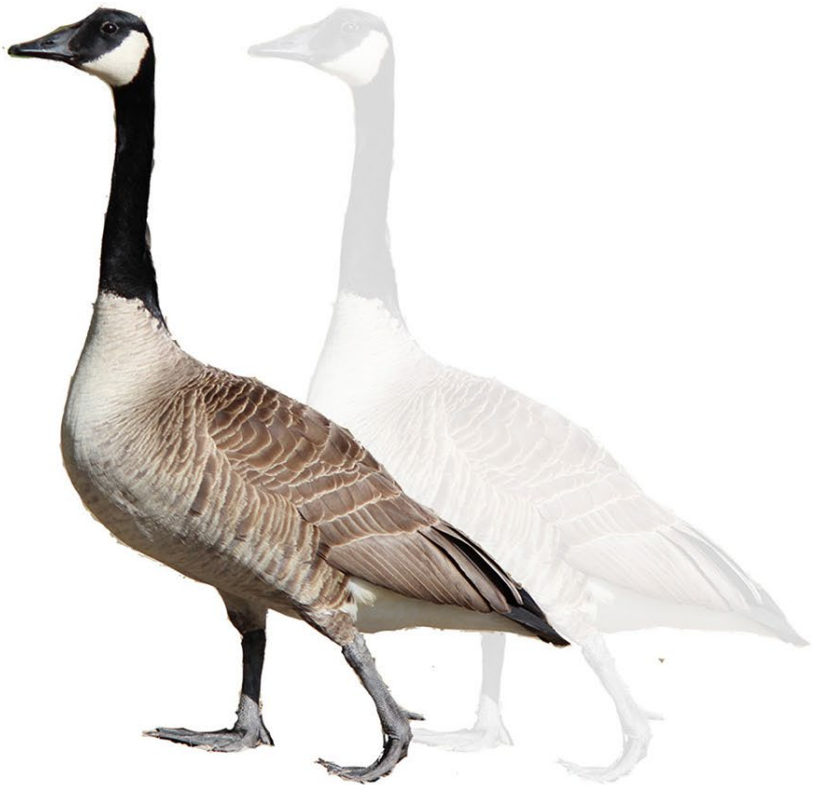


# IMAGINE

## THE DIVINE NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE



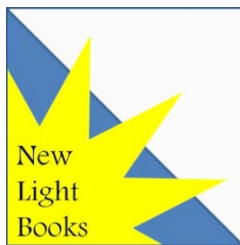
By H. Bruce May

# IMAGINE

## UNMASKING SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

SPECIAL EDITION  
BY H. BRUCE MAY

*A New Light Book*



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Cover Design by H. Bruce May

What is seen as ordinary, mundane reality is only a misperception that hides the underlying spiritual nature of the Universe and the true nature of the human condition, regardless of culture, time, or place and even more so, regardless of religion.



A special thanks to my good friend  
David Dodd, whose feedback on all  
my books has been priceless.



IMAGINE  
UNMASKING SPIRITUAL  
EXPERIENCE

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BY H. BRUCE MAY



Master Baso asked his student, Hyakujo,  
“What do you see in the sky?”  
“Wild geese, Master.”  
“Where are the wild geese flying?” Baso asked.  
Hyakujo said, “They have already flown away.”  
Baso angrily twisted Hyakujo’s nose and said,  
“They have been here from the very beginning!”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From *Essays in Zen Buddhism, First Series*, by D.T. Suzuki, Grove Weidenfeld, New York, first published in 1949.



# Forward

Imagine, if you can, a world without religion, a world without conflicting ideas about the divine nature of the Universe. John Lennon's famous song, *Imagine*, says it isn't hard to do. I think most people would find it hard to imagine such a world but that is the starting point for this book. If you are strongly attached to your religion, and you probably are if you have one, then you may struggle to imagine such a world, but I encourage you to try, if only to follow the discussion that follows. If you do not believe in religion, then you will find it easier to imagine such a world, but you will probably struggle to understand what I talk about in this book. Yet, I think you will find the effort worthwhile. As much as one third of Americans describe themselves as "spiritual but not religious". Many of these people decry the impact of "organized religion" on the world. Religionists often paint a rosy picture of the last several thousand years, one that ignores the horrors of inquisitions and religious wars. Surely, they argue, religion has had a civilizing effect on humanity. I would agree but we shouldn't turn a blind eye to the dangers of religion practiced badly. I will begin with the premise that we live in a world without religion. In this imagined world, some people believe in a higher power, but many do not, and even the ones who do, have little concept and few ideas about the nature of that higher power. Imagine that this is our starting point. From here we will attempt to unmask spiritual experience and describe it without any labels or theological baggage.

From this premise I will proceed to describe the nature of spiritual experience and provide what little we can know about the

Imagine

divine nature of the Universe based on that experience. That knowledge is limited by the very nature of the divine. In a world without preconceived ideas about the divine nor any theology whatsoever, there is little that a human mind could comprehend, beyond a vague idea of extreme intelligence perhaps, but not much more. On the other hand, because our knowledge of the divine comes from our own, unique spiritual experience, there is a lot we can say about that. We know this because of the rich history of spiritual experience recorded by thousands of followers of many different religions over thousands of years. Because the premise of this book begins with the assumption that we live in a world without theology or concepts of any kind about the divine nature of the universe, I will not dwell on this rich history of spiritual experience. Instead, knowing the common characteristics of these experiences, I will create a description of spiritual experience that does not rely on any religion or historical theology of any kind. This description will be a bare bones description of spiritual experience. These descriptions are based on what I have found repeatedly, in many different religions. This experience is deeply mystical, and it leaves the divine mysteriously undefined... and that is fine. We don't need to define the divine to appreciate it or even to invite it into our lives. These are highly paradoxical truths, but I will show you how you can understand these ideas and how you can open your heart to accepting the divine into your own life. Do so and you will discover a richly rewarding experience that can transform you in the most powerful way imaginable. So, imagine what that would be like under these conditions. Imagine living in a world without any ideas about God or religion. But also imagine that we can unmask spiritual experience and understand it without referring to the context of theological concepts and therefore,

understand it more clearly, in a clean and simple fashion. If you can do that, you can discover how to transform yourself into a person who can experience the divine in your own life. Imagine how this experience can help you become a more loving and giving person. Imagine how this experience can bring you a sense of inner peace about life in general, including your own temporal place on Earth. Imagine with me, if you can, that John Lennon was right. If we can only imagine a world without religion, then we can begin to understand the one thing that religion struggles to understand most: there is but one divinity and it does not depend on any one religion to understand it or explain it. Call it whatever you like. Such names are meaningless because they don't explain anything about it or provide you with any real insight into the nature of the divine. To find that you must give up ideas and concepts altogether. You cannot hope to find your connection to the divine with the use of words and ideas. You must go beyond theology to find the divine and invite it into your life. Do so and your life will be enriched beyond imagination.

So, join me on this short journey into the mysterious nature of the universe and discover for yourself the beauty that awaits you on the other side, if you can only learn how to unmask your own spiritual experience and see it for what it really is.



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# Beyond Ideas

***I am standing in the desert under a beautiful white cloud that seems to reach to the very heavens themselves. More clouds stretch out to the horizon and beyond. A sky has never seemed so big to me before. The view takes my breath away. I stand transfixed under the deep blue sky filled with waves of giant white clouds. I have never been anywhere more beautiful or seen the world reveal the natural wonder of this magical planet that we inhabit with such majestic beauty. In this powerful transcendent moment, I feel completely one with the desert, the sky and the clouds floating effortlessly above me.<sup>1</sup>***

This description is from my book, *Searching for the Light*. Oneness is a classic expression of mystical experience. The only way to know what the sense of being one with the world is like, is to have a deeply mystical experience for yourself. When you do, any description I can offer will suddenly make sense to you. Until then, my efforts to describe this experience will be difficult to comprehend, and even more difficult to imagine for yourself. In fact, it is virtually impossible to imagine this sense of oneness without having the experience yourself. If you have never had a mystical moment, I cannot describe the experience in words that would make any sense to you, but I can explain the underlying psychology of what is happening when you have such an experience.

Science is quickly learning all the secrets of what it means to be a human being. The most amazing species to appear in literally

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<sup>1</sup> Searching for the Light, third edition, New Light Books, copyright H. Bruce May (2016).

Imagine

billions of years of evolution, we have grown exponentially in our knowledge of science and technology, the latter being an invention enabled by the former. Depending on how you count it, we are on our 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> technological revolution. The big ones are agriculture (beginning about 10,000 years ago), the scientific (about 400 years ago beginning with the telescope), the industrial (about 150 years ago with massive mechanical machines and motors), and the information (less than 50 years ago with the computer). The agricultural revolution gave us the ability to settle down and build cities which led to all sorts of things, like trade and commerce and all the things you find in large cities. This was the beginning of civilizations. The optical revolution, not usually recognized for its importance, gave us a deeper understanding about space and our place in it, and led to Newtonian physics which was the beginning of modern science. The industrial revolution gave us modern factories with massive machines that could produce all sorts of things, including the mass production of a multitude of products, including smaller machines and tools which revolutionized farming, building, travel, commerce, banking, and sadly, war. On the good side, this led to a massive increase in the standard of living for everyone all over the globe. The information age began with the rapid advance of computer technology in the seventies and eighties, giving us the ability to revolutionize how we process information, leading to the development of the Internet, complex computing and Artificial Intelligence (AI), which may be the greatest threat the human race will face in the next century. All these revolutions led to significant improvements in lifestyles but not without the costs of bringing new problems and challenges, many of which we are still dealing with today.



