

The God State: The Journey from Character to Creator

By Dr. Mike Van Thielen, PhD.

What if the greatest journey of our lives is not the one we take across the world, but the one we take inward?

For centuries, humanity has searched for God in temples, churches, sacred texts, spiritual teachers, and distant dimensions. We have looked upward, outward, and beyond ourselves, hoping to discover the source of truth, peace, love, and creation. Yet nearly every great wisdom tradition eventually points us in the same direction. Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God is within. The ancient yogis spoke of pure consciousness. Buddhist teachings describe awakening from the illusion of the separate self. Mystics across cultures have been written about moments in which the boundaries between the individual and the whole seem to disappear.



Modern science approaches the subject through a very different doorway. Neuroscience studies perception, self-awareness, attention, nervous system regulation, and the brain's ability to change. Psychology explores conditioning, identity, emotional patterns, and the

subconscious mind. Quantum physics raises profound questions about observation, matter, and the nature of reality, even though its findings are often stretched far beyond what science can currently prove.

Perhaps these perspectives are not competing explanations. Perhaps they are different windows looking into the same room.

At Limitless Lab, this is the essence of the Science and Soul philosophy. Science helps us understand the mechanisms through which transformation occurs, while spirituality helps us explore its meaning. Science explains how the brain, body, breath, and nervous system influence our experience. Soul invites us to ask who is having that experience in the first place.

The God State is not about becoming superior, all-knowing, or more divine than anyone else. It is not an inflated form of ego disguised as spirituality. It is a state of consciousness in which fear, conditioning, judgment, and separation no longer dominate our inner world. It is the gradual embodiment of the qualities we have always associated with the Divine: presence, compassion, wisdom, creativity, peace, love, and unity.

The journey toward that state often unfolds through a series of recognizable phases. We begin as the character in the story. We awaken as the observer. We learn to regulate and release what has kept us trapped in survival. We become more intentional with our attention. Eventually, we begin to live as conscious creators rather than unconscious reactors.

Living as the Character

Every human being enters the world open, impressionable, and dependent on others for safety and survival. Long before we develop the ability to reason or think critically, our brains and bodies are already collecting information about the world. We learn from the tone of our parents' voices, the presence or absence of affection, the stability of our environment, the reactions of teachers, the expectations of society, and the emotional patterns of the people around us.

Every experience leaves an imprint. We begin learning what earns love, what causes rejection, when it is safe to speak, when it is better to stay quiet, and what we must become to belong.

Over time, these experiences form our conditioned identity. We begin identifying with our name, body, nationality, profession, achievements, failures, relationships, wounds, and beliefs. We develop a personality that helps us navigate the world and protect ourselves from pain.

This personality, often called the ego, is not our enemy. It is an intelligent survival strategy. It helps us form boundaries, organize experience, pursue goals, and interact with others. The problem begins when we forget that it is only one layer of who we are.

Imagine watching a movie so immersive that you forget you are sitting in a theater. You become completely absorbed in the main character's story. Every victory feels personal. Every loss becomes painful. Every threat feels real. The experience may be emotionally genuine, but you have temporarily forgotten your true position as the one watching.

Much of life unfolds in the same way.

We become so identified with the character that we believe every thought, every emotion, and every reaction define us. When criticism appears, we feel attacked. When plans fail, we feel defeated. When someone disagrees with us, the nervous system may respond as though our very identity is under threat.

From this state, life becomes deeply personal. We are constantly defending, proving, comparing, achieving, controlling, and searching for validation. The nervous system repeatedly asks one central question: Am I safe?

When survival dominates the body, possibility becomes difficult to perceive. The brain prioritizes protection over imagination. Creativity narrows. Intuition becomes harder to hear. Compassion gives way to judgment, and curiosity is replaced by certainty.

The character is not the problem. Forgetting that we are playing one is.

Becoming the Observer

The first great shift in consciousness begins when we notice a thought instead of automatically believing it.

Perhaps we catch ourselves worrying about the future and realize that the mind is creating a story. Perhaps anger rises and, for the first time, we observe it before acting. Perhaps we notice the impulse to defend ourselves and choose to remain silent for one more breath.

In that moment, a subtle but profound distinction appears. There is the thought, and there is the awareness that notices the thought. There is emotion, and there is the presence that can witness the emotion moving through the body.

This is the birth of the Observer.

