never be absolutely accurate because each of

us has a different viewpoint (time/space locus) and impression (because of our unique individual past experience) of reality, which entered into our minds through our senses. Our mental construct of reality will be couched in any of our many symbol systems: language, mathematics and others. Bear in mind, too, that finding the most accurate truth requires us to test and validate (or invalidate) our sensory evidence.

To explain the “most accurate” more fully, these words are used because, no matter how much we’d like to, it’s impossible to be completely accurate. Beyond their natural physiological limitations, our senses are giving us, at any single moment, only one of the many possible snapshots of the one reality. And you’re just one of many other sensing humans. While you’re looking at the front of the barn and truthfully describing it, someone else is looking at the back side and truthfully describing that. Your two sensory “views” of the barn will be markedly different and, of course, so will your descriptions. Recall, too, that our senses are psychologically modified as well as having physiological limitations. The philosopher David Hume wrote, “Nothing can be verified as absolute truth because all human ideas and impressions are subjective.” You can bring your personal truths together with a lot of other people’s necessarily-different personal truths (all supposedly describing the same sensory reality) and come up with a statistical truth, called a consensus.

To review then, the way our consciousness works is that starting from a sensory experience of reality, we form our most accurate idea about that experience in one of our symbol systems: language, mathematics, art or whatever we can come up with. Thus do we seek

truth. In language, word symbols stand for reality and, when they're joined by invented action words (verbs), they become concepts. This permits us to think and/or communicate among one another about what we've experienced. Some of us have the genetic ability to use concepts better than others. But education and practice will improve anyone's success, sort of like bodybuilding will pump up the muscles.

Concepts themselves may *seem* to have some degree of reality, because thinking takes place over time, as do all our other experiences. But they don't. Like concepts, mental images also take up time in our consciousness, giving us an even stronger illusion of being real. I don't want to give anyone the idea that there's anything intrinsically wrong or bad about thinking or seeing mental images. These things are totally wonderful, but not what is defined as *real*.

Conceiving is what you're doing right this minute. When you shine your spotlight of attention on some idea, you can lose your sense of self (being aware of being aware) and become one with your thoughts.

We can build the concepts that are taught to us, in school and elsewhere, into elaborate calculations, into exquisite poems and profound systems of philosophy, without ever having experienced the reality that gave birth to those concepts. For example, we could write a story about the American Revolution without having been there. In doing so, we're just manipulating the symbols, sort of like doing a juggling act with them. That's certainly fine as long as we understand the nature of symbols and concepts.

Of course we do very often play with symbols while never having even partially experienced the reality

that underlies them. But in doing so we may tend to lose our ability to distinguish those symbols from reality. Once again, many of our insecurities and non-biologically induced mental illnesses have their beginnings right there in our inability to distinguish symbol from reality. And, as our society becomes more and more engrossed and addicted to the symbols brought to us now by movies, television and computer screens, the more we'll become confused and unbalanced. Remember that sensory input is real; and thinking is *not* real.

So, it's imperative that we rediscover how to recognize what's really real — and what's not! For our minds, “garbage in” means “garbage out”, just like it does in a computer. How can you guard against that happening to you?

There is a way. First, of course, we must sense reality as fully as we can. Then, when we get to the point of describing our reality as accurately as we can in language or mathematics, we transpose our sensory data into words and equations of exacting definition and employ sound reasoning, logic and critical thinking to form and verify and use our resulting concepts. That is, if we want to be most accurate.

Reasoning is the process of directing our thinking. We may reason with the specific goal of trying to find a solution to a problem or with a more general wish to deal with fallacies and inconsistencies in thought, our own or someone else's.

Logic is the systematic study that provides standards by which valid thought processes can be recognized. It clarifies the reasoning process and provides a means for analyzing the consistency and

rationality of basic concepts. Logic is a part of the art of critical thinking.

These processes are essential to the system that science uses. It's called **Scientific Method**, which are the principles of investigation, experimentation, and discovery necessary for science. These principles generally involve observing, conceptual analysis and hypothesizing to draw conclusions from those observations, and testing those conclusions by repetition of experimental results to establish their truth or falseness. Science also names, describes, and categorizes things and happenings in the environment. Wonder and curiosity, coupled with critical thinking and the ability to accept change are some of the attitudes of Scientific Method. It's the route to *most* truthfully describing reality, even though it may contain errors. It's our surest path to factual knowledge. By using this method of thinking we can begin to clear away the various wrong and rigid concepts that we have been conditioned to accept by our parents, preachers, teachers, our culture in general; our authorities. Hermann Helmholtz asked, "How do our ideas correspond to reality? What in our sense of perception and thought is true?"

There's another method of thinking used by many, many people, called **Will to Believe**.

It's a way of thinking that doesn't incorporate logic, reason or Scientific Method and which is not based on the existence of any evidence. It implies a static, rather than the dynamic universe that we know we inhabit, and results in concepts that can easily be incorrect.

A **belief** is an idea accepted as true by an individual or a group, which may have little or no basis in scientific or historical information presented as objectively real. It's synonymous with one connotation of Faith. Sam Harris had this to say in his book, The End of Faith, "We have been slow to recognize the degree to which religious faith perpetuates man's inhumanity to man. This is not surprising, since many of us still believe that faith is an essential component of human life."

It is very difficult for the Will to Believe to produce truth, and then probably only accidentally. Myriad fallacies result from using Will to Believe thinking. Rigid, static, change-resistant and absolute, it's the antithesis of Scientific Method. The foundation of Will to Believe is based on highly questionable concepts that have been taught to us rather than received by direct experience or through the use of Scientific Method. A person's beliefs are usually centered on unexamined ideas that have little historical merit. Unfortunately, skepticism and the art of critical thinking are both fairly rare in our culture. It's too easy to be lazy and comfortable in our thinking, adopting the thinking of others without question, being conditioned and propagandized. Some individuals, even some scientists who are skeptics by training, compartmentalize their thinking, using Scientific Method in one area and Will to Believe in another.

Truth is hard to come by; it requires effort and commitment. And truth is ever-changing as more and different data are received.

Our universe is a dynamic affair, like the movement of our planet around the sun. It's always-moving, ever-changing with no beginning and no end.

Perpetual *becoming* is the nature of the cosmos, our universe and beyond. That being so, can the stasis implied by the use of the Will to Believe lead to truth? Concepts about our universe (or anything else, for that matter) *must* be approached by Scientific Method, the fundamental way of thinking to discover truth and that permits change. Belief is little more than a fervent hope — a cover-up for doubt and uncertainty. People feel comfortable with their beliefs, less naggingly insecure about where they came from, what they should do now, and where they're going, the basic questions. But the price they pay is the chance that they may exhibit inappropriate and inharmonious behavior. Sadly, their minds are closed to any new or different vision of the world. Rigid belief can cause stagnation of human progress.

Belief can give birth to prejudice, a prejudgment without benefit of having examined the evidence; an opinion formed before any knowledge of the facts has been acquired. Prejudices are usually formed in childhood by surrounding cultural influences, then rigidly held for life. A baseless negative attitude toward a racial, ethnic, sexual or religious group is called a prejudice. It's a tenacious monster whose grip on our minds gives rise to the most horrible aspects of human behavior. A person's prejudice is sustained by his rigid beliefs.

I have a woman friend who encountered a man who became her friend, then her lover and finally her live-together. Marriage and children were in their future. But he suddenly left, never to return. Why? Because he discovered that she had Jewish ancestry! This example portrays the horrors of prejudice.

I've tried to discard the words "belief," "believe" and the like as much as possible from my own vocabulary. I don't "believe" that the sun will rise tomorrow morning. It's an illusion anyway, because what really happens is that the earth revolves to a position where we start to see the sun revealed. The illusion of a flat earth is of the same order. There's no way for me to know absolutely what the future will bring. But I can predict that the sun will "rise" because in my past experience it has always risen and because the evidence of science (the laws of celestial mechanics) and written history also says it has. Another reason I've thrown out the word is that there are so many other definitions of "believe" that confusion can easily occur when using it. Try this: "I believe I'll go to the store", or "I believe that's correct", rather than, "I think that's correct". Believe is just a sloppy word.

Thomas Jefferson said, "... I was in bold pursuit of knowledge, never fearing to follow truth and reason to whatever results they led and bearding every authority which stood in their way."

This statement shows human intelligence applied with the courage of a free and open mind that displays the opposite of Will to Believe.

NONDUALISTIC CONSCIOUSNESS

The ultimate reality

“Whatever diverts the mind
from itself may help.”

Bernard Malamud,
Dubin's Lives (1979)

Now that you know what the dualistic Sensory and Conceptual segments of the Circle of Consciousness are, it's on to the third segment, the heretofore largely unknown or mysterious and “different” type: the Nondualistic Experience, where no contrast exists. But an absence of contrast in our consciousness doesn't imply that nothing is going on. In the mental state of nondualistic consciousness, there is most certainly something, a very great something going on.

We've learned that no single segment of consciousness is at any higher or lower level, better or worse, than any other. But the Nondualistic segment does take on a special prominence because we've been so thoroughly deprived of it. It's not that there has been any conspiracy to keep it secret. Many people have made many attempts over many years to reveal it. But so far it hasn't been recognized as simply being a state of consciousness that contains no contrast. And, except for a few masterful exceptions, whatever explanations there have been about it are not very accurate or clear. Even then, word about it hasn't gotten around to most of us.

That's probably because there isn't much (or nothing) that can be communicated about what happens

while actually experiencing this segment of consciousness. It's only possible to talk about it *afterward*, and then only talk *around* it, not *of* it. That's because language, our primary means of thinking and communicating about anything, is a system based on duality, and duality can't directly express the nature of nonduality. A system based on contrast can't express no contrast, except in the negative. Recounting the nondualistic experience is about as easy to get across as telling what it's like to be hit by a truck: "It hurt." We describe the results. The nondualistic experience is totally unique in that, unlike our ordinary perceptions, no past experience is brought to bear on it. It's completely clear of preconceptions and conditioning. It is not mediated.