This progression of knowledge and technology came out of nowhere and without any warning, from an evolutionary point of view. And it has been expanding exponentially at an astounding

Imagine

rate. My grandfather witnessed the change from the horse and buggy to modern cars, airplanes and rockets that could take us to the moon. The information age promises to accelerate the rate of technological advances even faster. If you find the nearly constant updates of computer software more than a little tiring and irritating, then you understand just how fast things are moving. You cannot learn how to use one piece of software before it changes, sometimes overnight, presenting you with a whole new interface that you must learn how to navigate all over again. At least the programmers are getting better at making these frustrating things more intuitive, so the learning curve is growing shorter. The only problem comes when Artificial Intelligence takes over and there is nothing left for human beings to do. Can humans cope with all that leisure time? We will have to see.

There is one thing that scientists are struggling to understand that seems to be beyond their grasp and that is consciousness. Advances in Artificial Intelligence are driving the conversation around consciousness, but these discussions offer little insight into the most mysterious thing in the universe. Consciousness is impossible to describe. Scientists have no idea even what it is. They believe that consciousness must have a connection to the underlying physical nature of the brain, but they cannot find what it may be or even point to any biological process that could explain why consciousness exists. Some believe that we could not function without it, but machines can function perfectly well in the physical world without being conscious. We now have a whole array of industrial robots that prove the point.

Understanding consciousness is a challenge for scientists because they are looking at it the wrong way. It is not that we are physical beings that are conscious of the world around us. We are

physical beings that at our heart, are consciousness. In other words, we are not conscious beings. We are beings who are made of consciousness.

That seems like a funny way of thinking about it but the only way to know what consciousness is, is by having it yourself, or as I would say, by being it yourself. Now this is where I part company with the typical scientist. That is because I believe that we are not only beings made of consciousness. I believe that we are spiritual beings because we are made of consciousness. While the typical scientist believes that consciousness is a secondary phenomenon that rises out of the complex computational functions of the brain, I believe that consciousness is a field, one that fills the entire universe. Our brains act like a lens that can focus this field and use it to literally, come alive, so we can experience the world as living creatures.

All of this gets even more confusing when we start trying to describe our personal sense of self. This requires that we use pronouns, which reinforce the assumptions that we have about who and what we are. These assumptions are useful because they allow us to function as individual entities and engage with other members of our species in useful ways. But the idea that we exist as separate beings, individual entities with personalities having unique characteristics, attitudes, and beliefs, all controlled by a central egoistic being, is simply not true. Our entire sense of self is created by our brain, in a complex process that reinforces this sense we have that we exist as separate, individual egoistic beings. But all this is just so much brain powered processing, a bunch of bio-algorithms, that exist only because of their usefulness for creating the illusion of our existence, as a separate, individual egoistic being. It is not that these algorithms are not real. They

Imagine

are, but it is not the case that these algorithms represent who we really are. They don't.

If you can stop your thinking, just for a moment, you can see that you don't disappear. Your sense of being an egoistic being is still there. You can't quite put your finger on exactly who or what you are, but you feel in your gut, that you definitely exist. Here's the problem with that idea. This feeling of existence does not come from the biological algorithms that create your personal sense of self. It comes from simply being conscious. Your personal sense of self is an illusion. There is no such person, except as an artificial construct, useful as a tool for interacting with others, but it is not who and what you really are. The confusion comes about because you don't ordinarily make any distinction between who you are as a person and your sense of consciousness. You don't see these as two separate things, when in fact they are. Your personal sense of self is an illusion, but your sense of consciousness is very real, perhaps the only thing that you can know directly. All the sense perceptions your brain processes exist in the real world, but the world you see is only an image created by your brain and projected in three dimensions placing what you perceive as your consciousness in the center. There is no question that the world you see is real. It's just that how you see it is unique to how your very human brain processes all the sensory data it collects.

The same is true for your subjective sense of self and the egoistic feeling that you exist as a separate being. Your thoughts, ideas, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and all the other subjective experiences you have, are also created by your brain, and presented to your conscious mind as a typical human being. Your experience of the world around you and of your own, inner world, are uniquely human. You cannot escape that. We are inseparable

from our human nature. If we meet aliens from another planet, they will have a very different, non-human experience. We don't have to wait for that day to come to know how different such experiences may be. Whales have brains much larger than ours and undoubtedly a rich experience of the world and their own unique subjective experience of the world. Yet, we can hardly imagine anything at all about what that experience is like. Is their view of the world any less real than ours? I think not. This all begs the question. What does it mean to be human and to experience the world in a very human like way?

Well, we have a rich history of storytelling that explores that subject in detail, but we don't have to rely on that knowledge to intuitively know what it is like to be human. We can experience it for ourselves, directly, every day of our lives. While we generally miss the fact that our perception of how the world looks is only one of many different possible images, there is something even more fundamental to our human experience that we do not recognize, and that is our subjective sense of being a separate, individual being. It is so ingrained in our thinking, that we hardly notice. We process virtually every facet of our existence in terms of this subjective/objective analysis. We understand the people, places, and things in our lives in terms of how they relate to our personal sense of self. Who is my family and who is not? What is my home and what is not? What is my country and what is not? What is my role in society? What responsibilities do I owe others in my life? What responsibilities do they owe me? How should I relate emotionally to the people in my life? How should they relate to me? We process these questions continuously in a mostly unconscious way, that informs our thoughts and feelings about everyone and everything we know.

Imagine

Now, what happens if we recognize that our personal sense of self is not really who we are? What happens to all this information processing? The short answer is that it collapses. That sounds like a horrible thing, but the truth is that it is not. It is a very liberating experience. The reason is that, when this occurs, you will recognize that all the time and energy you invest in processing the world in terms of how it relates to the idea of “you” is largely wasted. That is not to say that this view is utterly worthless. Indeed, we could not live without it. So, the collapse does not erase all this knowledge. It just puts it into perspective, one that reveals your true nature as a conscious being. This experience is the foundation experience for mystics throughout the centuries. It reveals the oneness that exists between your own consciousness and the entire world. It is not a delusional experience. Just the opposite for it reveals what should have been obvious to you all along. Your consciousness is not a single, isolated expression of being. It is continuous with all of creation.

It is possible to reason through this and come to the understanding that this is all true. Yet, knowing that your personal sense of self does not represent who you really are, is not the same as experiencing the world beyond the normal subjective/objective distinction that we ordinarily make on a daily basis. Breaking through this limited subjective/objective viewing requires that your mind disconnect from the egoistic way of viewing the world. That breaking away comes on suddenly and without warning and it will take your breath away, at least initially. The first instance of such an experience is often called liberating, because it literally liberates you from your ordinary way of understanding who and what you are as a human being. It offers up a vast new view that reveals your true nature, a nature that cannot be denied once

seen. It provides you with insights into the very nature of the universe, one that convinces you beyond all doubt that you are a spiritual being.

The path that leads to such an experience is poorly understood. Thinking about it may help, but it usually takes something more. It requires that you let go of your attachment to your personal sense of self. That is a tall order for modern humans who celebrate the individual as the measure of success and achievement. These views obliterate the necessary distancing of the individual from his own sense of self in order to have a liberation experience. Instead of measuring success in terms of your personal achievements, you must come to recognize that you are not the center of your world. This requires a special kind of humility, one that recognizes that seeing the world from an egoistic viewpoint, moves you farther away from the thing you really seek. Real happiness comes not through personal achievement but by letting go of your attachment to your personal sense of self. There have been disciplines in the past designed to guide individuals down this path but there has never been a perfect formula for achieving this. The irony is that such an achievement is not possible, because it requires that you give up the thing that is holding you back, the idea that there is a personal self that can achieve anything! If there is no way to achieve liberation from your personal sense of self, then how can it ever come to pass? There is no clear answer. What we can say is that there are those who develop a sense of non-attachment to their personal sense of self over the years, and these are the people who are most likely to break free of the illusion of being a separate being. The only key we have to this mystery, is in knowing that the secret in transcending your egoistic way of viewing the world, requires that you stop thinking conceptually altogether.

Imagine

It is this constant analyzing of things, people and events, that keeps you bound to seeing the world through an egoistic lens. It turns out this is a dark glass, and as long as you are viewing the world through it, you are seeing the world darkly. When you can cast it aside, you can see the world directly and you will discover that it is filled with light, a light that shines right through your very being. You are one with this light. This is mystical experience. You cannot have a liberation experience until you first train yourself to stop thinking conceptually about the world, categorizing it into a thousand different things, and thinking endlessly about it all, yourself included. When you can go beyond ideas altogether, the ground of being is ripe for revealing your true nature, not as an individual entity with a personal sense of self, but as a spiritual being, united with the divine nature of the universe.

# **The Wisdom of Liberation**

Liberating yourself from the normal, egoistic way of viewing the world, leads to the ultimate form of liberation, when your attachment to your personal sense of self falls away and you break through to a more expansive view of the world and your connection to it. This liberation is perhaps the most valuable experience you can have as a human being. It reveals new insights into the nature of our lives and our relationship to the world at large. Liberation is not a state of being but rather a way of looking at the world. It does reveal your true nature as a spiritual being but there is no real change that takes place in you other than in the dramatic change in point of view. Instead of viewing the world from the point of view of an egoistic entity, living as a separate and distinct being, you suddenly see that you are in fact, in the most fundamental way imaginable, united with and completely continuous with the entire Universe. Now your egoistic self does not experience this unity. It remains distinct and separate from the world. The illusory nature of your personal sense of self becomes self-evident as does your true nature, which stands apart from your egoistic self. Your true nature is quite simply, pure consciousness, and the amazing nature of consciousness becomes the most important thing about this new way of looking at the world.