The realization is simple, yet life-changing: if I can observe my thoughts, then I cannot be only my thoughts. If I can witness fear, then there must be something within me that exists beyond fear. If I can notice anger rising, then I am not identical to the anger.

The Observer does not suppress emotion or pretend pain does not exist. It creates space around experience. Instead of saying, “I am anxious,” we begin to recognize, “Anxiety is present.” Instead of becoming the storm, we become the sky in which the storm is moving.

This shift has a scientific foundation. Practices such as mindfulness, meditation, breath awareness, and reflective self-observation can strengthen the brain’s capacity for metacognition, emotional regulation, and intentional choice. The prefrontal regions involved in awareness and decision-making become more engaged, while automatic threat responses can become less dominant.

In everyday terms, we become less reactive and more responsive.

This space between stimulus and response is where freedom begins. Without it, our past keeps making decisions for us. Old wounds choose our partners. Childhood beliefs shape our confidence. Previous rejection influences how we interpret present relationships. The body reacts before the conscious mind understands what has happened.

The Observer interrupts that cycle.

Instead of asking, “Why is this happening to me?” we begin asking, “What is happening within me right now?” That question returns power to the present moment. It turns blame into curiosity and reaction into awareness.

Healing does not begin when life stops triggering us. It begins when the trigger is no longer allowed to control what happens next.

When Life Becomes a Mirror

As the Observer grows stronger, the world begins to look different. People who once seemed to be nothing more than obstacles may begin to appear as mirrors.

The controlling partner, the critical parent, the unreliable friend, the impatient driver, and the difficult colleague may still behave in ways that require boundaries. Becoming conscious does not mean tolerating disrespect or denying harmful behavior. Yet even within conflict, we can begin to recognize what the experience is awakening inside us.

Why does this person affect me so deeply? Why does this comment remain in my mind long after it was spoken? Why does one person’s rejection activate a reaction far greater than the event itself seems to justify?

Often, the intensity of the response reveals an older wound. The present moment may be touching fear of abandonment, the need for approval, shame, unworthiness, betrayal, control, or the belief that we are not enough.

The other person may have triggered the pain, but they did not necessarily create all of it.

This is the power of mirroring. It transforms relationships into classrooms of consciousness. Instead of using every conflict to prove that someone else is wrong, we begin using it to discover what remains unresolved within us.

The trigger becomes a messenger.

This does not mean every reaction is our fault. It means every reaction is our responsibility. Responsibility is not blame. It is the ability to respond consciously rather than surrendering our power to the behavior of others.

When we stop demanding that the outside world change before we can be at peace, we begin reclaiming our inner authority.

The Power of Attention

One of the greatest responsibilities of the Observer is learning to direct attention.

Attention is the currency of consciousness. Whatever repeatedly receives it begins shaping our inner world. The thoughts we rehearse become easier to think. The emotions we repeatedly activate become more familiar to the nervous system. The stories we continue telling gradually become part of our identity.

The human brain receives far more sensory information than conscious awareness can process. It must constantly filter, prioritize, and interpret. It notices what seems relevant to our survival, goals, beliefs, and expectations while allowing enormous amounts of information to remain outside conscious awareness.

This explains why two people can experience the same event and live in completely different realities. One sees rejection while the other sees redirection. One sees danger while the other sees possibility. One sees evidence that life is unfair, while another notices evidence that support is available.

The event may be the same. The filter is different.

This is why what we pay attention to matters so deeply.

A person who constantly focuses on betrayal may begin noticing every sign of disloyalty while overlooking genuine care. Someone who repeatedly focuses on scarcity may become highly sensitive to what is missing and almost blind to what is already present. A person who intentionally cultivates gratitude does not deny difficulty. They train the mind to recognize goodness alongside it.

Attention is not passive. It is creative.

Where attention goes, the nervous system follows. If the mind repeatedly focuses on danger, the body prepares for threat. Muscles tighten, breathing changes, stress hormones rise, and perception narrows. If attention is directed toward safety, connection, appreciation, and possibility, the body begins receiving a different message.

The soul may speak in images, intuition, longing, and inspiration, but the nervous system helps determine whether we can hear it.

This does not mean we create every circumstance through thought or that suffering can be blamed on poor attention. Life includes loss, injustice, illness, and events no individual consciously chooses. Conscious creation is not magical control over reality. It is the recognition that attention shapes perception, perception influences physiology, physiology affects behavior, and behavior helps shape what becomes possible next.