So it's only in the explanations after the experience, when remembering and thinking about it in the terms of a specific language and cultural context, that words and phrases like "undifferentiated unity", "pure consciousness", "oneness", and the like are used. But in any context, it has always been described as being an experience of peace, of joy and of bliss, and containing lessons about how to live in harmony with our selves and our environment.

People from all over the world, from the beginning of history, and regardless of their culture or language, have each described the essence of their experience of nonduality in a roundabout manner, always after-the-fact. They do it by using many different names, parables, similes, analogies, allegories and metaphors. But they all say the experience does not contain any sensation at all, nor does it contain any concepts, thoughts or images.

In the Upanishads, written in India some 2200 to 2600 years ago, we read that nondualistic consciousness is, "Beyond the senses, beyond the understanding, beyond all expression...It is pure unitary consciousness, wherein awareness of the world and multiplicity is completely obliterated. It is ineffable peace."

Total nondualistic consciousness is the only experience in life that is uniquely and absolutely the same for each individual person who has it!

Regardless of our background, unity is the same for each of us, simply because it is one, not two or more, and oneness is both absolute and unique. There is only one "one" and it's always the same thing. The nondualistic experience is the only one of life's many experiences that is not mediated by one's past experiences. And personally having this nondualistic experience is the only way for you to fully know what happens in it. Then, and only then, can you comprehend what the same experience has been for someone else. In it, a person's awareness is still there but it contains no contrast as do our senses and concepts. You're neither asleep nor unconscious. The astounding results of having this experience are purely, simply and totally yours.

Nondualistic consciousness is truly and actually the mental experience of undivided oneness, the singular unitary wholeness of yourself and everything, where no differences appear. It is not the reality we ordinarily perceive, that we sense and conceive as separated and contrasting parts. Nondualism is the

“ultimate reality”, which is simply a phrase to describe the profound content of the that experience.

To put it in the necessary negative terms again, the one has no multiplicity. It is wholly undifferentiated. It is not two or more. There is no contrast, no dualism.

Ultimate reality is a flowing of single moments of the present, of the “now-moment”. The now-moment is all we ever have in any of our conscious states: a passing point in our ceaseless continuing experience of change. Leonardo Da Vinci had this to say about it: “The water you touch in the rivers is the last of the waters that have passed and the first of those that are to come. So it is with the present moment.”

Like our sense of “time”, the now-moment is highly abstract because it can never be captured; never made to stand still, not even with the highest-speed photography. Living in the now-moment implies not being engulfed in remembering the past, or in planning, predicting and fantasizing the future. In order to experience the now-moment in sensory and conceptual consciousness, we must pay close and immediate attention to whatever we’re doing, including all our daily tasks and habits.

There’s a Zen story that will illustrate the point: A man was running across a field being chased by a man-eating tiger. He came to a cliff drop-off where he climbed over the edge to escape the tiger. He climbed down by holding onto roots sticking out from the earth and rock. Part of the way down he looked below and saw another man-eating tiger waiting there for him. He stopped descending and held onto a root with both hands. Looking about, he saw a wild strawberry plant near him that bore a single luscious strawberry. Letting go of the

root with one hand, he plucked the berry and put it in his mouth, savoring the taste.

Afterward he thought, "Ah, how good that was."

Nondualistic consciousness also contains no concept of time because it contains no concepts, and time is a concept. In this respect only is it like the full-blown sensory experience. Even full-blown conceptual consciousness contains no impression of time unless we focus our spotlight on it.

Nondualistic consciousness is our inborn source of compassion. When we discover that all is one, a love and compassion for all things naturally blooms within us. This, in the end, is the only source of true moral activity. Your personal experience is the innate source from which our values, our desired principles for living, ultimately originate. All selfishness, cruelty and evil (the manifestation of inharmonious behavior) results from the conceptual separateness of one human being from another, and of ourselves from our total environment.

When you eventually experience nondualistic consciousness, you will realize that you, your fellow humans, and all things are one. Therefore their suffering is your suffering and their happiness is your happiness. The experience of nondualism is one of the most powerful and magnificent experiences of which a human is capable. It's our route to independence and self-confidence, to a feeling of wholeness and equanimity.

Some people have reported having a deep feeling of oneness with their surroundings, usually when alone and in the natural, not man-made, countryside. Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) wrote that in this experience, "All blades of grass, wood, and stone, all things are One. .

.When is a man in mere understanding? When he sees one thing separated from another. And when is he above mere understanding? When he sees all in all, then a man stands above mere understanding.”

This indicates that his spotlight of attention had jiggled between the Nondualistic and the Sensory segments of consciousness. There’s a fair chance that many of us have experienced this overwhelming satisfaction of being thus connected with our sensory environment. This particular experience, regardless of its profundity, is but the dawn of nondualistic consciousness, but not the perfect day. But here, too, we experience the absence of “self” or “I” (and time), that exists only in the Conceptual segment. Further, our “being aware of being aware” is only available to us conceptually, and disappears when thinking stops.

There is talk about scientists having the ability to make a computer that thinks like a human or even being able to transfer the contents of a human mind into a computer or robot. That’s pretty scary to me because of the question about the kind of mind that would be transferred to these machines, even if they could do it, which I doubt they can. Would it be one filled with greed, hunger for power and fraught with insecurity because of the dualistic, on/off contrasting nature of computers? Or would it be one that has undergone the practice of Liberation to bring about nondualistic consciousness where no contrast exists? Not much chance of that! Even if successful (and, along with John R. Searle, Professor of Philosophy and author, I don’t think it will be) those scientists are going to be disappointed with their limited creations that only sense and think.

Liberation is the process of setting free, as from the oppression and confinement of our dualistic beliefs and illusions. It entails the regular, continuing practice of leaving behind our daily burdens of guilt and anxiety, confusion and indecision, insecurity and self-disapproval. It points toward compassion for and harmony with our environment, and peace within ourselves: the route to enlightenment.

Enlightenment is a person's mental state after having often experienced full-blown nondualistic consciousness, revealing his oneness with the universe. It's an enduring relief from the restrictions of dualism.

Bernadette Roberts, in her book The Experience of No-Self, refers to the single experience of nondualistic consciousness as an "insight". She goes on to say, "I learned that a single insight is not sufficient to bring about any real change. In time, every insight has a way of filtering down to our usual frame of reference, and once we make it fit, it gets lost in the milieu of the mind — the mind, which has a tendency to pollute every insight. The secret of allowing an insight to become a permanent way of knowing and seeing is not to dogmatize it, or even think about it. Insights come and go, but to have them stay we have to flow with them, otherwise no change is possible."

This is my wishful thinking: if everyone were to achieve authentic, nondualistic enlightenment, there could be a fellowship of all humankind, without quarrels or fights, but without abandoning our wonderful differences and opinions. We could all come together in unity, together in the thoughtful study or contemplation of our oneness, giving rise to the loving kindness that is

COMPASSION. Bernadette Roberts says it well, “But it’s exciting to think we can make it at all, and even more exciting to think of what would happen if every man could live as he was originally intended to live.”

Nondualistic consciousness, bringing you firsthand knowledge of your oneness with everything, is something you can experience, if you have the willpower and self-discipline to proceed. And the best time to have this experience is now, in the midst of all the cares and woes that most of us don’t seem to be able to escape in our high-stress and limited-time situations. All that’s required is for you to make the effort, to get into a new habit, an effort similar to exercising your body but without all the sweat and strain. We contain rare and unexpected resources within ourselves that can be tapped. Great powers lie within the human mind.

From The Week (1/21/05), “Buddhists have maintained for centuries that meditation can actually change the way the mind works. Now, researchers at the University of Wisconsin, (whom I mentioned in the Introduction) have evidence to back that claim. They monitored the brains of eight of the Dalai Lama’s most accomplished meditators – monks who have practiced meditation for up to 50,000 hours, over decades – and compared the results with those of novice meditators. The monks’ brains were dramatically different, producing higher levels of ‘gamma’ brain waves than scientists had ever observed on a laboratory. Gamma waves are associated with happiness, heightened awareness, and coordinated thinking. Earlier studies have found that this kind of brain activity also boosts such mental functions as memory, learning, and concentration. Meditation, the researchers say, actually appears to rewire the brain’s

circuitry – in effect, training the brain the way physical exercise trains the body.”

The following chapter will tell you how to eventually, personally and directly, experience nondualistic consciousness, the ultimate reality, by doing a very simple daily exercise. That is the exercise called **meditation**. By using the efficient and productive method of meditation I will describe, nondualistic consciousness will be more easily and quickly realized.

**DEVELOPING
NONDUALISTIC CONSCIOUSNESS**
How to do it

“If thou may not continually gather
thyself together, do it sometime at
least once a day, morning or evening.”

Thomas `A Kempis
The Imitation of Christ (1426)

Now we get to the heart of it: learning and practicing a simple mental exercise that will reveal to you, first hand, a great and perhaps heretofore unexplored thing your mind can do. This practice is called meditation. It's time to begin your Liberation. Our purpose is to achieve nondualistic consciousness. The process for doing so is that of practicing to focus the spotlight of your consciousness on one single thing, long enough and often enough that the thing itself will disappear through lack of contrast with anything else.

No mental contrast means no sensing or conceiving. Compare this to the homogeneous sensation caused by wearing the red goggles that we talked about earlier, where all visual contrast was eliminated. Now you can proceed to that condition in your own total consciousness. The single thing you're going to concentrate on in your meditation is your breathing.

By paying attention to your breathing to the exclusion of anything else, your awareness of your breathing will, at least momentarily in the beginning of your practice and for longer periods later on, disappear from your consciousness. Eliminating the contrasts in thinking and sensing from your consciousness will eventually result in your experience of nonduality, that unique experience of oneness with all, enlightenment.