You realize immediately upon having a liberation experience, that your true nature is empty of any characteristics whatsoever. It is neither great nor small, arrogant nor humble, smart nor foolish, brave nor cowardly, or any other polar opposites that you can describe. It is simply empty and void of anything, except for the perception of reality and the world around you. This consciousness

Imagine

contains all things. After a liberation experience you can see clearly that there is no way you can make any distinctions between the essence of your being and the rest of the phenomena that exist within your perception. There is only everything and you are one with all of it.

This view is dramatically different from how you have previously thought about yourself. Prior to a liberation experience, you could only think of yourself as being an individual persona, an egoistic entity, with a multitude of relationships with all the other people, places, and things in your life. These relationships defined who you are, and they occupied most of your conscious attention. Once you see that this is only an illusion and that your real self has nothing to do with this limited, separate egoistic being, you will discover that all the relationships between you and others become irrelevant to how you understand who and what you are. Of course, the people you care about remain important to you, but your perception of these relationships is changed. Your positive feelings for these people, friends, and family alike, rise to the surface while all the negative feelings fade to insignificance. Liberation reveals not only your true nature but also the true nature of all those around you, and the essence of everyone is exactly the same. The persona they portray is seen as just that. Shockingly, you realize that you are, at the core of your heart and soul, one with all of them, and this one substance is also continuous with the entire universe.

You have no name for this essence. You just recognize that it is what you are, what everyone is, what the entire universe is. It is consciousness married to the phenomenal world. Beyond that, you cannot describe it, explain it, or even say what it is. Yet, once seen, it is recognized as marvelous, a spotless beauty that fills the void in



which all matter exists. All things seem new again. The world is filled with wonder. It is a marvelous and enchanting place. Everything is beautiful. You have no ambitions, no pains, no agony about anything. There is nothing to do, nothing to achieve or strive for, because your awareness of this magical essence that fills the entire universe is complete in and of itself. You can easily enjoy the moment, whatever is happening. There is no need to do anything other than the normal daily activities that require attention. There is no need to remain attached to egoistic struggles and these are now seen as meaningless. The personal drama of your life falls away and there is no need to be anywhere other than where you are now. There is no reason to change what is happening. You see that most of the pain you have experienced is based on your personal drama, which is now meaningless. If you see others in pain, you recognize that their pain is also based mostly on their own personal drama which is also seen to be mostly meaningless. You have a deep and powerful awareness that all things pass away,

Imagine

including everyone and everything, but this is seen as part of the natural order. There is no reason to be attached to anything, even life itself, which unfolds naturally and requires little attention from you.

Most of the pain of this world is created by egoistic views which now ring hollow. Real pain and sorrow cannot be escaped, but now they are seen in a new light, and the pain of life, even unto death, is seen as being a natural part of the physical world. You can also see that your true nature transcends the physical world and is not subject to the destructive forces of the physical universe. Consciousness is seen to be completely distinct and separate from the physical world which it reveals. These two things go together so seamlessly that there is no way to separate them. The physical world and consciousness are two sides of the same coin. They cannot exist except in relation to each other. There is no desire to fathom the depths of this mystery. It simply is what it is... and it is marvelous!

A liberation experience occurs for reasons that are poorly understood, but clearly there is a path that can lead you there. It requires that you learn to recognize your egoistic way of viewing the world and distance yourself from this view. Non-attachment to your personal sense of self begins with little things. It begins with letting go of your strong emotions, especially negative feelings of anger, hurt, envy, jealousy, and hatred in any form. It also requires that you develop a stoic attitude toward the misfortunes of life. Bad things happen to good people and believing that you deserve the good things in life is no guarantee that you will receive them, despite all the hard work and dedication you may bring to your daily endeavors. There is a certain kind of wisdom that comes with this non-attachment. This wisdom offers up insights into the way

of the world; into the relative insignificance of personal achievements; and the value of experiences over material possessions. This is not to say that you should not have goals or attempt to achieve personal success in the world. To fail to do so would be foolish. It is the attachment to success that misleads you, not success itself. Life is all about success, both on a personal level and on a collective level. We succeed to the extent that we help others succeed. The greatest teams in sports and business know this. They define clear goals for their teams, and they build commitment from every member to help the organization achieve these well-defined goals, sometimes even sacrificing their personal success along the way. A great quarter-back may want to run the ball himself to score a touch-down, but if the team is better served by passing the ball and letting a wide receiver win the goal, the quarter-back knows it's the right thing to do. In another situation, perhaps he should run the ball himself. Only he knows for sure but if he is playing on a great team, he knows the right answer instinctively and he doesn't hesitate to make the right call.

Similarly, great companies and organizations build a strong sense of teamwork, one that inspires everyone in the company toward success as defined on a grand scale, one that makes it more important that the company win, than the individual. Business experts are recognizing this underlying truth about successful organizations. They inspire their members to achieve great things through collaboration. Individual rewards are not ignored. They are merely accepted within the context of helping others work together more effectively. There is a commitment to innovation, of adapting to ever changing circumstances, and trying to always make improvements throughout the organization in both incremental ways and occasionally, in breakthrough ways that can

Imagine

dramatically change outcomes and make significant improvements in how an organization operates. These truths hold for all forms of organizations, including private, public, NGO's, non-profits, and small businesses.

This wisdom is not new. It has been around for millennium, but it seems that it is poorly learned by most people and poorly transmitted from one generation to the next. Major civilizations have learned these lessons during their rise and lost them during their decline. What is even less common, is the application of this wisdom to our spiritual lives. Organized religion often provides a comforting solace through weekly rituals that become so common place that they offer little or no insight into the divine. The masses feel comforted by practicing these rituals, but they never seem to change or transform their lives in any significant way. If religions are designed to help people get better connected to the divine, and become more giving, more loving, more caring, and more forgiving, they fail more often than not. Liberation changes how we think about our spiritual life. This is a rare experience in most cultures. Rather than teaching practical ways for people to develop non-attachment to their personal, egoistic way of seeing the world, rituals just let people pat themselves on their backs for having showed their commitment to the ritual itself, and not to any underlying transformation in themselves. I won't deal with these issues any more than I already have because the premise of this book is that we live in a world without religion.

There is a way to embrace practices that do transform your life. These are among the oldest practices on Earth, and they are very simple. We all talk about them, but rarely do we apply them in our own lives. These include developing empathy for others by learning to listen to their stories; letting that empathy grow into a sense of

compassion for others; forgiving others for their transgressions against you; letting go of the many negative and hurtful feelings that we carry around in our hearts; and opening our minds to the wonder of the universe and the miracle of our existence as conscious beings. These are the things that we should be learning to do on a regular basis. Nothing else really matters because nothing else leads to real personal transformation.

A liberation experience is the natural outcome of embracing these best practices. Learn to listen, love, and forgive. That is all it takes. Practice these things in little ways every day and you will see the transformation begin to take place. It continues throughout your life, changing you in the deepest core of your being. Over time, your attachment to your personal sense of self will become thinner and thinner until the tiniest, little thing will cause the illusion to snap, and realization of your true nature breaks out. Prior to this, you can begin to experience transcendent moments, times when your sense of self is forgotten, at least for a moment, and you can feel the underlying characteristics of the universe as they are expressed in your immediate experience. These transcendent moments may not seem like much. Initially, they are hardly noticeable. They may seem no more than an easy peaceful feeling associated with listening to music, or seeing a beautiful vista, or just spending a relaxing day with friends. Yet, if you pay attention to these moments, you will begin to learn how to invite them into your life. Transcendence, whenever it occurs, offers us a glimpse into the timeless beauty that is the universe. We experience this in the only place we can: our immediate experience of the moment. When our minds are racing through thoughts about our personal lives and the drama that usually surrounds us, we are far removed from transcendent reality. When we learn to

Imagine

distance ourselves from our egoistic way of seeing the world, we move closer to the magical nature of reality and the experience of peace and harmony that we so desperately want to know.

There is a hunger for transcendent experience. This hunger sometimes expresses itself in dark and dangerous ways, as when we get addicted to things like drugs and alcohol, or to experiences that stir our passions. Except for addictive drugs, many of these experiences are fine, when taken in moderation, but when they become obsessive, they turn into just another form of addiction. The irony is that transcendence offers us a natural cure for these addictions, one that gives us the thing we secretly crave above all else: peace and happiness. We experience peace and happiness whenever we feel complete and whole. We feel this way whenever we feel loved. Liberation conceals the ultimate truth that we are always loved by a nurturing spirit contained in the deepest part of our being. This spirit is pure being, pure consciousness, pure love. It is the thing that we are made of. It is the thing out of which the whole world comes to life. This would be a Godless universe if it were not for this being, the essence of life itself. It is that which allows the universe to become conscious of itself, through us. To call it God is to say nothing about what it is. If you postulate a supreme being that oversees everything, it immediately begs the question, why would such a being create a world that is so full of pain and sorrow? Why would such a being create creatures only to watch them die and pass away? These questions have no answers because they are based on a faulty way of looking at things. These questions are asked by egos; by individual, separate beings that do not recognize their intimate connection to the divine which already exists inside them. If you are one with the divine nature of the universe, why are you concerned about anything at all? If you are

already one with this divinity, why would you have any concern for the ending of your false, egoistic self when the essence of who and what you are, is already eternal? Liberation reveals this underlying reality, and it transforms your understanding of what and who you are. It reveals your immediate connection to the divine nature of the universe, a connection that is not merely an attachment, but is continuous with the very substance of reality. What difference does it make to you, knowing that your temporal existence as the individual person you have come to know yourself to be, will cease to exist one day, while the essence of who and what you are, has always been here. It will come back again in a thousand different ways. The flower blooms every spring. It neither longs for the past nor does it hope for the future. In the present, eternal moment, everything exists now and forever. The paradoxical truth of this statement becomes obvious to you in a liberation experience. Liberation chases away the contemplation of silly questions like why is there evil? Dualistic ways of seeing the world have meaning in our temporary lives, but not in the bigger view revealed by a liberation experience. We can embrace the sorrows of grief on a daily basis while incarnated in the physical world, while at the same time we celebrate our spiritual existence as part of a much greater universal consciousness which is eternally present in the world. A Liberation experience allows you to process your personal grief more easily because it offers a deeply spiritual experience of the context that is not seen by most people. That context is the eternal foundation of being and the inherent joy in a being who is conscious of the world.