The Observer therefore learns to ask, “What am I feeding with my attention?”

Am I feeding fear or possibility? Am I strengthening an old identity or creating space for a new one? Am I rehearsing the problem, or am I becoming available for insight?

What we consistently observe, rehearse, and emotionally reinforce gradually becomes part of who we are.

The Nervous System as the Gateway

Many people attempt to think their way into transformation while the body remains trapped in survival. They repeat affirmations, visualize a new future, and try to adopt positive beliefs, yet their physiology continues communicating fear, danger, and contraction.

The conscious mind may say, “I am safe,” while the nervous system is preparing for attack.

The mind may say, “I am worthy,” while the body still carries the memory of rejection.

This is why nervous system regulation is not merely a wellness practice. It is a gateway between survival and creation.

When the body is dysregulated, the world appears more threatening. Neutral expressions may look critical. Delays may feel like rejection. Uncertainty may seem intolerable. The nervous system interprets reality through the lens of its current state.

A regulated nervous system does not mean we remain calm at all times. It means we become flexible. We can mobilize when action is needed and return to safety when the threat has passed. We can experience difficult emotions without becoming permanently trapped inside them.

The breath offers one of the most direct pathways into this system. Slow, conscious breathing can communicate safety to the body, soften muscular tension, reduce mental noise, and create access to greater awareness. Somatic movement, meditation, trembling, time in nature, meaningful connection, and restorative rest can support the same process.

At Limitless Lab, this journey is expressed through the R4 Method: Regulate, Release, Rewire, and Rise.

We begin by regulating because the body must experience enough safety to loosen its defenses. From that foundation, we release the tension, emotions, and survival patterns that no longer serve us. Once space has been created, we can rewire beliefs, habits, and identity through repetition, intention, emotional experience, and aligned action. Only then do we rise, not above other people, but beyond the limitations of our previous conditioning.

The R4 Method is not a straight line. We move through these phases repeatedly. A new level of awareness may reveal another layer of healing. A new relationship may expose an old wound. A larger dream may activate a deeper fear.

Transformation spirals. We revisit familiar territory from a higher level of consciousness.

From Observer to Creator

Observation creates space, and space creates choice.

This is the transition from Observer to Creator.

The Creator is not someone who controls every event, avoids all suffering, or manifests every desire through thought alone. The Creator is someone who becomes increasingly conscious of the role they play in shaping their inner and outer life.

Thoughts influence emotions. Emotions influence the body. The body influences decisions. Decisions shape behavior, and repeated behavior forms identity. Identity then influences what we believe is possible and what actions we are willing to take.

Creation begins as coherence between these levels.

When thoughts, emotions, physiology, values, and actions move in different directions, we experience internal conflict. We may say we want love while remaining emotionally unavailable. We may say we desire success while identifying deeply with struggle. We may visualize freedom while repeatedly choosing what feels familiar rather than what feels aligned.

The Creator learns that a new life requires more than a new idea. It requires a new way of being.

This is where neuroplasticity becomes deeply relevant. The brain changes through repeated experience. Every time we interrupt an old reaction and choose a new response, we begin weakening one pattern and strengthening another. Every time we remain present with discomfort rather than escaping it, the nervous system learns that the feeling can survive. Every aligned action sends a message to the subconscious mind about who we are becoming.

Creation is not a single moment of intention. It is the repeated embodiment of a new identity.

The question changes from “How do I force life to give me what I want?” to “Who must I become to participate in creating the life I desire?”

This is a far more powerful question because it places transformation within our sphere of influence.

The Creator understands that life is not only happening to us. It is also responding to what we repeatedly choose, tolerate, believe, practice, and embody.

The God State

As awareness deepens, there are moments when the usual sense of separation begins to soften.

The mind becomes quiet. The body relaxes. Time seems less urgent. The need to prove, defend, achieve, compare, and control temporarily disappears.

There is simply presence.

In these moments, love may no longer feel like an emotion directed toward one person. It feels like the underlying nature of experience itself. Compassion arises without effort. Forgiveness becomes less about excusing others and more about releasing ourselves from the burden of carrying the past.

This is what I call the God State.

It is not the claim that a human personality becomes God. It is the experience of moving beyond the limitations of the conditioned personality and embodying the qualities associated with Divine consciousness.