For a beginner it's much, much easier to start with your spotlight on a sensory source rather than a conceptual one. It's easier yet for the source to be an interior one. That's why we'll focus our sensory spotlight on our breathing. We use breathing because, like your heartbeat, it's always there but, unlike your heartbeat, you have more control over it.

There are many other techniques people try to use that don't work nearly as well as this one. Some people recommend sitting on a pillow on the floor with your legs crossed, back straight, middle finger and thumb touching, and so on. Some also teach that looking at a candle or repeating a verbal phrase is the way to go. These methods are brought down from ancient traditions that need not be followed. There's no use taking the long road to where we want to go. Being uncomfortable or using sight or sound makes the process much more difficult because it's necessary to somehow stop doing it in order to have a total nondualistic experience.

We might as well practice in the most efficient and effectual way. Remember, your technique will be the practice of focusing and keeping the spotlight of your consciousness on one single interior thing: your breathing.

Here's how to do it.

FIRST, find a quiet location so that there's the very least distraction from the sounds and moving sights of the world around you. Select a place where the light is dim and you can be alone for awhile. For those of you living in a noisy city or having children around, this will obviously be more difficult to find. But you can do it. It would be very helpful, too, if your body didn't hurt or itch or rumble. No distractions, if possible, especially for a beginner.

SECOND, dress in comfortable loose-fitting clothes. There shouldn't be any binding from underwear or belts or wristwatches or glasses or other things like

that. It would be best if your body and the room were clean and odor free. Best, too, if the room temperature is about 70 to 75 degrees F. Again, minimal distraction.

THIRD, sit down in the most comfortable padded lounge chair you can find, preferably one with a fairly straight back and padded arm rests. But any chair or even the floor will do in a pinch. But if you sit on the floor, use a cushion. Don't rest your head against anything. Keep your spine naturally erect and your head held slightly drooping to the front rather than holding it tensely back or artificially high. What we're trying to do is create a sort of sensory-deprivation chamber right in your own home.

All these specific instructions are only necessary for a beginner. An experienced meditator can achieve nondualistic consciousness with more distractions than you might be able to handle right now.

FOURTH, close your eyes and wiggle around a bit to get as comfortable and relaxed as you can. You won't be sleeping or hypnotizing yourself or be unconscious or anything like that. To make sure you're totally relaxed, let your attention wander with feeling over your body. Find any tenseness you may have. Relax those muscles. Be especially sure to check out your jaw, neck, shoulders and chest.

FIFTH, concentrate on your breathing, only. Once again, it's your total focus on a single thing that's necessary for you to eliminate contrast from your consciousness.

Fill your lungs, through your nostrils, with a big breath of air and then empty them as far as possible. Gradually slow your breathing to a shorter deep inhale with a slow and complete exhale. This will help put your attention totally on your breathing. Next, return to your normal and natural breathing. Now try to keep the focus of your spotlight of attention solely on your breathing. This is the key. No contrast.

As you concentrate on your breathing you'll find your mind thinking thoughts, hearing sounds, or perhaps sensing the life in your own body (heartbeat). In other words, your attention to your breathing will automatically wander to other things. Expect this and don't resist it. It will happen. Don't let it upset you. Stay calm and relaxed. Just gently slide the focus of your spotlight of attention back to your breathing.

Some people will see visual images floating through their minds instead of thoughts. If that happens, simply return your focus to your breathing in the same gentle way that you used to guide your thoughts back. This applies equally to any outside distractions that will undoubtedly occur, attracting your attention. Again, don't resist; just return your spotlight to your breathing, with no frustration and no guilt. Here's the rare chance to peer into the workings of your mind. It's interesting no matter what happens, so there's no reason to get upset if you can't yet continually keep your spotlight on your breathing.

Always keep your body comfortable and never tense or strained. A marked decrease in your awareness of any distractions will proceed as you become more and more practiced.

Some of the traditional dualistic visual and auditory techniques we mentioned earlier (candles, mantras) are great for achieving a full-blown sensory experience but they make it very difficult to eliminate all contrast. The concentration undertaken to achieve a total *sensory* experience is done by looking at a visual object (a beautiful vase has been used) or by listening to a sound. The object or sound doesn't efficiently disappear as it does in our breathing practice toward nondualism because there's always contrast in our sensory world. This isn't to denigrate the value of paying full attention to a single sense. That's wonderful, too. But there are practitioners who mistake it for a full nondualistic experience. It isn't. Go on and try a long and continuous visual attention experience sometime. You'll like it. And, in your daily life, pay active attention to any activity you undertake. Concentrate on brushing your teeth, for example. Don't let a wandering mind *a/ways* interfere with a now-moment of experience. Check out your habits.

Just as your mother told you, practice takes patience, especially at first when things may not seem to be progressing as fast as you'd like. It's somewhat like learning to play a musical instrument: discouraging at first but gradually changing to elation. There'll be some backsliding and plateaus, but otherwise you can expect constant improvement if consistent practice is continued. Even your beginning experiences will be conducive to deep relaxation that will leave you calm and peaceful.

For most of us, the best time for our practice will be in the morning after a bath or shower and before we're disturbed by intruding memories or the day's

planning has begun. Make a habit of practicing every day for, say, ten minutes to half an hour. If you need to, in order to get on with the day's work, set the alarm on your clock to alert you to the end of your designated session. You can begin with a short length of time and gradually lengthen your sessions.

The next best time to practice is probably at sunset; the next is the hour you retire for sleep. If none of these times work for you, grab whatever time you can. But try to use a regular time, whatever it is. It's better to do it for ten minutes every day than thirty minutes every three days. You could even practice twice a day, morning and evening, for ten or fifteen minutes at a time, then longer.

There might be some slight benefit for certain people to join together in a group for study or to somehow help one another. However, the possibility for distraction, competition, conflict and jealousy is just too great. For the beginner, it's better done alone. If you do meet with others who are also engaged in meditation practice, let it be for some kind of helpful cooperation, but certainly not to discuss your progress or success. Keep mum! Don't compare your beginning experiences. It's important that you not feel superior or brag or be around anyone who does. A tendency to boast is the surest sign that someone is not very far along the path of Liberation.

The eventual result of your practice, after you have progressed in the elimination of contrast from your consciousness, will be to realize, from your firsthand direct experience, the oneness of all things: **enlightenment**. From that you'll attain, among other advantages, an everyday mode of thought and action

that will be much more in harmony with your environment. You'll be a spectator of your thoughts and actions, a viewer of your role in life, not its slave. Beyond that, life will proceed as usual but much brighter and more intense.

As you continue to practice in the way I've recommended, you can expect flashes of nondualistic consciousness that continually lengthen. The training of the mind is gradual, although it's reportedly possible to jump over the hurdle in an instant. But, no matter how quickly or slowly it occurs, through your practice you'll go forward along the path of liberation.

Now you understand the sentence from my old manuscript: "Put the spotlight of your attention ... into any of the forms of consciousness that are available in your individual consciousness, and thereby experience the ultimate in what it means to be human."

By Making for the Light, you can expect quietness, happiness and great peace to invade your inner being, with all-abiding love, care and compassion.

Liberation is self-psychotherapy.

CONTINUING...

Our path to the future

“In human affairs, the best stimulus for running ahead is to have something we must run from.”

Eric Hoffer

The Ordeal of Change (1964)

WHAT we have to run from is our feeling of separateness and isolation from our world. Remember the young woman who didn't like a partial moon?

And right now, the best way for us to continue might be to read this book at least one more time, starting with the chapter Understanding Your Consciousness. The better you comprehend this message, the more likely you'll want to begin, and continue, meditation: your practice of Liberation. There isn't anyone who's too old, and probably only preschool children are too young to focus their attention this way. Breathing meditation is a valuable process that can be enjoyed for a lifetime.

Alice Walker had this to tell us in the Humanist (1997), "The struggle to liberate one's self, one's spirit, is often long and difficult. And even though I knew when I was thirteen that I preferred nature to the church, still – because of my conditioning, my parents' conditioning, my grandparents' conditioning – it was very difficult to work out all of the reasons and then to create a form so that other people could understand this particular process and this liberation."

To paraphrase an analogy of the course of life by Bertrand Russell: The water tumbles from the crevice in the rocks, high in the mountains. It rushes down the steep valley, cutting its way through impediments, bounding over and around the boulders. Its force is strengthened from rain and snow and many tributaries. Gradually, as the run through the gauntlet becomes less steep, the stream widens and deepens to become a river. The current slows and its path becomes straighter until, broad and smooth, it merges with the sea.

We can let the tributary of liberation enter and continue flowing into our stream of life at any time and place. The sooner the better.

As indicated, meditation time without distraction is going to be harder for very busy people, for you parents of young children, for city dwellers in their noisy environment and others in some kind of non-supportive living situation. But anyone, anywhere, *can* manage to do this if the motivation is there. I hope I've provided that motivation.

I especially urge you to recommend this idea and method to the parents, teachers and others involved in educating our children. If enough of them could acquire an understanding of their consciousness and develop its total potential, a quiet revolution might occur that could help save life on our planet.

Here, perhaps for the first time, all the forms of consciousness have been integrated into a unified whole: the Circle of Consciousness. This book is obviously not an answer to the questions about the neural functioning of consciousness that you may read about elsewhere. Using what you know now about the dualistic and nondualistic segments of consciousness, you'll have a clearer understanding of some of the things our psychologists, philosophers and physicists are saying in their books. Bear in mind though, that any explanation of our total consciousness that doesn't include the nondualistic consciousness experience is not complete.

What you've read here may remind you of various "spiritual" teachings. That's because:

This is Buddhism without belief, meditation without mantras, mysticism without mystery and centering prayer without religion.