This is the wisdom of liberation. It offers us feelings of comfort and joy even as it liberates us from our attachment to our egoistic way of viewing the world. The only question is, how do we find it?



# Finding Transcendence

Short of having a liberation experience, we all experience transcendence throughout our lives. Transcendence is one of the most overused words in the English language. Because it means to “go beyond” ordinary limits of some kind or another, it is often used, or misused, to talk about all sorts of silly things. In theology, it has a narrower definition. It means to exist outside the bounds of the universe, outside space and time, in contrast to being “immanent”, or being within the bounds of the universe. The distinction is used in debates about the nature of divinity (i.e., does it exist outside or within the universe). Transcendence has another meaning and that has to do with experiencing a transcendent moment, one that connects you to something greater than the ordinary, everyday experience of the world around you. Such experiences are unique and stand out in contrast to how we normally perceive the world. These experiences connect us to something that is greater than our personal sense of self. We recognize this when we have such an experience, but we don’t often recognize these experiences as being anything special. That is in part because in their milder forms, transcendence does not stand out as being anything that special. Yet, transcendence, even in its milder forms, opens the doors of perception to a greater sense of being, one that defines not only our own true nature, but the essence of being that invests the entire universe.

In the world of religions, such ideas are associated with the idea of God, but for the purpose of this book, we are leaving all such ideas alone. The minute you begin talking about things like God, you get caught up in a maze of arguments that never ends. Transcendent experience has nothing to do with concepts of any

Imagine

kind. Transcendent experience in its purest form, simply takes you away so that you literally transcend your personal sense of self and experience the world directly and not through the lens of your personal, egoistic way of viewing things. Once you understand this, you can begin to invite transcendent experience into your life. The more you invite it into your life, the more likely it will appear and the longer it will linger. It is the state that most people seek to achieve when meditating but the minute you seek to achieve a state of being of any kind, transcendence slips away. That is because it is your egoistic way of thinking that drives it away. Who is it that wants to achieve such a state? Your personal sense of self does and that is, by definition, not transcendent because the egoistic identity that seeks to obtain something, is the very thing that must be transcended. It might seem to be a hopeless task but it's not that complicated unless we make it so.

To polish off your transcendent skills, all you need to do is to open your mind to experiencing the world just as it is, in this immediate moment. Accept it and everything in your mind without trying to change anything, including your thoughts about it. Simply observe the world as it passes by, like a bystander on a street corner that has no plans for where he wishes to go next. Anytime you pause, even for just a moment, you open yourself up to transcendent experience. At first, it may not seem very magical or special in any way, but if you practice watching the world this way, you will discover that it becomes easier and easier to simply observe the world and watch it pass by. Someone who I admire very much but whom I will not mention by name (because I'm not making references to any historical figures), once said that if you want to learn how to meditate, watch a cat. Cats have no intention to meditate when they sit quietly watching the world go by.

They don't even know what meditation is, but they do it very well. Of course, this is part of their programming, as a hunter, to sit quietly and watch for prey to wander by. Still, it is a very good recipe for watching the world without judging it or thinking about



it or thinking about anything. All such concepts would be a distraction to a cat, who would then miss the mouse when it appeared because it would be caught up in a daydream about something else. Humans tend to think all the time. It's all that thinking that gets in the way of experiencing a transcendent moment.

Cats can sit for hours perfectly alert and remain perfectly still, just waiting for something worth their attention to come along. Human beings aren't very good at this, except perhaps when fishing, which isn't about doing much of anything, except waiting for a fish to bite your line. Fishing is good practice for someone

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who wants to learn to meditate. Of course, most fishermen don't care about learning how to meditate, which is funny because they are actually pretty good at it. That only goes to prove that meditation is not about achieving anything at all. It's only about observing the world, just as it is, without thinking about it or judging it or analyzing it. This is why so many very smart people aren't interested in meditating or learning about transcendent experience. If they can't analyze it, study it, or learn about it in any formal way, what good is it? That is why they don't teach transcendence in colleges. They don't even know what it is. You could never get a Ph.D. in transcendence. If you think about this book, and what I'm talking about, it comes down to eliminating conceptual thought altogether. It is not a subject for academics because they would have nothing to say about it, nothing that would really matter very much anyway, and certainly nothing that could be analyzed, studied, and explained endlessly in never ending discussions. Academics have no use for transcendence and they never will. They can study theology all they like but that is just a world filled with concepts and that is exactly what transcendence is not about.

If you do practice watching the world like a cat, you will probably find a nice place to sit, not one in a closed room but one outside, perhaps on a porch or on an outside deck, where you can look at the world. In the old days, people would sit on their porch in an old-fashioned rocker and watch the world for hours. That was a very American way of meditating. Of course, they didn't think of it that way, but it amounted to the same thing. Before mass media took over the world, people could pass the time quite easily, by sitting on the porch and watching the world go by. That is just exactly the skill we have lost, and it is the skill you need to acquire

if you want to get good at experiencing transcendence. When you do, you will begin to notice some things about transcendent moments. They are often filled with an inner sense of peace, characterized by contentment with things just as they are. There are no goals in your mind, no thoughts about things you need to do, places you must go, or people you need to meet. Everything that you need is right in front of you and it is perfect, just as it is. This peacefulness is a very special experience. It is our natural state of being. We are not taught this, which is sad. It is only our modern materialistic culture that bombards us with ads and promotions all day long along with an endless stream of media content that offers up endless distractions and keeps us thinking about things we don't really need. When you sit outside just watching the world go by, you can forget about all that non-stop array of distractions and attention grabbers, and let your mind simply come to rest.

It turns out that this state of rest is perfectly common to the human mind. We just have to relearn how to find it. It is in fact, the simplest form of happiness there is. It turns out that we don't have to pursue happiness to find it, we only have to learn to come to rest, and let it appear. You may also notice that this sense of inner peace has another aspect to it. In some transcendent moments, this sense of peace transforms into a simple feeling of joy. This is not an overwhelming sense of joy. It is a quiet and peaceful sense of joy. In these moments, there is nothing that you must do, nothing to achieve, nothing that calls out and demands your time and attention. That includes, thoughts about improving yourself in any way. All those self-improvement books you have read can be thrown away. They will do you no good here. They address the one subject that suddenly has become irrelevant, your

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personal sense of self. In a transcendent moment, you forget about yourself altogether. After you experience transcendence in its many different forms, you will begin to appreciate the fact that you really aren't that important. The world has been here for millennium, and it will continue far into the future, long after you are dead and gone. You will hardly be missed, except of course by your closest friends and family. The point is that all the things that concern you so much from day to day, really don't amount to much. Think about how much time and emotion you invest in thinking about yourself. Most of this thinking is a great waste of time. You worry endlessly about your relationship to other people and things. You worry about what you have to achieve, how you are perceived by others, how they feel about you, how you feel about them, what you can do about it, how you can manage it, how you can manipulate it, how you can get something out of it, how you can be a better person, by some standard that matters to you. All these thoughts are the focus of your personal sense of self. Not only are they mostly a waste of time, they are an endless distraction that keeps you engaged in endless thought, all of which chases away transcendent experience.

You will be far better off, if you spend less time worrying about these things and spend more time letting your mind come to rest. Restfulness is an ordinary state of mind, but we don't know that because we are taught to be endlessly restless, worried about achieving things, doing things for others, becoming a better person, and so on and on. The truth is the average person is just fine, just as they are. Of course, there is no harm in trying to become a better person, but the irony is that if you learn how to rest your mind and invite transcendence into your life, you will discover that you are on a path that will naturally make you a better person,

without any effort to make it happen. That has to do with the power of joy. People who are happier, live longer happier lives. That is so obvious, it is hardly worth mentioning, except for the fact that we don't know how to achieve such happiness. Real happiness comes when you open your heart and mind to transcendent experience. It is only through our direct connection to the divine that we can transform ourselves in any meaningful way. Don't take my word for it. Just find people who are happy and learn from them. Most truly happy people have learned that the secret to happiness lies inside themselves, and not out in the world of material things, or personal achievements.

The joy you can experience in a transcendent moment reveals itself in another powerful way. In some transcendent moments, you will experience this as sense of love. It may not attach to anything or anyone. Instead it will come across as simply a feeling of being loved, or perhaps more accurately stated, a feeling of being filled with love. To be loved is a wonderful feeling but divine love is more mysterious than that. This kind of love is all embracing, specifically because it is transcendent. If you have forgotten about yourself, forgotten about your personal sense of being an individual egoistic entity, then this love is not directed at you, it is simply filling the world all around you. These types of transcendent moments can be very powerful and moving but they can also be very quiet and peaceful. They are distinct from the sense of joy you often experience in transcendent moments, in that such love attaches itself to anything and everything. In such a moment, the world can suddenly become a beautiful place. This is true regardless of where you might be. A suburban back yard can become as beautiful as the most exotic garden. It is not objective beauty that you see in such a moment. It is the inner beauty that

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is an integral part of the universe. The world around us is filled with this marvelous beauty all the time, but we rarely see it because we are focused on evaluating everything we see, judging things and places in terms of what they mean to us personally.