In the God State, we no longer experience ourselves only as the character. We remain aware of the Observer, yet even the distinction between observer and observed may begin to soften. For a moment, there is no separate self-struggling against life. There is simply life, aware of itself through us.

THE GOD STATE

From Observer to Creator

Awareness • Attention • Alignment • Creation

PHASE 1 THE OBSERVER Awakening to Awareness

You step back from the mind and become the witness. Thoughts, emotions, and sensations are seen—not as self, but as passing experiences.

PRACTICE

Mindfulness, breath awareness, body presence, self-inquiry.
Science: Meditation strengthens meta-awareness, reduces stress, and changes brain networks involved in self-referential thinking and emotion regulation.

PHASE 2 THE CREATOR Aligning with Truth

You align with your inner truth, values, and higher wisdom. Attention becomes intentional. You choose what to focus on, what to feel, and what to believe.

WHAT WE PAY ATTENTION TO

Attention is the doorway to creation. It shapes perception, rewires the brain, and influences behavior. Where attention goes, energy flows. What we repeatedly focus on becomes our experience—and our life.



PRACTICE

Service, embodiment, surrender, trust, non-attachment.
Science: Purpose, compassion, and connection are linked to well-being, longer life, and coherence in heart-brain and nervous system.

PHASE 3 THE CREATOR IN ACTION Expressing with Grace

You live from your higher self. Your actions, words, and choices flow from alignment. You co-create a reality that reflects your consciousness.

DAILY REMINDERS

- I pause and observe.
- I choose my focus.
- I align with truth.
- I act with love.
- I trust the process.
- I co-create my reality.

Science shows us the how. • Soul reveals the why. Together, they guide us home.

THE SCIENCE

Neuroplasticity shows that repeated attention changes the brain. Meditation improves focus, emotional regulation, and well-being.



THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

Breath and awareness regulate the autonomic nervous system, increase heart rate variability, and shift us from survival mode to presence.



PERCEPTION IS ACTIVE

The brain is a prediction machine. Expectations and attention shape what we notice and how we interpret reality.



SOUL PHILOSOPHY

You are not the thoughts. You are the awareness in which they arise. You are the sacred consciousness itself.

Some call this unity consciousness. Others call it non-dual awareness, Christ consciousness, pure presence, awakening, or enlightenment. The name matters less than the experience.

The God State is rarely permanent. For most people, glimpses come. It may arise in meditation, breathwork, prayer, deep love, creative flow, service, nature, music, or moments of profound surrender. The mind eventually returns. The character resumes its role. Responsibilities, fears, and habits reappear.

Yet something has changed. Once we have glimpsed the space beyond the conditioned self, it becomes difficult to believe that the character is all we are.

The practice is not to escape ordinary life. It is to bring more of that awareness into it.

Can we remain conscious during conflict? Can we remember love when the ego wants to attack? Can we stay connected to truth when fear begins writing the story? Can we create from alignment rather than react from old wounds?

The God State is not measured by what happens during meditation. It is revealed by how we live when meditation ends.

Practicing the Shift

The movement from character to Observer and from Observer to Creator occurs through ordinary moments.

It begins when we pause before sending the angry message. It grows when we sit quietly with an uncomfortable emotion instead of immediately escaping it. It deepens when we recognize a trigger as information rather than proof that someone else controls our peace.

A simple daily practice is to sit in stillness and observe the movement of the mind without attempting to control it. Thoughts will arise, as they always do. The practice is not to eliminate them, but to witness them. Each time we notice that attention has become lost in a story, we gently return to awareness.

The breath can serve as an anchor. A slow inhale followed by a longer, softer exhaling signals the body to settle. In the stillness following the exhale, there may be a moment when the usual noise of the mind softens. This pause can become a doorway into presence, not because it is magical, but because it interrupts the habitual momentum of thought.

From that quieter state, we can introduce a conscious intention. Rather than focusing only on what we want to have, we can imagine who we are becoming. How does this future self-respond under pressure? How does this person communicate, love, lead, and serve? What choices would this identity make today?

The goal is not to force an image onto the mind, but to make a new way of being emotionally and neurologically familiar.

Throughout the day, the most useful practice may be one simple question: “Who is driving right now?”

Is the wounded child driving? Is fear driving? Is the need for approval driving? Is the Observer present? Is the Creator choosing?