You're on the right track at the perfect station and your train to the future is on the horizon. You have your ticket, so hop aboard. It's the ultimate ride and you can't get hurt.

"Meditation", said his teacher, "hasn't got a damn thing to do with anything, 'cause all it has to do with is nothing. Nothingness. Okay? It doesn't develop the mind, it dissolves the mind. Self-improvement? Forget it, baby. It erases the self. Throws the ego out on its big brittle ass. What good is it? Good for nothing. Excellent for nothing. Yes, Lord, but when you get down to nothing, you get down to ultimate reality. It's then and exactly then that you're sensing the true nature of the universe, you're linked up with the Absolute, son, and unless you're content with blowing smoke up your butt all your life, that there's the only place to be."

Tom Robbins
Fierce Invalids Home From Hot Climates (2000)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and
Why and When
And How and Where and Who.

Rudyard Kipling
"The Elephant's Child"
Just-So Stories (1902)

The following questions and answers are for possible clarification of what you've read. Some I've raised myself that you may enjoy seeing answered.

You'll probably have many other questions about things I've left unanswered and discover that more clarifications still need to be made. Such is the nature of trying to hugely simplify and shorten this all-encompassing subject.

Are all these things I've been reading about in any way practical?

Understanding and using the full potential of your consciousness is one of the most "practical" things you can do, if significantly you think improving the quality of your life is practical. It can hardly be started too early or too late in life. Liberation from all that stuff that's on us, as it was for the man who escaped the collapsing building, can be achieved.

What will enlightenment mean to me?

It means that after practicing and, consequently, being able to turn off your thoughts and senses, you'll know firsthand your oneness with all. You'll be able to act more spontaneously, without self-consciousness, and with complete trust that your actions will be harmonious with your environment. A self-conscious person is one who is ill-at-ease in society because of being excessively aware of his appearance, behavior or some other source of insecurity.

Liberation by meditation is the route to enlightenment, to independence and self-confidence, to

a feeling of wholeness and equanimity and freedom from fear. It's our intrinsic source of love, caring, and compassion. It's liberation from mean-spirited cultural conditioning.

Is Nondualistic Consciousness similar to Mystical Consciousness?

_____ It is not only similar, it is exactly the same thing. In his book, The Teachings of the Mystics (1960), Walter T. Stace wrote this: "...the mystical consciousness is destitute of any sensations at all. Nor does it contain any concepts or thoughts. It is not a sensory-intellectual consciousness at all...mystical experiences...involve the apprehension of *an ultimate non sensuous unity of all things*, a oneness or a One to which neither the senses nor the reason can penetrate."

Nondualistic consciousness *is* the mystical experience.

Continuing with the subject of mysticism, Stace said, in his book Man Against Darkness, "...the mystic has expelled all sensations, images, and conceptual thoughts from his consciousness. He has reached the fundamental unity of consciousness without its differentiations. Its psychological essence, therefore, is an undifferentiated unity. This is accompanied by a feeling of the dissolution of individuality, the melting away of the individual person into what he feels to be the Infinite. There is a powerful feeling that this is the revelation of a transcendental reality. The emotion coloring the experience is that of blessedness and peace. And finally the aftereffects are a certain serenity, a change of attitude which may in certain cases amount to a complete transformation of the personal life, a

turning away from that which is mean and evil towards that which is fine and noble. And these aftereffects are not as a rule transient but may last indefinitely.”

Is there any other good reason to practice liberation?

No. The underlying reason to follow the path of liberation is to find enlightenment, the ultimate reality. It might be called the absolute in self-improvement. But liberation practice will, at the very least, provide relaxation and act as a great stress reliever. Are these good enough reasons?

Only the idea and method of liberation can be taught, not the experience itself. We have to do that for ourselves through continuing meditation practice. Enlightenment will eventually begin to appear, and continue henceforth in our daily lives.

What if I don't have the patience to practice?

Then you won't achieve the full capability of your consciousness and will probably continue to feel trapped by the illusion of separateness from yourself, your fellow man and nature. Everything is process: moving, changing, always dynamic. Practicing for nondualistic consciousness is a process of fulfillment, and it works as does exercising a muscle.

Having patience is finding joy in the “doing”, rather than looking only to the always-transient goal of “done”. If we can't find joy in our now-moment of experience, we won't find much joy at all. Liberation practice is a process you can and will enjoy.

Is there anything I should be doing between practice sessions?

Other than involving yourself totally in your daily tasks, it's very instructive to learn and contemplate, anytime you can, any and all manner of subjects: the self, the cosmos, war, music, love, anything. A greater understanding of the subject will evolve, especially because of your new investigation of consciousness and as an aside to your daily practice. Give some time over to having total sensory experiences, also.

Is the "self" more than an idea?

The self is a concept but it's much more than just an simple idea. It's our conceptual construct of our total organism being and doing all the things that a human animal is capable of. It's not only our skin and bones and beating heart. It's the sum total of our genetic makeup and of our past physical and mental experience, coupled with our individual purpose for the future. The "self" is a result of a human thinking about one's own body, thinking and experiences. We humans are the only organism that can do so. Body and mind are one.

How can I know myself?

What we are at this moment, what there is to know about *self*, depends on all we have done in the past, remembered or not, and our primal instincts. Your unique personal history and the future development of the full potential of your consciousness is what you are and can be. Realizing and experiencing this is to know yourself.

To expand our past into a harmonious future, it's necessary to fully experience each kind of consciousness available to us: sensory, conceptual and

nondualistic, and not merely exist in our usual state of perception, i.e., our condition of divided attention.

We can't change what has already happened to us but we most certainly can determine what we want to be happening now. And that decision will, of course, ultimately influence our future.

If my beliefs already make me a happy person, why should I give them up for the anything else? Wouldn't I feel loneliness and alienation from other believers?

_____ It's not necessary for you to give up any beliefs that you hold dear and make you happy. The "anything else" you refer to is an addition, not a subtraction from your character. There have been many believers throughout history who have achieved nondualistic consciousness and who have reported themselves the better for it. Religious people have recalled the experience as being a direct union with God. And no, you won't find a separateness from your friends and others who hold beliefs. You'll be more full of love, compassion and kindness for them and they will return your warmth. However, the use of scientific method for your thinking, rather than will to believe, is my recommendation on how to acquire the most accurate truth in your concepts.

Will my daily problems hurt my progress during liberation?

Not necessarily, if you can leave your problems behind during your meditation sessions. Your outward behavior and inner conflict will be modified beneficially by the forthcoming expansion of your consciousness.

Will I be able to laugh and have fun during liberation?

Absolutely. Further, the ability to laugh at oneself, with joy and humor, is a sign of a liberated person. Liberation doesn't mean the loss of the concept of self. It means seeing through it, observing our roles in society and having fun with them. As your path of liberation reaches toward enlightenment, you'll go on behaving as rationally as ever (probably more so), but with a remarkable sense of lightness.

What will happen to my morals?

Morality is concerned with rules of conduct: what humans ought and ought not to do with reference to social standards of right and wrong. We must recognize that what "ought" to be is our coming into harmony with our environment, meaning ourselves and all else. This is what rules are meant to accomplish but don't do completely well. But harmony can be learned first hand (rather than having it taught to us) from the nondualistic experience. You will not lose your morals, but find them in the interior of your being.

How can we balance spontaneity and self-consciousness? Is introspection the same as self-consciousness?

Introspection isn't the same as self-consciousness. A self-conscious person is one who can't be spontaneous because of his fear of criticism by the public. A person who is introspective is examining himself to make sure he is thinking and behaving reasonably. A secure person is spontaneous and not self-conscious. A spontaneous person is one whose behavior is natural, unconstrained and unstudied,

without preconception. It requires a condition of self-trust that's the opposite of insecurity. And this condition is available through the nondualistic experience.

While I'm reading this, aren't I experiencing reality?

We tend to think that all of our ordinary now-moments have some degree of reality, like those times when we're reading a book or watching television. And indeed they do if what's meant by reality is merely anything we're doing in the present. But, remember that only through a sensory experience can we approach reality. All thoughts and mental images are symbolic and therefore not real. Listening to conversation or reading a book is, in essence, conceptual, and thus not reality as we define it here.

Can't I create my own reality?

No, but you can modify reality. Remember that reality, available through your senses, is "out there", not in yourself, except when you sense your inner physical condition. You can cut down a tree and reality will have changed. Call this creating or destroying, if you want. Of course it's always changing anyway but we can speed up that change like we're doing to our environment. People talk about creating their own reality or having many realities only because they don't have a clear definition of it. It becomes obvious, then, why we must define our words if we're to think clearly and understand one another.

What can I do to have more control over my future?

You can try to influence your future but you can't "control" it. You can undertake various tasks in the

present that will possibly modify your circumstances in the future. You can plan, predict and fantasize about your future but your decisions and behavior will be what affects it. One of the greatest positive influences we can have on our future is the use of your complete consciousness potential.

Should I continue to seek my goals?

You can't do otherwise and continue to function. There are lots of other names for goals: objectives, aims, ambitions, desires, volitions, intentions. It's the purpose toward which our endeavors are directed, what we intend to do or achieve. But, before a judgment about seeking goals can be made, it's necessary to know what kind of goal it is. Is it one of acquisitiveness or ambition? Is it a goal of fame, fortune or sex?

Goals of personal acquisition, ambition and sexual conquest are, of course, sometimes achieved. But their achievement is only a passing now-moment, instantly gone, ultimately turning out to be just a memory. Then they can lead onward toward other now-moment goals. These types of goals, when not achieved, usually result in frustration and anger.

Long-term power, fame and money goal orientation is dangerously self-defeating. It's much more rewarding to enjoy the process, rather than the end goal, because there is no final end other than death. What we do have now is perpetual becoming.

Short term non-acquisitive/competitive goals like, "I want to go to college to learn more about biology", or, "If we're going to have milk to drink tonight, I'd better go to the store", or, "I want to shoot a perfect score", are

perfectly normal and usually not too frustrating if not achieved.