Finding transcendence only requires that you forget about your personal sense of self and focus on the immediate moment, letting your mind come to a state of rest. There is nothing special or difficult about learning to do this because this state of rest is part of the programming built into humans by our DNA. It only seems difficult because we live in a culture that bombards us with constant chatter and insists that we must be in constant motion, thinking about things, doing things, buying things, building things, achieving things. There is nothing wrong with doing active things. Indeed, we must in order to survive, but we become disconnected from our true nature as spiritual beings when we keep our minds working overtime, thinking, analyzing, and conceptualizing about all manner of things. Practice letting your mind come to rest and just leave it there and remain idle in your thoughts. When you do, you will discover a clarity of mind that sees the world in all its natural beauty. Clarity of mind, when cultivated as a natural state of rest, reveals your natural connection to the world around you, a transcendent state of being that is filled with joy and happiness. Clarity of mind eventually reveals all things unknown but worth knowing. It provides you with a way to know the universe that goes beyond thought and analytical thinking. It is a way to know without knowing. It allows you to discover the mysterious nature of your connection to the divine and fill your life with comfort and joy.

# Love and Forgiveness

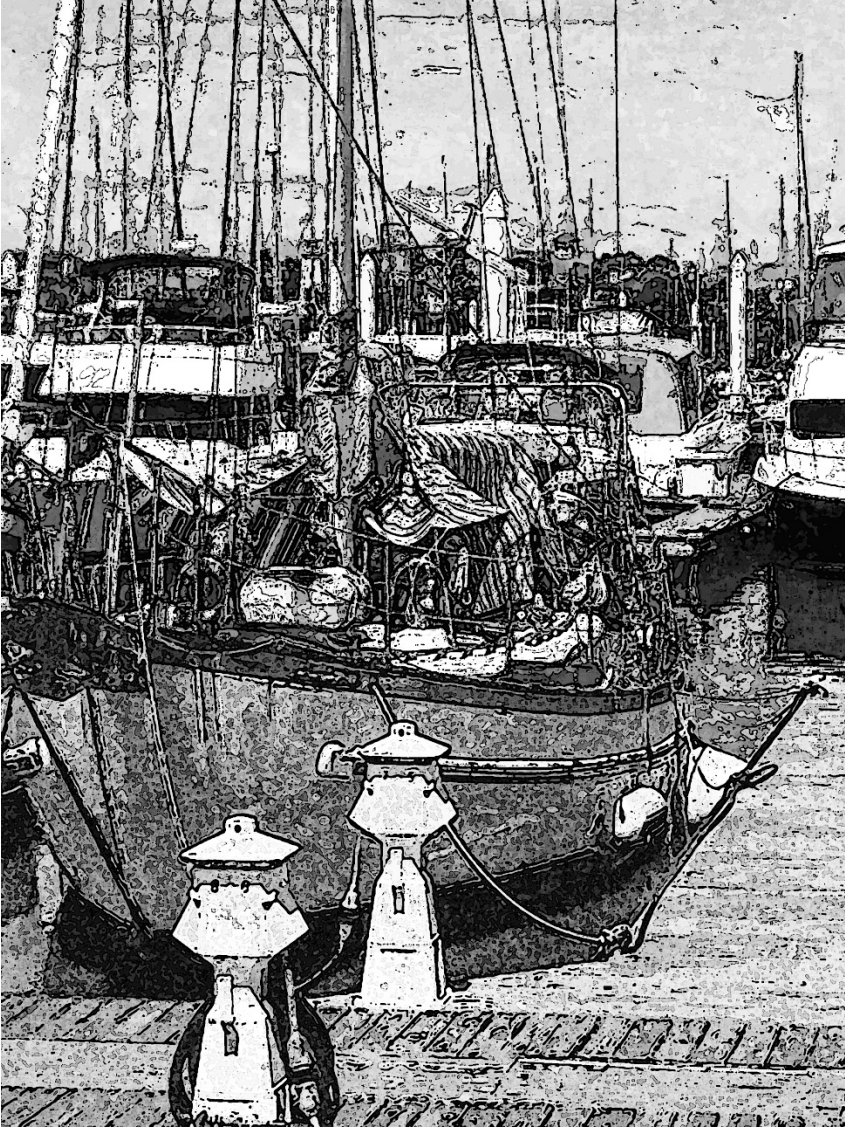
Love is the most powerful thing in the world. It transforms everything it touches, and it will transform you if you let it. Our culture promotes romantic love as if it were the only kind of love in our lives. Other forms of love are recognized but they get much less attention; love for family; love for country; love for work. These are all real and meaningful in their own way, but there is a deeper, more powerful form of love and it is spiritual in nature. When we talk about things that are spiritual, we risk slipping into the world of concepts. Conceptual thinking leads to a great confusion of ideas. Matters of the spirit need not be complicated with analytical thinking. Just as we said with transcendence, which can be experienced not by thinking about it, but simply by letting your mind come to rest, spiritual love can be experienced whenever you open your heart to the feelings of joy that naturally come with being happy and content with the world in this present moment. When we discover how to accept joy into our lives, we discover the greatest secret in the universe. Love is inherent to the essence of being.

When we are very young, we need to be loved. A child may love his or her parents, but they need to feel loved. This is a very strong need. As we grow older, love becomes more giving and less needy. A love that is totally giving is also totally accepting. It has no need to make demands or set conditions. We actually call it “unconditional” for that reason. In a romantic relationship, unconditional love can be wonderful if it is returned in kind. Otherwise, it can open you up for abuse, so you should be careful about that. Spiritual love, on the other hand, is completely accepting. You feel it when you accept the world, just as it is, at

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any given time. Normally, we have a restless tendency to think about what is missing at any given moment. Our culture reinforces this in us, encouraging us to be constantly working on something. Obviously, when we are working, we must attend to business, but our culture forces us to think that, even when we are not working at our jobs, we should still be busy doing something. Idleness is the product of laziness, or so we are taught. Time should not be wasted. We apply the work standards of our industrial culture to our personal lives, to the point that we feel that we should even spend time, when we have it, working on ourselves. There is no time left, in a life spent constantly doing things, to simply enjoy the present. Even when we try to, we find ways to structure it, so that it doesn't seem like we are wasting time. Every activity has goals attached to it, so that we are always trying to improve our performance or attain some higher level of achievement. This is all part of our mercantile culture where everything is graded, rated, and evaluated. It hardly occurs to us that just lying on the grass and watching the clouds roll by could be of any use, let alone be one of the greatest skills we can acquire. It is not unlike the art of sailing. You can of course, sail in competitions, or sail to a destination, but you don't have to. You can just sail around a lake with no purpose in mind, and watch the clouds roll by.

You may laugh. What skill is there in watching the clouds roll by; it takes no training at all; and there is nothing to achieve. What possible use could it be? The human mind is a powerful tool, perhaps the most sophisticated tool of its kind that we know of in the universe. We use it to manage every aspect of our lives, often without even realizing that we are using it to do anything at all. Socially, our brains monitor our every engagement, action, and reaction. Even small talk is important on many different levels.



Our relationships with other people, personally and professionally, are the most important things in our lives, and yet we hardly notice how much time we spend thinking about the people in our lives.

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It very nearly consumes us. For all our conscious attention to these issues, our brains are unconsciously processing everything we do, sending out evaluations, warning signals, and alerting us to opportunities and threats. In business, there is something called a SWOT analysis. It stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strengths and weaknesses are internal to a business organization while opportunities and threats are external. The human brain applies the same approach to our personal lives, usually without you even noticing that it is happening. Consciously or not, we are aware at least to some extent of our own strengths and weaknesses and the same can be said for opportunities and threats in our personal lives, from people and events that come our way.

We spend an almost infinite amount of time thinking and talking about these things. That is because, as we have evolved as social animals, we have had to develop a whole host of skills that help us cope with individuals, organizations, and institutions in our culture. Our success in life is determined to a large extent by how well we navigate these interactions, so it is no surprise that the human mind has spent tens of thousands of years adapting to these conditions and polishing off the skills we rely on to survive and thrive in our social culture. It's also no surprise that social networking has become a dominant feature in our modern lives. Even though it is important that we rely on these skills to thrive in society, we spend far too much time thinking and talking about our social relationships. Just think about how many people have said to you, "I've been wasting too much time on Facebook!" The antidote for wasting too much time thinking and talking about our social relationships is simply this: develop an idle mind.