The answer will not always be flattering. That is the point. Awareness without judgment allows transformation. Shame only strengthens the identity we are trying to outgrow.

At the end of the day, we can revisit our experiences from the position of the Observer. Where did we react unconsciously? Where did we remain present? What captured our attention? Which thoughts did we feed? What would a more conscious response look like next time?

Each honest observation expands our freedom.

The Journey Home

Perhaps awakening is not about becoming someone new. Perhaps it is about removing everything that prevents our deepest nature from expressing itself.

The character will remain. We still need a name, a personality, preferences, ambitions, and boundaries. The ego does not need to be destroyed. It simply needs to stop occupying the throne.

The Observer allows us to see clearly. The regulated body gives us the capacity to remain present. The Creator helps us act with intention. The God State reminds us that beneath every role and every story, there is a deeper intelligence seeking expression through us.

This is the journey from unconscious survival to conscious creation.

It is the movement from fear toward love, from separation toward unity, and from reaction toward responsibility.

The world may not change the moment we awaken, but the way we meet it does.

We stop asking life to complete us and begin participating in it more fully. We stop waiting for peace to arrive from the outside and begin creating the internal conditions through which peace becomes possible. We stop searching for God as something distant and begin embodying the presence, compassion, truth, and creativity we have spent so long seeking.

The character still plays its role. The Observer watches with awareness. The Creator chooses with intention. And through them all, something deeper begins to remember itself

Scientific References and Further Resources

The God State is a philosophical and spiritual framework rather than a clinical or neuroscientific diagnosis. Science cannot currently confirm concepts such as Divine consciousness, unity with God, manifestation, or the soul as objective realities. It can, however, help us understand many of the processes discussed in this article, including self-awareness, attention, emotional regulation, nervous system flexibility, breath regulation, neuroplasticity, and shifts in the ordinary experience of self.

Mindfulness, Self-Awareness, and the Observer

Bernstein, A., Hadash, Y., Lichtash, Y., Tanay, G., Shepherd, K., & Fresco, D. M. (2015). Decentering and related constructs: A critical review and metacognitive processes model. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(5), 599–617. This paper explores decentering—the ability to observe thoughts and emotions as temporary mental events rather than unquestioned truths. This closely supports the article’s concept of becoming the Observer.

Dunne, J. D., Thompson, E., & Schooler, J. W. (2019). Mindful meta-awareness: Sustained and non-propositional. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 28, 307–311. The authors examine meta-awareness as a central feature of mindfulness, including the capacity to recognize thoughts as mental experiences instead of literal representations of reality.

Tang, Y. Y., Hölzel, B. K., & Posner, M. I. (2015). The neuroscience of mindfulness meditation. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 16, 213–225. This widely cited review summarizes evidence connecting mindfulness with attention regulation, body awareness, emotion regulation, and changes in the experience of self.

Bernstein, A., Hadash, Y., & Fresco, D. M. (2019). Metacognitive processes model of decentering: Emerging methods and insights. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 28, 245–251. This article further develops the science of stepping back from thoughts, emotions, and internal narratives without suppressing them.

Meditation, the Brain, and Emotional Regulation

Gotink, R. A., Meijboom, R., Vernooij, M. W., Smits, M., & Hunink, M. G. M. (2016). Eight-week mindfulness-based stress reduction induces brain changes similar to traditional long-term meditation practice: A systematic review. *Brain and Cognition*, 108, 32–41. The review describes functional and structural changes involving the prefrontal cortex, cingulate cortex, insula, hippocampus, and other regions associated with awareness and regulation.

Fox, K. C. R., Nijeboer, S., Dixon, M. L., et al. (2014). Is meditation associated with altered brain structure? A systematic review and meta-analysis of morphometric neuroimaging in

meditation practitioners. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 43, 48–73. This meta-analysis identified several brain regions that differed consistently in meditators, including areas associated with meta-awareness, memory, interoception, and emotional regulation. The authors also emphasized methodological limitations and the need for cautious interpretation.

Doll, A., Hölzel, B. K., Mulej Bratec, S., et al. (2016). Mindful attention to breath regulates emotions via increased amygdala–prefrontal cortex connectivity. *NeuroImage*, 134, 305–313. This study offers a possible neural explanation for why attention to the breath can help regulate emotional responses.