Still, process is what's important because everything *is* process. Goals are fleeting and reaching them is amazingly unsatisfying for more than a short time. These successes can make pleasant memories, but that's all.

In Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's book, Flow, The Psychology of Optimal Experience (1990), he quotes Victor Frankl as having written, "Don't aim at success — the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue...as the unintended side-effect of one's personal dedication to a course greater than oneself." M.C. goes on to say, "So how can we reach this elusive goal that cannot be attained by a direct route?... (T)here is a way. It is a circuitous path that begins with achieving control over the contents of our consciousness."

How can I trust my immediate actions and reactions to be in harmony with my environment?

If humans think carefully and minutely about an action to be taken, they might not be able to make up their minds in time to act as immediately as the situation demands. This is the point at which the process of having learned how consciousness works, and experiencing those workings, lets us act with total self-trust before it's too late to take effective action. However, if there's time enough, thinking a thing through is the way to go.

We *can* learn to trust our actions and reactions. Spontaneity is based on self-trust without any

reservations. Direct awareness of our oneness with all things will bring about that self-trust.

During liberation will I still want friends and will they want my friendship?

Sure. But you won't need people (contrary to Barbara Streisand's song). You'll enjoy certain people and not others. And yes, others will still want to befriend you, perhaps even more than you can accommodate. Your social intercourse will continue in an even sweeter way if you're kind and tactful about other people's beliefs, fantasies and superstitions while gently presenting your own viewpoint.

Did William James have any more to say about our "different" kind of consciousness?

Here's his complete paragraph in his book, The Varieties of Religious Experience:

"Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. How to regard them is

the question, for they are so discontinuous with ordinary consciousness. Yet they may determine attitudes though they cannot furnish formulas, and open a region though they fail to give a map. At any rate, they forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality. Looking back on my own experiences, they all converge toward a kind of insight to which I cannot help ascribing some metaphysical significance."

Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that examines the nature of reality, including the relationship between one's mind and the environment. It speculates upon questions that have so far been unanswerable by scientific observation, analysis or experiment. Will Durant called Metaphysics the "inquiry into the ultimate and fundamental reality". The term as I use it here is not about a first cause nor about the ultimate nature and origin of the world.

What is the purpose of life?

It can hardly be called a "purpose," but what appears to be the one general functional characteristic of every species is to propagate and sustain that species as best it can. If you're asking about whether humans have an "ultimate" purpose, my answer is a resounding **no**. And our species' future sustenance doesn't look too good right now.

Any purpose we think of for our existence is only something we create in our minds or something that was taught to us that we carry aboard. Our present purpose can be thought of as our intention or will.

What is the meaning of life?

Life has no “meaning”, it just *is*. By looking for meaning we’re attempting to invent a “reason” for living. It’s like inventing an ultimate purpose. Because we can create concepts in our minds, we can create reasons, meanings, purposes or complex imagined fantasies. Everyone of us, after having given it some thought, can probably invent his own personal theory about the meaning of life. Substantiating that reasoning, using scientific method, won’t be all that easy, though.

Why are we here?

It’s very easy to ask questions that can never have a rational, evidence-based answer. The only answer to such a question is something we invent in our minds, our speculation, but certainly not something we should believe. Here are two more questions that have no answers because they’re asking for ultimately non-knowable answers: “Why is there no beginning and no end?” and, “Why is the universe the way it is?”

Some things just are.

What is death?

It has been said that the cause of death is being born. Well, sure! But you aren’t asking about cause. Death can be described as The Big Sleep, the title of the book Raymond Chandler wrote in 1939. When the body dies the brain is also dead. Without a living brain there’s no mind and without a mind there’s no consciousness. I submit, also, that the idea of life after death is just a made-up fantasy. The fact about death appears in these lines by Walt Whitman that were inscribed on his tombstone, “I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from

the grass I love / If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.”

To paraphrase the ever-worried Woody Allen, how can you enjoy life when you know you’re going to die? Well, you have no need to worry about or f e a r death any more than you would fear dreamless sleep. Fear is a feeling of agitation and anxiety caused by danger. We probably shouldn’t consider it here as caution based on observable facts (real danger), but as a dread of some experiences (like death). Fear is one of our most disturbing emotions.

If a person is conscious while dying, it might be that he has a nondualistic experience at the end. Perhaps this is a partial explanation of the “near death” things we read about. It stands to reason that the only people who’ll feel anything after a person’s death are those still alive. Death is the same condition we were in before we were conceived. There was no “I” before we were conceived and no “I” after we are dead.

What is the Soul?

The soul is an idea that humans invented to explain why they often feel that their minds are separate from their bodies. They also have the desire for their consciousness to live on after their body dies. The undesirable end of consciousness has been a vexing threat to humans for as long as we’ve existed. The fundamental questions that everyone would like to have solidly answered are: where did we come from, what should we do now, and where are we going? The idea of a soul is supposed to give us a happy answer to the last one.

“The uniquely human mind is a property of the organic characteristics of the uniquely human body, just as all function is the accompaniment of the physical structure from which it arises. There is no duality of mind and body: all is one.” Sherman B. Nuland, The Wisdom of the Body (1997).

I read about things that are spiritual. What does that mean?

People use the word “spiritual” in phrases like this: psycho-spiritual development, spiritual approaches to health and wellness, the spirit in our daily lives, integrating the body, mind and spirit, dream work as a spiritual practice, the emotional/spiritual body, etc. It’s a word with many meanings, from “soul” to “the essential nature of a person”, with lots of other nebulous things in between. The word is hard to pin down and one to be skeptical about.

Is there anything that’s sacred?

____ Yes, everything in the physical environment is sacred. The only exception might be the ugly works of humans, that being because a human is the only organism that can create disharmony. But even there we can find a few sacred creations, especially those done before the industrial revolution, after which gross tools negated intricate handwork. We’re using “sacred” here to mean reverence and veneration; a feeling of profound awe, respect and love.

What is evil?

____ Evil is usually defined as behavior that’s morally (socially) unacceptable. We humans are the only beasts

in the forest that can do evil, because we can think, because we make and can break our own rules. We form concepts that are necessarily at least partly in error and then proceed to modify our environment according to these concepts. In language, based on dualism, there can be no good without evil (like no up without down), so evil and good are conceptual creations.

Evil can be construed to be destructive behavior manifested only by some person who is not living in harmony with his environment.

What will Enlightenment do to all my years of learning?

Your learning will stay perfectly intact. The memories of your sensory and nondualistic experiences become your guide, along with your use of the art of critical thinking in your concepts. You will thus better understand everything you've learned in the past and will learn in the future.

Will Enlightenment affect me as a teacher?

Yes. Being a teacher is more than an employment; it's also playing an important role in society. You can more successfully perform your roles during liberation. Actually, you can play them all the better for seeing that playing a role is like playing an interesting game. Your purpose will be to obtain a viewpoint where the roles of life are obvious and fun. The improvement in our lives through understanding and using our total consciousness will positively affect our skills in any occupation we choose, teaching prominently included.

How does all this apply to the education of our children?

Our ever-growing lack of ability to distinguish symbol from reality in this “information age” has made us feel more and more separate from our world. As our footing in reality grows more perilous, we evidence continually increasing errors in our behavior. There are people who actually think that symbols precede reality, that is, the *word* “rock” preceded some individual's direct sensory experience of a real rock. Because of this view, there's not much hope for them to continually exhibit harmonious behavior.

The beginning of this problem starts with the way we educate our children. They're almost exclusively being taught to learn and understand predetermined concepts, to follow directions and pass tests. Some occasional relief from this kind of education can be found in sports but rarely even in art or music.

Many politicians and organizations are aware of, and pushing for, some method of improving education. But nothing they try is working very well. And nothing will work well for them until they understand the real problem: the lack of education of the senses in order for the children to most closely approach reality. There are some educators, (Montessori, Waldorf) who use this valuable method. But a wider and universal footing must be found. And kids love to use their senses. In this area children can be role models for adults.

Cognitive skills (but without critical thinking) and memorization are way, way overemphasized. Information is poured into the child and then regurgitated on a test: ultimately forgotten. Creative behavior is discouraged and even penalized in many of our schools. And, of course, there's not even a remote sign of teaching about our consciousness or about the

technique of reaching the ultimate reality of Enlightenment through Liberation practice.

The very root of education should be that of teaching our children how to experience their total potential. This means teaching them to enter fully into each of the three segments of their consciousness. Education must be more than learning to make and use concepts that are acceptable to the adults in this current time and place, usually for future employment in large corporations. Education should free the individual, not bind him.

Is it true that in education no progress at all has been made in understanding and expanding our consciousness?

Yes, none! It is not even mentioned as an educational goal.

Remember the old song:

School days, school days,

Oh, those golden rule days.

Readin' and writin' and 'rithmetic,

Taught to the tune of a hickory stick.

Well, things today are still pretty much like they were then but they use a different kind of stick now called blame. Should you have the opportunity to visit an average public elementary school, you'll probably be quite discouraged about our children's sensory education. Even in art, the criterion for excellence is conceptual "understanding" rather than sensory training and creativity. That makes it easier for the teacher to test and grade the students. And any idea about the children's consciousness-forget it.

Moreover, with newly-included classroom television and computers, education is going closer and closer towards the secondhand, vicarious experience.

This actually happened: in a lesson about the leaves on plants, a television *picture* of a leaf was represented to the children to be a *real* leaf, without giving them any instruction about distinguishing between the symbol (picture) and reality. There were no real leaves in the classroom. Such a lesson, couched in ignorance, is actually harmful to the students.

This book may be among an educator's first available information on this subject. As teachers pay attention to the message here, they can create an educational curriculum that presents reality, truth, consciousness information and patterns of living that would better-enable a student to have a fulfilling life, and to help all life on our planet ultimately survive. We'll need many teachers informed about consciousness in order for our children to be able to learn to use their entire potential.