An idle mind can easily idle its thoughts and simply observe the world go by. An idle mind can be entertained by watching the clouds float by, or the wind drift through the trees on a beautiful day, or by simply watching city traffic on a busy street while sitting quietly at an outdoor café. An idle mind is rarely bored with life. That is because, once you discover that watching the world through silent observation opens a magical vista that you have been ignoring, you will see the uselessness of being consumed with your own egoistic viewing. Evaluating the world through the eyes of your ego is not without value. You must have an ego to engage with others. Without an ego and a personality, others would have no way to understand who you are, nor would they know how to react to you or make sense of the things you say. Your entire personal sense of self exists in the first place, to make you real to others, and to yourself, so that you can operate from a solid footing. But egoistic viewing can easily become an obsession, and not just for the narcissist, but for anyone who is still attached to their personal sense of self. Idleness is a perfectly fine way to manage your day. Just like sleep, which we need to function, idleness lets us relax and recharge our minds. As such, idleness can be practiced at any time of day, at least for a few moments. Letting your mind rest will make you far more productive through the rest of the day. Idleness, when practiced with a clear focus on the present moment, becomes not lazy, but rather mindful. A mind cleared of thought is open to fully experiencing the present moment. This mindfulness is the key to finding transcendence and all the secrets that come with it. Chief among these are the simple joy of experiencing life. Consciousness exists in the first place so the universe can experience itself. It does this through all conscious beings, not just people but all conscious animals, and

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probably many intelligent species living on other planets which we have not yet met. Consciousness makes this world a deeply spiritual place. Without consciousness, the universe would hardly be any place at all, because there would be no one, no beings, to be conscious of it.

Of all the secrets revealed by transcendent experience, joy is the first to be noticed by the mindful person. From this comes the sense of love, an inclusive acceptance and deep appreciation for the world just as it is. When you see the world this way, it suddenly becomes a very beautiful place. The trees look greener, the brook looks clearer, the sunlight shines brighter, and the whole world comes to life in a vibrant and exciting manner. The universe is in love with all of creation. It little matters that all things must pass away, ourselves included. There is a time and place for all things and when you transcend your own personal sense of self, the world appears perfect just as it is. When you feel this love, you may feel at first as if you are feeling loved, by something bigger than yourself, or perhaps by the world itself, but then you will discover that this feeling of love is so pervasive that it seems to swallow you up. You can neither tell whether you are being loved by it or whether you are feeling love for it, but then you see that both are true at the same time. Love itself becomes a characteristic of being. This is why consciousness is spiritual. Joy and love are inherent characteristics of being itself. These characteristics manifest themselves whenever you let your mind come to rest and observe the world with a mindful view.

If you want to help your mind become more mindful, that is full of life, with an empty and clear consciousness that can observe the world just as it is, then you should practice forgiveness, one of the most important skills in the world. Most people think of

forgiveness as something they do if they happen to be in the mood. If someone apologizes to you, then you may be more likely to forgive them, but then again, perhaps not. It all depends on how you feel about it. Forgiveness is perceived as a feeling or an attitude about someone or something that has happened in the past. Few people realize that forgiveness is a skill that can be practiced, and there is good reason to practice it. Carrying around anger in any form is hurtful to your spiritual being. Anger turns into bitterness that can fill your heart with hatred. There is nothing more damaging to your spirit. Letting go of these kinds of feelings is important so that you can free yourself of this unwanted burden. It is not easy to do. It takes time, patience, and practice to get good at forgiving others. The good news is that practice makes forgiveness an easy skill to apply, and you will learn to use it often because it will give you a light heart and bring happiness into your life. Why would you want to waste time feeling anger and hostility when you can let it go and fill your life with joy? It is a choice. You can live in misery, or you can let the pain go and live in joy. You do that by forgiving those who have hurt you. That doesn't mean that you have to accept them or their negative behavior. If someone has hurt you in a very painful way, you should consider moving on with your life, without having them in it. This may be hard in the most extreme cases of abuse, but how much emotional pain do we suffer that comes in the ordinary course of life? Most people have fallen in love only to be rejected. It is hard to get through life without hurting someone this way. We often apply a double standard to this kind of hurt, feeling justified when we reject someone and completely offended when it happens to us in return.

Forgiveness is the gateway to bliss. Practice forgiving everyone who has ever hurt you and you will eventually run out of people to

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forgive. With practice, forgiveness becomes easier and easier to do, in part because it brings the wisdom of seeing the world through the eyes of others. Empathy is closely related to love, and it is an important skill that helps you forgive others because it helps you see the world through their eyes. That doesn't mean that their actions are justified. They may or may not be, but empathy gives you the ability to at least understand how others view things and what motivates them. As you become less attached to your personal sense of self, it will become harder for others to hurt your feelings. That is because you will not be engaged in egoistic viewing. What others think of you will become increasingly less important to you. All these transformations help you become better at forgiving others. You will develop greater levels of empathy for the struggles they face. There are people who are awake to their spiritual nature, and those who are not. Those who are still living in ignorance of their true nature, will be far more attached to their personal sense of self, and they will act out in all manner of bizarre ways, that seem really quite silly to someone who is awake to their spiritual nature.

Once you open your mind to transcendent experience, you will discover a powerful path to happiness, one that does not dwell on things that make you angry. You may want to change the world, and there is nothing wrong with that, but you can make far more progress if you first attend to yourself. Transform yourself by becoming more connected to your spiritual foundation, and all things become easier. Annoying people are easier to deal with; social injustices are easier to fight; goals become easier to attain for things that you deem are worthy of the effort; and life becomes far more pleasant. In the end, practice these skills and transcendence will begin to appear in your life. Learn to let your

mind become idle so you can better observe life, just as it is, without labeling or judging everyone and everything. Most people behave badly from time to time but that doesn't mean they aren't good hearted at their core. The more attached someone is to their own personal sense of self the more they will be caught up in the emotional struggles that life brings their way. When you can begin to see people as being either more or less attached to their personal sense of self, you gain insight into the human condition, and you gain the wisdom of one who can see through the egoistic ways of viewing the world. *Practice observing the world with a restful mind, and you will develop a rich, mindful attitude toward things, places, and people you meet in life. Open your heart to the nature of transcendent experience and you will find increasing levels of joy and happiness seeping into your life. Learn to practice forgiveness as often as you can. Open your heart to the love that is a natural part of being, the essence that manifests itself as consciousness in all conscious beings.* Altogether, this is a simple formula for finding transcendent experience and inviting it into your life where it will continue to transform you, making you ever more aware of your true nature as a spiritual being, filled with the simple joy of being alive.



# The Eternal Present

When you have polished off your new skills, so that you can bring your mind to rest and focus on the present moment, without analyzing it, judging it, or seeing it as it relates to your personal sense of self, you may begin to notice something magical about “now”. The present moment is eternally present. It constantly renews itself, but it never goes away. Geese fly by, high overhead, but when the distant sound of their honking passes away, you realize they have never left. If you are still thinking about them, they are still there in your mind. More interesting in another way, they always remain in our mind, not as geese, but as part of the fundamental nature of experience. There is something unique about experience, any experience. Consciousness takes in all things and yet, there is nothing about consciousness that you can point to and say, there it is, that is what it is, right there, that thing over there, that’s it.

Consciousness is the most mysterious thing in the world. It contains all things because it is completely void and empty of any characteristics of any kind. Scientist cannot even define what it is, or what connection it has to the physical world. How does it arise? They have no idea. What is it made of? They have no idea. How does it operate? They have no idea. Consciousness can only be known by having it. Only a conscious being can know consciousness, and then it is the most obvious thing there is. I am conscious because I am. That is all one can say about it. Yet, it is the most pervasive thing there is. All things come into being by entering our conscious awareness. Reality exists only in our minds. That doesn’t mean it’s not real. It just means that outside of a human mind, there is no perception of reality in any kind of a

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human like understanding. Reality appears very different to a cat, or a dog, or a bird. Every living creature has their own version of reality. Even as they experience the same world, they see it in a very unique kind of way. As humans, we take for granted our own version of reality. A house is a house, a table is a table, and a chair is a chair. But to another animal, these are just words that would make no sense to them. We process everything that we perceive in terms of what they mean as a creature that has a human mind. Yet, that is not the only way we can come to perceive the world. Transcendence is about transcending our ordinary way of understanding the world and our relationship to it.

More than anything, transcendence is about becoming aware of consciousness, even though we can't touch it, see it, or hear it. It is through conscious experience that we can see, touch, and hear the world, but consciousness is nowhere to be seen. It is the thing that cannot be seen, touched, or heard. Our brains are a powerful computing device, the most powerful one we know of, and that is true regardless of your intelligence. Transcendent experience is the same for the genius and the fool. The only difference is that the genius is likely the last one to find it. That is because the intelligent mind spends all its time analyzing, judging, and conceptualizing about it all. To comprehend the present moment without conceptualizing about it, you must let your mind come to rest. There is no intellectual knowledge to be gained in transcendence. There is no secret knowledge, other than that acquired indirectly when you stop identifying with your personal sense of self and let the illusion of separation fall away.

When you let your mind come to rest, and simply observe the world go by, you can see how it all flows, from one moment to the next, seamlessly, through your mind as it processes the sensory



data you observe. As you watch it this way, there comes an awakening to the essence of experience. All things manifest themselves in a similar way, similar in terms of perception.

All things have characteristics that distinguish them from one another, but all things appear within our field of consciousness by the same means and in the same way, just as images appear on a movie screen. There are certain characteristics of film that make it obvious to you that you are watching a movie, except when you get caught up in the story and forget yourself altogether. Life unfolding in your conscious mind as a stream of events also has a similarity to it. When you become aware of consciousness working inside

Imagine

your mind, you can sense the sameness of it all. You can name ten thousand things and they are all different, but within your mind, all things come alive as part of the seamless parade of events that are continuously unfolding. It is this continuity that begins to take shape as a thing in itself, as the thing we call experience.