Treves, I. N., Tello, L. Y., Davidson, R. J., & Goldberg, S. B. (2024). The mindful brain: A systematic review of the neural correlates of trait mindfulness. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*. The review found recurring associations between mindfulness and reduced amygdala reactivity, along with differences in networks involved in attention, emotional processing, and self-regulation.

Pascoe, M. C., Thompson, D. R., Jenkins, Z. M., & Ski, C. F. (2017). Mindfulness mediates the physiological markers of stress: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 95, 156–178. This review examined how mindfulness-based practices may influence physiological stress markers and stress-related activation.

Khoury, B., Sharma, M., Rush, S. E., & Fournier, C. (2015). Mindfulness-based stress reduction for healthy individuals: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 78(6), 519–528. Across 29 studies, mindfulness-based stress reduction was associated with moderate improvements in stress and smaller-to-moderate improvements in anxiety, depression, distress, and quality of life. The studies were heterogeneous, so results should not be interpreted as universal.

Breath, Heart-Rate Variability, and Nervous System Regulation

Zaccaro, A., Piarulli, A., Laurino, M., et al. (2018). How breath-control can change your life: A systematic review of the psychophysiological correlates of slow breathing. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 12, 353. This review links slow breathing with changes in heart-rate variability, respiratory sinus arrhythmia, autonomic function, emotional state, and activity within brain regions involved in regulation.

Laborde, S., Allen, M. S., Borges, U., et al. (2022). Effects of voluntary slow breathing on heart-rate variability: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 138, 104711. The analysis found that voluntary slow breathing reliably affects measures of heart-rate variability, particularly during the breathing practice and immediately afterward.

Gerritsen, R. J. S., & Band, G. P. H. (2018). Breath of life: The respiratory vagal stimulation model of contemplative activity. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 12, 397. The authors propose a physiological model describing how slow breathing used in contemplative practices may influence vagal pathways, cardiovascular regulation, and emotional functioning. This is a theoretical model rather than definitive proof of a single mechanism.

Laborde, S., Hosang, T., Mosley, E., & Dosseville, F. (2019). Influence of a 30-day slow-paced breathing intervention on cardiac vagal activity and sleep. *Psychophysiology*, 56(1), e13265. A month of slow-paced breathing was associated with changes in cardiac vagal activity and improvements in reported sleep quality.

Laborde, S., Allen, M. S., Göhring, N., & Dosseville, F. (2017). The effect of slow-paced breathing on stress management in adolescents with intellectual disability. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 61(6), 560–567. Slow-paced breathing improved aspects of stress management compared with a control activity, illustrating its possible usefulness as a practical regulation tool.

Attention, Expectations, and Perception

De Lange, F. P., Heilbron, M., & Kok, P. (2018). How do expectations shape perception? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 22(9), 764–779. This review explains how expectations influence what sensory information is prioritized and how it is interpreted. It supports the broader idea that perception is not a passive recording of reality.

Summerfield, C., & de Lange, F. P. (2014). Expectation in perceptual decision making: Neural and computational mechanisms. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 15, 745–756. The authors describe how prior expectations can bias sensory processing and perceptual decisions before and after a stimulus appears.

Clark, A. (2013). Whatever next? Predictive brains, situated agents, and the future of cognitive science. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 36(3), 181–204. This influential theoretical paper presents the brain as a prediction-oriented system that continuously compares incoming sensory information with prior expectations. Predictive-processing theories remain active areas of debate rather than settled explanations of all perception.

Newman, J. (1995). Thalamic contributions to attention and consciousness. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 4(2), 172–193. This review examines how brainstem, thalamic, and cortical systems contribute to arousal, selective attention, and conscious awareness. It also provides historical context for the reticular activating system.

A useful scientific clarification is that the Reticular Activating System should not be described as a simple mechanism that manifests whatever we think about. It participates in arousal and attention, but selective attention also depends on interacting with thalamic, cortical, sensory, emotional, and executive networks. A more accurate statement for the article is that repeated attention, expectations, goals, and emotional significance influence what the brain prioritizes and how experience is interpreted.

Neuroplasticity, Learning, and Becoming the Creator

McEwen, B. S., Gray, J. D., & Nasca, C. (2015). Recognizing resilience: Learning from the effects of stress on the brain. *Neurobiology of Stress*, 1, 1–11.

McEwen, B. S., Nasca, C., & Gray, J. D. (2016). Stress effects on neuronal structure: Hippocampus, amygdala, and prefrontal cortex. *Neuropsychopharmacology*, 41, 3–23.