Should competition be encouraged?

Competition seems to be a fundamental character of our present educational process and, indeed, of our culture in general. But beating the other fellow is the very opposite of helpfulness and cooperation. We're taught that our goal is not just to play, but to win. Continuation of such an extreme emphasis on competition is detrimental to the child.

For humans, competition means the rivalry between two or more persons who are striving for what only one can possess. It's a struggle for superiority or victory, a test of skill or ability, or a contest for a profit or

prize.

Competition is the opposite of cooperation.

Marianne Szegedy-Maszak had this to say in The Los Angeles Times: "Today, a broad array of recent psychological research has led some researchers to conclude that hypercompetitiveness resembles a diagnosable mental disorder—a volatile alchemy of obsessive compulsiveness, narcissism, neurosis and sometimes a dose of paranoia. Psychologists have even linked the hypercompetitive personality to such seemingly disparate conditions and behaviors as road rage, drunk driving, eating disorders, addiction and depression.

It's a style and temperament that affects all other relationships and which, over time, becomes fundamentally impairing, causing fractured families, social isolation and even the disintegration of careers. Such win-at-all-costs behavior may be unsettling but, truth be told, it's not so very far from what our culture views as laudable."

As an example of the danger of competition, let's refer to children and their art. It's well documented that in any art competition for children the result will be either of two things, neither of which are a desired educational goal. One, the winner will tend to repeat herself, hardly an encouragement of creativity, and two, the losers will tend to copy or quit, again hardly what we want.

And while we're on the subject of art education, giving coloring books to children has a very negative impact on their artistic creative development. There's no good reason to do coloring; in fact there are many reasons against doing it. We can refer to one of the foremost texts in art education, Creative and Mental

Growth by Lowenfeld and Brittain. They have this to say about coloring, "These kinds of activity are worse than no art at all. Such predigested activities force youngsters into imitative behavior and inhibit their own creative expression. These activities make no provision for emotional growth because any variation the child makes can only be a mistake; they do not promote skills, because skills develop from one's own expression. Instead, they condition the child to accept adult concepts of art, art that the child is unable to produce, therefore frustrating normal and creative urges."

Can everyone be creative?

Yes, to a greater or lesser degree each of us has the potential to create. Each unique individual's endeavors and level of success are dependent upon the unique physiology of that organism, brain included. Assuming equal practice, one person can only lift one hundred pounds while another can lift two hundred. It's the same for intelligence, creativity and many other human functions, except for the ability of each of us equally to achieve nondualistic consciousness.

What should we know about our emotions?

An emotion is a sometimes intense mental state (which often creates a physical reaction) that is either an innate instinctual reflex or a learned *response* to certain objects and events. It's a response to a powerful perception. Our innate response is simply there: it will appear automatically, as does fear and the fight or flight reaction. Some of our emotions are anxiety, joy, anger, sadness, and desire. Emotions can lead to unconsidered action or instinctual behavior, like crying and running in

fear. Our learned emotions, if continually disturbing, can many times be reordered to consist mainly of those that are pleasurable or beneficial. This is doubly beneficial because our emotions feed back to us as a new concept from which we learn further responses. If we trust ourselves, we can react spontaneously. If we don't trust our emotional reactions, we'll be "repressed."

Freedom from inappropriate responses will be aided by practicing meditation. "Working-up" an emotion won't be rewarding unless you're an actor.

Control of our spotlight of attention enables us to exclude unwanted concepts that try to intrude upon a sensory/emotional experience.

We can eventually become completely able to trust ourselves—our thoughts, actions, and intuition as well as our emotions. As it is now, before practicing liberative meditation, our emotions can introduce factors into our thinking that obscure the issue and make cool judgment far more difficult. Trustworthy, spontaneous emotional response is fully achievable, however.

Is there a lesson here that will help control my physical pain?

Yes. The mastery of your total consciousness will help you. If you're in pain, concentrate on the pain and it will, if not lessen, become less important and more remote. Try to go with the pain rather than resist it. Resistance won't lessen it. This technique is, nonetheless, very difficult to do because our first instinct is to escape the pain, pain being a signal to us of physical disease or damage.

The Lamaze childbirth-training method is one of relieving anxiety and learning not to resist what's being felt. The mothers successfully learn to perceive what would have been the pain of childbirth as a tolerable pressure.

What is meant by "visions"?

Visions are pictures in the mind, or hallucinations, that can be easily thought to be real. But the vision is no more real than a thought in language. It's necessary to differentiate here between *visions* and the process of active, purposeful *visualization*.

The "seer" of a vision must ask for verification (a check on its truth) by objective observers or require some other test before giving credence to the vision. Unverifiable visions are highly suspect and are probably the product of an active imagination and wishful thinking.

The power of visualization (not "visions") can be very interesting and constructive, like any power of imagination, and can, with practice, be much improved. But even these visual images should never be taken at face value as being real.

There may be visions or visualizations during beginning meditation, but not in the resulting nondualistic experience.

What contribution can Parapsychology make to consciousness research?

The psychology of consciousness has reached the pinnacle of importance to many researchers of the mind. Most of them are trying to understand human consciousness through the use of neurobiological/physiological and cognitive investigation.

Other psychologists and philosophers are attempting to amalgamate information from both the East and the West in a cross-cultural approach to finding a solution to the mysteries of human consciousness. This kind of search for understanding from all sources is vital to their quest. Questions about Parapsychology have even been asked.

Approaching these questions, it's necessary to understand the meaning of parapsychology. For this word, "para" means "outside:" outside of psychology. What, then, is this thing outside of psychology? Parapsychology is defined as a study of the evidence for phenomena such as extrasensory perception (ESP), the ability to acquire information without the benefit of our universally-recognized senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch and the sense of the position of the body and its movements). ESP is usually divided into telepathy (the reception of someone else's thoughts), and clairvoyance (the sensing of an object or event beyond the normal ability of our established senses). Parapsychology also includes the study of psychokinesis (the ability to move or alter matter by thought alone).

Among the numerous people who have claimed the title of Parapsychologist, perhaps the best known is J.B. Rhine who, having split with the Psychology Department at Duke University, was allowed to form the first Parapsychology laboratory there in 1935. Despite his long efforts, however, none of his experiments ever produced any results that went beyond the rules of chance.

Moreover, none of the results of any parapsychological research have ever been

experimentally repeatable and, consequently, have never been considered scientifically valid. A 1988 study by the National Research Council found that no research conducted in the last 130 years has proved the existence of any parapsychological phenomena. From this and other studies such as those done by The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), it's reasonable to conclude that parapsychology, regardless of its continuing popularity, exists outside the realm of science and outside the realm of psychology. It behooves the serious researcher of consciousness to be extremely cautious and skeptical about the claims of parapsychology.

The most reliable way of discovering truth is by the use of scientific method. This is the process of observing (acquiring evidence), using any or all our proven senses and the extensions technology has provided for them. The event or object observed is named and theories about its existence and function formulated. These theories are then tested by whatever controlled experiments can be devised. The ability to repeat an experiment to achieve the same result as before is examined. If the experiments are controlled and repeatable, the theory becomes at least a tentative fact: truth. All science, including psychology, uses (or should use) this procedure. Richard Feynman tells us that the aspects and characteristics of science can be understood directly when we understand that observation is the ultimate and final judge of an idea. Aristotle held that whatever was real must be found in objects of the senses and were then knowable (that is, concepts were formed).

But there's another way of thinking where personal bias intrudes on scientific method. It's called Will to Believe (William James' term), the process of pre-deciding a conclusion before evidential observation. Theories thus derived are highly suspect. Testing, if done at all, is tilted toward a predetermined answer. The results are more likely to be wrong than accidentally right. This is the thinking process used by practitioners (some of whom may be deliberately fraudulent) and believers in the supernatural, the paranormal and the occult. Their beliefs may include that of the existence of a God, spiritualism (using a medium, now called a channeler, to contact the dead), reincarnation, crystal healing, aromatherapy, therapeutic touch healing, psychic surgery, astrology and, of course, ESP and psychokinesis.

Alan Watts, the philosopher of Zen, told us that belief is the insistence that truth is what one would wish it to be, and that its opposite is the unreserved opening of the mind to whatever the truth may turn out to be, without preconceptions.

With this comparison between the procedures of science and those of the Will to Believe, there is only one rational answer to the question about the contribution of parapsychology to consciousness research: nothing yet.

What is time?

Time is a seamless continuum of motion of all matter and energy, of constant change, with no beginning and no end. Time can't be stopped or "frozen."

The rate of particle movement can be slowed by lowering the ambient temperature but absolute zero where motion is stopped is a theoretical limit that can never be achieved. When we try to catch an instant of time, as in photography, the best that can be done is to produce a less blurred image over a shorter interval, rather than a more blurred image over a longer interval. The now-moment is forever fleeting.

Time is a sequence of now-moments, a procession which occurs whether or not a human is present to sense and conceptualize them. We humans are the only organisms to have a concept called Time. This is because, as far as we know, we're the only organisms that are able to form such highly complex ideas.

Time as a sequence of events is true no matter if the clock is standing in your bedroom or moving near the speed of light. The relative speed of the clock hands is just faster or slower, but still just ticking away regardless of where the observer is located.

Can the experience of oneness influence our view of the cosmos?

We'd better first define cosmos. The cosmos consists of all this universe and other universes, if they exist, regarded as an orderly, harmonious whole. Some people think the cosmos is chaotic. That's probably because the future behavior of a complex dynamic system can't be accurately predicted.