In that sense, there is no difference between one moment and the next. All things come and go but the field of consciousness never changes, never fades away, or grows louder. Geese fly by high overhead and fade away, yet they are never really gone because they are just another part of the fabric of consciousness. Things appear and fade away, but consciousness remains. It is a constant, the one thing that we know more than anything else. In this conscious moment, you can become aware that time is relative. In a very real sense, nothing ever changes, time never marches by; all things keep flowing through your mind, but they are just images manifesting themselves within the field of consciousness that is your mind. This present moment is eternal, and this eternal moment has always been, and will always be. Once seen, this sense of eternity is very real. Certainly, your mind will stop working one day, and your body will pass away, but while you are alive, every experience you have, will transpire in the field of consciousness that is focused within your mind, as if through a spiritual lens. Beings will come and go, but “Being”, the field of consciousness that flows through your mind, is the very same field of consciousness that flows through all minds. It will never pass-away. In the most fundamental way imaginable, you are one with this field of consciousness. And it is eternal.

There are five things revealed by transcendent experience. First, everything you experience is a manifestation of experience

itself. That is, we can subdivide reality into an endless set of classifications, but in the final analysis, all things are just “stuff”, the stuff of the physical universe. Matter and energy are constantly moving, changing form and shape but never changing in substance. The physical universe offers one half of the equation of human experience. The other half is provided by consciousness.

The second thing revealed by transcendent experience is that, despite all these endless transformations that parade through your mind in a never-ending procession, the most fundamental characteristic of your presence in this world, is your consciousness. When you see this, you will begin to feel a oneness with the world around you; indeed, with the whole universe. This feeling of oneness reveals the truth about your true nature as a spiritual being. Your mind is a spiritual lens, processing the union of matter and consciousness. These are the two underlying fields that make up the universe: physical matter and consciousness. They go together so intimately in the reality that you experience, that they cannot be torn apart. These two fields, the physical (time, space, matter, and energy) and consciousness, are united in you. They become manifest in the living mind. At your core, this is what you are, a spiritual lens, experiencing the universe in the most sophisticated way we know.

The third thing revealed by transcendent experience, is the eternal nature of these two fields. The universe was created by the big bang, but that does not mean that the universe does not continuously recreate itself over and over again, in a multitude of universes, sometimes called the multiverse. All things pass away, but they also come back, over and over again. The eternal nature of the universe can be seen within a transcendent experience. The timeless nature of the dance between the physical substance of

Imagine

reality, and consciousness reveals this eternity. Every moment, comes and goes but nothing ever really goes away, like the geese that fly by, far overhead. They are always there, just waiting for you to hear them. They are just another part of the fabric of reality, constantly changing but underneath, always remaining the same. All the characteristics you can perceive, color, shape, texture, hue, and so on, make up a palate of experience that morphs and changes, but these things are only sights and sounds echoing in your mind, part of the fundamental nature of experience.

The fourth thing revealed by transcendent experience, is a powerful sense of joy. The universe created matter and consciousness for the very simple reason that there is joy in experience. The universe gets to experience itself through conscious beings. There may be many other intelligent beings on millions of other worlds throughout the billions of planetary systems in our galaxy, and certainly throughout the billions of galaxies throughout the physical universe. We do not know yet, but we almost certainly will one day. And then our place in the universe will become far more clear. We are spiritual beings, alone in our world, but not alone among the stars; one race among millions, all of whom are also spiritual beings, scattered throughout the far reaches of space and time. We will eventually come to know the value of joy, not only through our own experience, but through the experience of millions of other intelligent species who will learn to communicate with us. Hopefully, they will share their own spiritual experience with us. It is foolish to imagine a universe filled with horrible monsters all bent on destroying us, or eating us alive, when it is so obviously not the case at all. How could it be? Any intelligent species will eventually come to comprehend the true nature of consciousness and when they do, they will become

transformed in the same way that human beings are only now learning how to transform themselves.

The fifth thing revealed by transcendent experience is a powerful sense of love for all of creation, ourselves included. When you can see through the illusion of being a separate being, unconnected to the world, and discover your true nature as a spiritual being, at one with the entire universe, you can sense the universal feeling of love that pervades the universe. All the many transformations that have taken place in the last 14 billion years are part of a great dance. We are the dancers on the stage. When the lights fade and we exit the stage, it is only to make room for the next act to follow. We have always been a part of this eternal dance of consciousness melded with matter, one that never ends. It is constantly recreated in new and more amazing forms. We too will be recreated and once again be part of the dance. We may have no memory of our past performances, but then why do we need to remember these things when we are experiencing the world all new again? Once seen, the eternal nature of our true self, can come again and again, unbound by past performance, unlimited in capacity to experience the world anew, again and again, a world without end. In the deepest sense, we never go away. Like the geese that fly away, we never really leave.

All this grand pageantry is playing itself out right in front of our eyes. We have the opportunity to appreciate the size and scope of this amazing universe as never before. Science has revealed the secrets of the universe in ways that are astounding and frankly, mind blowing to a humble human being, who has lived generation after generation for millennium, largely in ignorance of the complexity of the dance. The universe is billions of years old. It is made of complex molecules that were transformed over these

## Imagine

billions of years into ever more complex elements and molecules, eventually creating organic molecules capable of evolving into living creatures, who eventually developed the processing ability to capture the field of consciousness and wake up to experience the world directly for themselves. This almost certainly did not happen for the first time with human beings on our planet. We know this because science has also revealed the gigantic spread of space throughout our galaxy and beyond, hosting trillions of solar systems, many with planets similar to ours, capable of retaining water for billions of years and maintaining temperate climates required for life. The complexity of life itself is now being uncovered by science as it continues to reveal our genetic makeup and the amazingly complex biological processes that make this all possible. The scope and complexity of this story is nearly beyond the imagination of human beings to even conceive, except it's not, because brilliant scientists have been able to build on the work of those who came before them, unveiling the secrets of the physical universe, including the structure of atoms that are in turn, built of subatomic particles. They have also revealed the quantum world which operates by rules that seem like magic, but only to creatures who evolved with brains designed to intuitively understand the macro world in which we live our lives. That scientists have been able to use their knowledge to build technologies to peer farther into distant worlds and dig deeper into the fabric of reality, is an amazing story unto itself. How many times have other intelligent species traveled down this same road, learning more about the universe and more about themselves? It is an interesting question to ponder. What is even more interesting to consider, is at what point, does the intelligent mind turn in on itself and recognize its own true nature as a spiritual being? As often as it likes if it is smart

enough to do so. When you do, you will discover the eternity of your own being, united to the underlying fabric of consciousness, continuous with the whole.



# On the Perfection of Being

Of all the things that transcendent experience can teach us about ourselves and the world around us, perhaps the greatest is the serenity that is discovered when everything is seen within the greatest context of all. That context is provided by transcendence, and it reveals a certain perfection in the universe, as it exists in this moment: the perfection of Being. This perfection can be seen even in the face of all the terrible tragedies that take place in our lives. We can acknowledge that bad things happen, that life comes with suffering, and that these things fill our lives with pain that we would rather not experience. Yet, despite all that, the perfection of the universe remains. We are spiritual beings living incarnate in the physical world. These two things are inseparable. As long as we are bound to the laws of physics, living in a material world, we must suffer the limitations of those physical laws, including death and decay, because without the forces of destruction at work, nothing new could ever be created. What most people imagine as a perfect world, if it could be achieved, would turn out to be completely static and unchanging. Life could not evolve. Planets could never be created. Intelligent species could never develop the technology necessary to explore the galaxies. This story is fourteen billion years old, and it is far from over. Where it is going next is unimaginable, but we are living in a special time, where we can peak into the future and see new worlds all around us, containing planets much like our own, in numbers that boggle the mind. Humans will set out for the stars and long before that, we will create quantum communication systems, which may even connect us to other intelligent life in the universe.

## Imagine

This is the nature of the physical universe. Creation and destruction go hand in hand. It cannot work any differently. Destruction is just part of the natural order of things. Still, it is our spiritual nature that shines through it all. Once seen for what it is, we can recognize that what we are, at our very center, is nothing less than the same spiritual foundation that underlies the entire universe. We are one with this foundation and our spiritual essence is eternal and everlasting. Our bodies will age and die. Our physical presence in this incarnation will pass away. The personal sense of self that we identify with will cease to exist. But we will never die. Like the geese that have faded into the distance, we are never gone, because we are continuous with the unformed and uncreated void that contains the field of consciousness that fills the entire universe.

We imagine that we know so much about how the universe works, but that knowledge belies our ignorance. We know virtually nothing about what happens inside black holes, the most powerful force that exists in abundance at the center of every galaxy. We know nothing about how universes within the multiverse are created or disappear. We know nothing about dark matter or dark energy other than they exist. We know nothing about how we might evolve in the future or what comes next. We know nothing about other intelligent life forms which almost certainly exist in abundance as well. Yet, we listen to scientific expert's pontificate as if they have all the answers. The smartest people I know, begin a conversation by telling you what they don't know. Human knowledge has achieved amazing understanding about how the physical world operates but that knowledge, no matter how impressive, sits within a vast sea of ignorance. It is within this context that we must accept life as it is.



This existential dilemma may shake the unfaithful to the core. It may drive the feeble minded to despair, but transcendent experience provides the antidote for this fear. It is within transcendent experience that we find the perfection of the natural order and recognize that despite all our personal suffering, we are one with the very essence of Being, and it is good. Regardless of the pain you find along your personal journey, you can also find, if you choose to look, peace and joy, love and compassion, and a deep connection to the spiritual reality that is completely united with the physical world.

All is well with the world and with yourself, just as you are, right now. You need not seek to perfect yourself in any way to see this spiritual perfection. If you embrace transcendent experience, you will begin a new journey, one that will transform you so that you become a more loving, more forgiving, and more caring person.