These works describe how stress and experience can alter neural functioning and structure, while also emphasizing the brain's potential for adaptation and recovery. McEwen's broader resilience research connects physical activity, social support, meaning, mindfulness, and self-regulation with adaptive plasticity.

Allen, M., Dietz, M., Blair, K. S., et al. (2012). Cognitive-affective neural plasticity following active-controlled mindfulness intervention. *Journal of Neuroscience*, 32(44), 15601–15610. This controlled study found changes in neural responses associated with mindfulness training, supporting the idea that repeated mental practices can influence cognitive-emotional processing.

Leung, M. K., Lau, W. K. W., Chan, C. C. H., Wong, S. S. Y., Fung, A. L. C., & Lee, T. M. C. (2018). Meditation-induced neuroplastic changes in amygdala activity and connectivity. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 13(3), 277–287. The paper discusses evidence that meditation may influence amygdala networks involved in affective processing and resilience.

Neuroplasticity does not mean that any desired reality can be produced through thought alone. It means that repeated attention, emotional experience, behavior, and learning can alter neural pathways. Conscious creation becomes scientifically plausible when it is described as changing perception, regulation, decisions, habits, relationships, and behavior—not as guaranteed control over external events.

Non-Dual Awareness and Changes in the Sense of Self

Josipovic, Z., Dinstein, I., Weber, J., & Heeger, D. J. (2012). Influence of meditation on anti-correlated networks in the brain. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 5, 183. This study examined brain-network activity during non-dual awareness meditation and

found that meditation strategy may alter relationships between networks associated with internal and external awareness.

Cooper, A. C., Ventura, B., & Northoff, G. (2022). Beyond the veil of duality: Topographic reorganization during non-dual awareness meditation. *Neuroscience of Consciousness*, 2022(1).

The authors reported altered activity in the default-mode, central-executive, and salience-related systems during non-dual meditation. These findings are preliminary and should not be interpreted as scientific proof of Divine consciousness.

Ehmann, S., et al. (2025). Mindfulness, cognition, and long-term meditators: A review of cognitive, affective, and neural characteristics. This review discusses altered self-awareness, interoception, emotional neutrality, cognitive flexibility, default-mode activity, and reports of less rigid self-boundaries among experienced meditators. The authors note important methodological limitations across the field.

These studies can help us investigate how the ordinary sense of self changes during meditation. They cannot determine whether experiences of unity represent contact with God, the soul, or an ultimate spiritual reality. Those interpretations remain within the domains of philosophy, spirituality, and personal experience.

Contemplative and Philosophical Resources

For readers interested in exploring the soul dimension of the article, the following works provide valuable perspectives. These books should be approached as philosophical, theological, or contemplative resources rather than scientific proof.

The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle explores the distinction between mental identification and present-moment awareness.

The Untethered Soul by Michael A. Singer examines the possibility of witnessing thoughts and emotions without becoming trapped in them.

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor E. Frankl explores responsibility, meaning, and the human capacity to choose one's response even under extreme circumstances.

The Wisdom of Insecurity by Alan Watts explores the illusion of separateness and the difficulty of living fully while mentally resisting the present.

The Dhammapada presents foundational Buddhist teachings on awareness, suffering, attachment, compassion, and disciplined attention.

The Bhagavad Gita explores action, identity, devotion, consciousness, and the relationship between the individual self and a greater reality.

The Upanishads contain some of the earliest recorded explorations of pure awareness, the nature of the self, and unity between individual consciousness and ultimate reality.

The New Testament, particularly teachings concerning the Kingdom within, love, forgiveness, and the transformation of consciousness, offers a Christian framework for embodying Divine qualities in daily life.

A Final Note on Science and Soul

Science and spirituality answer different kinds of questions. Science investigates measurable mechanisms, tests competing explanations, and revises its conclusions as evidence develops. Spirituality explores meaning, purpose, transcendence, morality, direct experience, and our relationship with that which we consider sacred.

The two become most powerful when neither pretends to replace the other.

Science can describe what happens in the brain when we meditate, regulate the breath, redirect attention, or experience a softened sense of self. It cannot yet tell us the ultimate meaning of those experiences. Spiritual wisdom may help us interpret them, but it should not be presented as scientific fact.

Science reveals the pathways through which we change.

Soul asks what we choose to become.