Now to the question: yes, it can give us a comprehensive overview, perhaps like the following. The primeval atom that gave rise to the Big Bang theory of

the creation of our universe was the gathering together of all the matter and energy in this universe into one ultimately compressed particle: a black hole, with not even light escaping. Actually it's not a hole but a spherical object gathering, from all directions, whatever was "near" it into its composition. At the point where the action of compression was complete (about 14 billion years ago), a reaction of expansion, an explosion in all directions, began: the Big Bang. But this wasn't the "beginning" and, alternatively, there'll be no "end."

In his Lives of the Poets, E. L. Doctorow tells us that, "there is a theory...that the universe oscillates. It is not a steady beaming thing, nor did it start with a bang. It expands and contracts, inhales and exhales, it is either growing larger than you can imagine or it is imploding toward a point. The crucial thing is direction. If things come apart enough, they will have started to come together."

In 1954 George Gamow had this to say, "A theory which suggests that our Universe started from an extremely compressed concentration of matter and radiation naturally raises the question: How did it get into that state? Relativistic formulae tell us that various parts of the Universe are flying apart with an energy exceeding the forces of Newtonian attraction between them. Extrapolating these formulae to the period before the Universe reached the stage of maximum contraction, we find that the Universe must then have been collapsing, with just as great a speed as it is now expanding! Thus, we conclude that our Universe has existed for an eternity of time; that ... it was collapsing uniformly from a state of infinite rarefaction; and that the

Universe is currently on the rebound, dispersing irreversibly ...”

But matter and energy move in a curved, circle-like direction. There are no straight lines in the cosmos. After the Big Bang, particles of matter and energy (these two are basically the same) began their circular path in all directions from the central explosion point through what’s called the space/time continuum. These particles have yet to reach their apogee, hence the appearance to us of expansion.

Over an almost unimaginable period of time (14 billion years is just the smallest drop in the infinite container of time), all the particles will return again, via their curvilinear route, to about the same place where they began. They’ll produce another ultimately compressed primeval atom (the Big Crunch) and, consequently, another Big Bang, followed by another expanding universe, and so on and on.

Thus, we see that there’s no beginning and no end, merely a cyclic wavelike pattern.

Some astrophysicists think that we can only find about ninety percent of our universe. So far we can’t even see in the electromagnetic spectrum what’s happening on the far side of the center of where the Big Bang was, if even that much.

Also, there’s no reason to think that this universe we perceive is the one and only universe. There may be many of them, coexisting, for all we know. It’s only possible to examine that part of the cosmos that’s within the range and limits of our inspection technologies; that is, made somehow available to our senses. And that’s not a whole lot.

John Updike recounts, in his novel, Toward the End of Time, “The world is like the little fork in reality when a quantum measurement is made. Each time that we measure either the position or momentum of an elementary particle, the other specific becomes, by Heisenberg’s indeterminacy principle, unknowable. The ‘wave function’ of the particle collapses. Our universe is the one containing our observation. But, some cosmic theorists aver, the system—containing the particle, the measuring apparatus, and the observer- continues to exist in its other possible states, in parallel universes that have branched from this moment of measurement. The theory is called that of ‘many worlds’. It is intellectually repulsive, which does not mean it is not true. Truth can be intellectually repulsive. From the same verifiable quantum formulations arises the possibility that our universe, born from nothing, was instantly boosted, by the gravity-reversing properties of a ‘false’ vacuum, into an expansion so monstrous that the universe’s real limits lie many times beyond the matter of which we can gather evidence with our farthest-seeing telescopes.”

Space and time are thought of as distinctly different when they’re used as two different words. But space and time are one; space can’t exist without time and vice versa. Time is the sequence of events — space is where those events happen. This is why we can now use the one word: spacetime.

All is one, not two or more. All is undifferentiated, nondualistic. There’s no beginning, no end, no start, no finish, only now and becoming, with or without a human participator.

Ultimate reality!

What is a “law” of physics?

A law of physics is a consensus opinion that something observed has always happened, is happening now and, consequently, will probably continue to do so in the future, although that can't be positively known. The idea is that the gradual, ceaseless change that we know is the nature of things, does not affect these laws because the laws take this very change into account.

Is there a danger in watching a lot of television?

Yes. Television and movies are passive and vicarious experiences that are very, very close to actual in-nature experiences. Myriad people are learning how to behave by watching the tube for many hours every day. Time spent in front of the tube is time not spent reading, inventing, discovering, playing, imagining and interacting with others. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that kids under 2 watch no television and that television sets be banished from the rooms of all children, regardless of age. They cited research showing that excessive television watching can transform kids into unhealthy couch potatoes with few friends, poor grades, and aggressive tendencies. For each hour of television watched by children between the ages of 1 and 3 years, they face a significantly increased risk of having attention-deficit problems by the time they reach seven. Television's rapid-fire pace may alter normal brain development.

Do we truly want to receive those lessons about hostility as seen in the soap operas, or those witnessed in violent cop-show and “reality” programs that inure us

to the blood and guts of death by bullets or bombs? And those fantasy commercials! No wonder we're having a more massive problem everyday in distinguishing symbol (in this case, television or movies) from reality.

Conflict is the essence of drama but cooperation is (or should be) the essence of life. Beyond this, consider that books like this one and others of a non-dramatic, non-visual or complex philosophical nature can't be seen on television or in movies.

How do computers affect our minds?

Computers involve the same kind of vicarious activity as television, movies and reading. The computer information highway, along with violent computer games, interactive programs, and so on, are just bits and pieces of the now-moment of time taken up by additional secondhand experiences.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with computers; they're incredibly important to science, business, graphic designers and writers. Only the probability of our even greater addiction to concepts is alarming. The communications revolution gives words not only the power to lift up and liberate but the power to divide and destroy as never before.

This statement comes from a computer software catalog: "Computers are fast replacing television as the household baby-sitter of choice."

What is virtual reality?

Virtual reality, the coming thing in computer game play, is the technology used to make the computer or television screen become a person's total visual and auditory experience by putting stereoscopic/phonic

screens and speakers on a person's head, inside a helmet or on glasses. When the head is turned, the scene changes as though one were perceiving it first hand. Take a step to the side and the scene, too, will change. Our muscles are involved, further enhancing the effect. Of course the sounds are directionally received by one's hearing. This synthetic environment is probably as close to normal everyday sensing as a vicarious sensory experience can become. The creators of these devices are cleverly trying to trick us into thinking that we're really *there*, in the space ship (of course, we "really" know we're not), shooting at enemy aliens. They welcome us to lessons in killing, war and impossible adventures that are easily mistaken, especially by children, for the real thing.

The profiteers of these illusions think that their virtual reality needs to be totally immersive, to be as real as reality. Does this signal the future introduction of heat, cold, pain, tasting, and smelling?

What does "group behavior" mean?

Group behavior as seen in social intercourse is the easy way for an insecure person to avoid his scary aloneness. A group gives its members a sense of security and identity, a feeling of personal worth, by exerting social pressures that reward conformity to, and reject deviance from, its norms, while fostering a mass mentality that limits individual creativity. You can easily observe this if you consider sports fans, street gangs and teenage dress. Spontaneous individual behavior is repressed in favor of group approved actions. Insecurity is temporarily bought off. None of this implies that joining a group to advance a cause is objectionable.

Can I rely on my ideas about cause and effect?

Probably not, unless the cause and effect are fairly simple, recent, reasonable and observable. The rock falls on your head (cause) and gives you a headache (effect). But what caused the rock to fall? There's even a question about whether it was the rock that caused your headache.

Causality refers to that connection by which one event causes another. The question of cause and effect relationships becomes very involved and difficult. The idea of a strict, long range, lineal cause and effect may be an illusion created by our limited sensory input and incorrect concepts about that information. It's somewhat similar to the illusion of edges that we get from a visual sensory stimulus of, say, a table.

Because we can ask the origin of something that's happening now, we tend to assume that there's some definite answer, a connection, a cause. Cause and effect reasoning is only our expectation that constantly connected events in our recent past experience will remain connected in the future. People have no way of knowing or proving that any two events will be related in the future even if they were in the past.

The most important thing for you to understand is that there is no such thing as a "first cause" because that implies a beginning, and there is no beginning, as there is no end.

All is transitory.

GLOSSARY

Definitions you'll want to know

*Each definition is for the way that word
is used in this book.*

I knew a fellow who rambled on in a pseudo philosophical way about things objective and subjective. Not being able to understand what he was talking about, I finally discovered that he was using the words with completely inverse meanings. He couldn't communicate sensibly when using these words whose meaning no one else understood. In order to clearly communicate with each other, we must agree on our definitions.

Objective is defined as: things having actual existence; reality. Material objects that can be received by the senses.

Subjective is defined as: things existing only in the mind and unaffected by the external world.

Quite a difference!

Belief An idea accepted as true by an individual or a group, which may have little or no basis in fact (evidence). Synonymous with one connotation of Faith. This is a good word to stay away from because it has so many other meanings.

Brain The material enclosed within the head that's part of the central nervous system. It's the primary

center for the regulation and control of bodily activities: receiving and interpreting sensory impulses, and transmitting signals to the muscles and body organs which then respond. It is also the physical seat of the mind, where consciousness is created. Brain is stuff; mind is one of its functions. Erich Harth, in his book The Creative Loop, says, "...physical processes ultimately must account for mental phenomena."

Compassion The feeling of loving kindness, not exclusively for our fellow humans, but extending to all things in our environment. It's one result of a person having experienced nondualistic consciousness. Dictionary: Sympathetic concern for the suffering of another, together with the inclination to give aid or support or to show mercy.

Competition For humans, as we use it here, it means the rivalry between two or more persons who are striving for a certain resource or goal. It's a struggle for superiority or victory, a test of skill or ability, or a contest for a profit or prize. It's the opposite of cooperation. The way the word is used in Ecology is the simultaneous demand by two or more organisms (including humans) for limited environmental resources, such as nutrients, living space or light. For example, trees compete with other trees for food and water and for a location where they can receive adequate sunlight. We humans will soon be competing, perhaps violently, for our dwindling nonrenewable global resources.

Concept An idea or thought existing in the conscious mind. All that happens in our minds that's *not*

either sensory or nondualistic. Concepts are composed of and expressed in symbols that stand, first, for objects or events (objects in motion) in our environment and, later, for complicated combinations of these symbols. Language and mathematics are two of our most important symbol systems. All concepts are dualistic, that is, based on contrast.

Consciousness The awake awareness by a person at any given instant of existence. From The Mystery of Consciousness by John R. Searle, "...consciousness refers to those states of sentience and awareness that typically begin when we awake from a dreamless sleep and continue until we go to sleep again, or fall into a coma or die or otherwise become 'unconscious'."

The three identifiable kinds of consciousness available to us are Sensory, Conceptual, and Nondualistic. The first two are ordinarily experienced alternately, in what is called perception. Any single one can be experienced by itself, either unintentionally or by one's own volition.

The consciousness of creatures other than human is not within the scope of this definition.

Contemplation Thoughtful and attentive observation or study, a kind of mental focus where the spotlight of consciousness is turned onto a specific object or idea. For example, you can contemplate a flower or a friend's insecurity.

Contrast At least two things which exist as distinct from each other. The difference between the

properties of the two permit us to perceive. This is the basis of dualism, and dualism is the essence of both our senses and our concepts.

Cosmos All the universe or universes, regarded as an orderly, harmonious whole. Some people think the cosmos is chaotic. That's probably because the future behavior of a complex dynamic system can't be accurately predicted.

Dualism The character of being two rather than one. Our senses and concepts exist only as a result of duality. Duality denotes contrast, as in ON with OFF.

Emotion A sometimes intense mental state (which often creates a physical reaction) that arises spontaneously rather than through conscious effort – unless one is perhaps an actor. It's a response to a powerful perception. Some of our emotions are anxiety, joy, anger, sadness, and desire. Emotions can lead to unconsidered action or instinctual behavior, like crying or running in flight. If we trust ourselves, we can react spontaneously. If we don't trust our emotional reactions, we'll be "repressed".

Enlightenment The condition of a person's mental state after having experienced nondualistic consciousness, which reveals his oneness with the universe. It's an enduring relief from the restrictions of dualism.

Environment All that surrounds a person including other persons and all other matter and energy

that influences or modifies the development of that individual. Each of us is part of the environment and, as such, we and our environment are one unitized whole.

Ethics The rules and methods for distinguishing and defining good from bad in human conduct. How we ought and ought not behave, usually based on our cultural standards of right and wrong; moral values.

Evil Destructive behavior manifested by someone who is not living in harmony with his environment; causing injury, ruin, pain, or harm.

Fear A feeling of alarm, agitation and anxiety caused by the presence of danger, or the imminence of imagined danger. We'll not consider it here as caution based on observable facts (real danger), but as a dread of some experiences or interpersonal relations, very often quite unreasonable.

Fear is one of our most disturbing emotions and can bring on anger and hatred, followed by violence.

Hallucination An imaginary, false or distorted perception of objects or events accompanied by a compelling sense of their reality.

Homogeneous Uniform in structure or composition throughout. Both milk and society can be homogenized, but, one would hope, not the latter.

Illusion An erroneous concept about reality. It is derived from an imagined sensory source or an hallucination but can also be learned as a belief. Seeing a nonexistent oasis in the desert is a famous illusion.

Introspection Contemplation of one's own thoughts, sensations or behavior; a self-examination. It doesn't imply self-consciousness. Direct introspection can provide us with knowledge about our consciousness.

Intelligence The capacity to acquire and apply knowledge. The ability to use thought and reason. The commonly used tests of intelligence are primarily for a person's conceptual ability.

Liberation The process of setting us free, as from the oppression and confinement of our dualistic beliefs, illusions and insecurities. It means leaving behind our daily burdens of guilt and fear, confusion and indecision, insecurity and self disapproval. It points toward harmony with our environment and for peace within ourselves: the route to enlightenment.

Logic The systematic study that provides standards by which valid thought processes can be recognized. It clarifies the reasoning process and provides a means for analyzing the consistency of basic concepts. Logic is a part of the art of critical thinking. It is a set of rules for rationality, dealing with truth and validity.

Meditation The act of sitting quietly and concentrating on one thing to the exclusion of all else. Described here in the Developing Nondualistic Consciousness chapter.

Metaphysics The branch of philosophy that examines the nature of reality, including the relationship between one's mind and the environment. It speculates upon questions that have so far been unanswerable by scientific observation, analysis or experiment. Will Durant called Metaphysics the "inquiry into the ultimate and fundamental reality." The term, as we use it here, is not about a first cause nor about the ultimate nature and origin of the world.

Mystical Words used in other contexts to mean Nondualistic Consciousness, as we call it here. It is also called Pure Consciousness Experience, Unitive Consciousness, Transcendent Experience, and Cosmic Consciousness. Mystical is not an ideal word to use because of the existence of many other divergent and popular definitions, like mysterious or irrational. The dictionary has a good definition: Of or having a spiritual reality or import unapparent to the intelligence or senses.

A Mystic is someone who has had the nondualistic experience.

Nondualistic Oneness, not twoness. Where no contrast exists. "One without a second," according to Ken Wilber.

Now - moment An ever-proceeding point in our ceaseless continuing experience of change. Like time, it's highly abstract because it can never be captured; never made to stand still. Living in the now-moment implies not being engulfed in remembering the past, or in planning, predicting and fantasizing the future.

The most we can do to experience the now-moment is to pay close and immediate attention to whatever we're doing, including all our daily tasks and habits.

O n e n e s s The condition of undivided wholeness, wherein there is no contrast, no differences. It is the mental experience, resulting from meditation, that all things are one, including yourself.

P e r c e p t i o n A sensory experience which our minds almost instantly convert into a concept, into thinking, into naming, describing and categorizing. That concept is highly influenced by our memory and purpose. Perception is our ordinary, everyday, waking state of consciousness, a combination of our senses and concepts.

P h e n o m e n a Objective objects and occurrences that are open to observation by the senses.

P r e c e p t A rule for guiding our conduct that we have obtained from books or lectures. A guiding cultural concept that we have learned.

P r e j u d i c e A person's judgment, opinion or belief formed before any knowledge or examination of the facts has been undertaken. Prejudices are usually formed in childhood by surrounding cultural influences, then rigidly held for life. A baseless negative attitude toward a racial, ethnic, sexual or religious group is a prejudice.

Reality The objective world. It enters our awareness through our sensory receptors. It is raw, unnamed, undescribed and uncategorized. By going on through the process of perception, to the creation of a symbolic concept or visualization, it will become named, described and categorized. There's only one reality but each person necessarily has a different take on it (from a unique space/time location, among other reasons) and will therefore have a distinct concept or visualization of the one, single reality.

Reasoning The process of directing our thinking. We may reason with the specific goal of trying to find a solution to a problem or with a more general wish to deal with fallacies and inconsistencies in thought – our own or someone else's.

Scientific Method The process by which scientists, collectively and over time, endeavor to construct an accurate (that is, reliable, consistent and non-arbitrary) representation of the world.

Recognizing that personal and cultural beliefs influence both our perceptions and our interpretations of natural phenomena, we aim through the use of standard procedures and criteria to minimize those influences when developing a theory. As a famous scientist once said, "Smart people (like smart lawyers) can come up with very good explanations for mistaken points of view." In summary, the scientific method attempts to minimize the influence of bias or prejudice by the experimenter when testing an hypothesis or a theory.

The scientific method has four steps:

1. Observation and description of a phenomenon or group of phenomena.
2. Formulation of an hypothesis to explain the phenomena. In physics, the hypothesis often takes the form of a causal mechanism or a mathematical relation.
3. Use of the hypothesis to predict the existence of other phenomena, or to predict quantitatively the results of new observations.
4. Performance of experimental tests of the predictions by several independent experimenters, called peer review.

If the experiments bear out the hypothesis it may come to be regarded as a theory or law of nature. If the experiments do not bear out the hypothesis, it must be rejected or modified. What is key in the description of the scientific method just given is the predictive power (the ability to get more out of the theory than you put in) of the hypothesis or theory, as tested by experiment. It is often said in science that theories can never be proved, only disproved. There is always the possibility that a new observation or a new experiment will conflict with a long-standing theory.

Science also names, describes, and categorizes things and happenings in the environment. Wonder and curiosity, coupled with critical thinking are the attitudes of scientific method.

Self-conscious Feeling ill-at-ease in society because of being excessively aware of one's appearance, behavior or some other source of insecurity.

Senses Any of the faculties by which stimuli from outside or inside the body are received: sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, and the position of our body in space. All our sensing is a product of contrast, dualistic.

Spontaneous Behavior that is natural, unconstrained and unstudied; without preconception. It requires a condition of self-trust that is the opposite of insecurity.

Symbol An abstraction representing a concrete object or event. Spoken and written language, sign language, mathematics, art, hieroglyphics and other symbol “systems” permit the forming of concepts, communication between individuals and the formation of a connection to larger groups, called society. Symbols only represent reality, and are not, in themselves, “real”. Symbols become so important to some people that they are willing to die for them.

Truth The most accurate description of reality. Truth can never be absolutely accurate because each of us has a different viewpoint and impression of reality. The description can be couched in any of our many symbol systems (language, mathematics, etc.).

Ultimate Reality The words we use here to describe the core of the nondualistic consciousness experience.

Values Widely shared attitudes toward a concept such as truth or freedom. A moral value is a principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable.

Will to Believe A way of thinking that doesn't incorporate logic, reason or scientific method and which is not based on the existence of evidence. It implies a static, rather than a dynamic universe, and results in concepts that are necessarily at least partly incorrect. The phrase, but not the definition, is borrowed from William James' book, The Varieties of Religious Experience.