Imagine

That is also part of the natural order. If you choose to continue to live in ignorance, you will only fill your life with more pain and suffering. The goals you set, to achieve perfection, will all turn out to be lost causes, driving you to greater attachment to a personal sense of self that divides you from the spiritual wellbeing that is yours for the asking. A transcendent person seeks nothing, ascribes to nothing, and claims nothing. A transcendent person learns to accept his or her own shortcomings, and in that acceptance, transforms themselves with a silent humility that opens the mind to the peace and tranquility of a serene life.

Acceptance is love. It is the secret lying at the center of all experience, waiting for you to embrace it. There is nothing else you need to know. Embracing this love is simply a matter of seeing through the illusion that you exist as a *separate being, an individual personal entity, ego, or distinct self*. When you see through this illusion, you can see the world as it is, without layering on any judgements or trying to analyze it in any way. When you give up conceptual thinking altogether, you can see it as clear as day, and your personal sense of self simply disappears. What is left is pure consciousness filled with peace and joy.

In this state of mind, you can see the perfection of Being. There are bad things and bad people in the world, understood in the conventional way, but the perfection of the universe exists beyond all concepts, even of good and evil. When you discover your connection to this spiritual foundation you can see the beauty of the universe in all its glory. There is a time for living and a time for dying; a time for growing up and a time for growing old; a time for personal struggle and a time for transcendent realization. Transcendent experience reveals all these things and makes the

world new again, so you can see it with the same wonder as a child, seeing it for the first time.

The perfection of Being is fully achieved from the beginning. There is nothing you can do to achieve it. There are no actions you can take to discover it. There are no paths to be traveled that will reveal it, except for the path of least resistance. Let your mind come to rest and stop focusing on concepts and ideas; stop trying to understand it intellectually and just open your mind up and see the world right before your eyes. The first act of looking may seem like nothing, but the act of observing quietly, without thinking about it at all, reveals its true nature. The true nature of Being is that the thing you are looking at is the thing that you are. You are not separate from it. You are completely one with it. You are a part of a continuous whole that includes every tiny bit and piece of the whole thing. Consciousness is not something you possess. It is what you are. That consciousness is continuous with the entire universe. There are only two things in the world, the physical “stuff” of the universe, as it exists in space and time in all its forms on the one hand, and consciousness on the other. These are two fields. Matter can be subdivided into a multitude of forms, energies, and particles. It can be distinguished from time and space. But altogether, the physical universe is of one substance. It is the “stuff of the universe”. Consciousness is the manifestation of the spiritual side of the coin. Physical “stuff” and spirit go together, and they come alive in the field of consciousness flowing through you. This is what you are seeing in every moment of your life. You become distracted by the many forms of things and places, including all the people in your life, but underlying all these things is just Being.

## Imagine

Being is completely passive. It has no characteristics except for the inherent nature of love. It lays no claim on the things that pass through it. It does not judge the world as it goes by. It does not label the multitude of things it sees, nor does it create ideas about any of it. Being simply observes, accepts, and appreciates what it sees, not because any of this fulfills some abstract set of goals or purpose. It appreciates the world just for what it is, in all its amazing manifestations. The universe exists because without it, there would be nothing to admire. Consciousness exists because without it, the universe could not admire what has been created. This is the perfection of Being. It is empty and marvelous. When you see the perfection of Being, you are transformed, becoming enlightened by its beauty, and made whole, accepted, and loved as part of the whole of creation.

There is nothing else to do but accept the loving embrace of the physical world and admire it through the perfection of Being that exists within you. It has been called many things, but that just creates concepts that lead to endless confusion. There is nothing to be confused about once you discover the perfection of Being within yourself. You may find it difficult or even impossible to describe, but you will have no difficulty at all understanding what it is you have discovered, and you will appreciate it as the most amazing and wonderful gift there is. This is a world of wonder, existing in perfect order, devoid of darkness and ignorance, filled with light and spiritual bliss. It is waiting for you, if only you have the eyes to see it. What you are looking for exists both within, and without you. It is your true nature, and it is continuous with all of creation. It is not the imperfect being that you imagine yourself to be. That is only an illusion, a phantom and a thief who steals away this beautiful gift. But the gift is continuously offered and all you

must do to accept this gift is see through the illusion that you exist as a *separate being, an individual personal entity, ego, or distinct self*. You begin to do that when you embrace transcendent experience and learn to let your mind come to rest, so that you can silently observe the world as it really is, a world without end, filled with the perfection of Being, and the wisdom that comes with transcendence.

There is nothing else to say about it. You know everything you need to find it. It is waiting for you. There is within all of us a deep need for this missing part of ourselves, the most important part of all. You can go through life, ignoring the opportunity to connect to it, or you can open your heart to the truth that you know is real. The existential ache inside you is this need calling out to you. The path forward is clear. You only need the faith to take the first step. Everything else will follow in due course. Just stop thinking about it and start observing with a quiet mind. The skills you need will appear. You will polish them off simply by using them. When it is all said and done, you will find this world for yourself, and the perfection of Being that is waiting for you, filled with peace and joy.



# Why You Should Care

You don't have to open your mind to transcendent experience. You need not discover the mystical nature of consciousness as it flows through your mind like water through a stream. You do not have to accept the ideas in this book. You can go on living your life just the way you have up to now. Why should you even care? Life is hard. It is conditioned and limited by the physical laws of the universe. These laws are well documented by science. They apply not only on our planet, they apply everywhere, throughout the universe. Admittedly, there are things we don't know, including what really happens inside a black hole, what happened before the Big Bang, whether there are multiple universes, whether conscious life can leap across from one universe to another, and thus potentially last forever. But even this admitted ignorance pales in comparison to the real ignorance in which we live. As long as you remain strongly attached to your personal sense of self, you can never experience the things I have talked about in this book. You can never know, subjectively, what it feels like to transcend your personal sense of self.

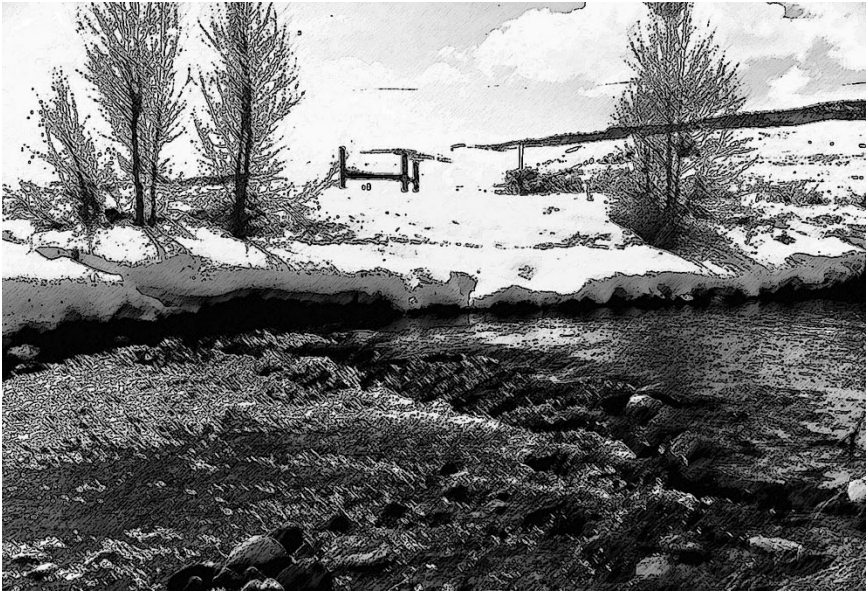
Is transcendence just a happy delusion; an imagined state of being that we can fool ourselves into believing? There is no logical proof that I, or anyone else, can offer to prove this one way or the other. The only way to know is to experience it for yourself. Then you will know. Is it worth the effort? That is the catch. Effort cannot produce the result you want. That's because as long as there is an egoistic entity that desires an outcome... of any kind... that outcome cannot be achieved because it requires that you first give up clinging to the very idea of a personal sense of self that wants to achieve something in the first place!

Imagine

So, is there any hope? I say there is, because others have found their way there. They have done so by following the paths of others who have found the Perfection of Being for themselves. You may not be inspired by my experiences, and that is fine with me. I am not here to inspire anyone. I just share my experience because to not do so would be ethically negligent. You cannot find something of such great value and not share it with others. My first impulse after I had a truly liberating break from my personal sense of self, was to tell everyone about it. That immediately became a daunting task. Many others have struggled with the same problem. Because there is no logical argument or even a clear path to follow that can guarantee the outcome you seek, how can anyone possibly talk about it in a meaningful way? In reading what many others have written about transcendence, I soon realized that I already knew the answer to this paradox. While you cannot describe what it feels like to break through your identification with your personal sense of self, you can still talk about it intellectually. That is not a perfect solution by any means. Concepts of any kind are the main roadblock that you must overcome. You must give up thinking about the world altogether to really experience it directly. This is even more so for breaking free of your subjective sense of consciousness. Until you can do that, and see your true nature as a conscious being, intimately and continuously connected to the very *Essence of Being*, you can never know the truth about who and what you are as a human being.

Yet, we can talk about transcendence and provide some clues about what it feels like, even though it sounds like we are talking in riddles. Mystic ideas are full of paradox. There is no helping that. There is no intellectual way of unwinding the mystery of it all.

It would be a shame if there was a means to describe it perfectly, because it is the mystery of the universe that makes this all so



compelling and marvelously beautiful. It is why Being is filled with love and joy, not just as emotions, but as integral parts of being itself.

We can also talk about the skills and best practices that others have followed to transcend their own personal sense of self, and discover the never-ending expanse of being, that invests the entire universe with consciousness, just as it is filled with the fabric of space and time. These are the two sides of the same thing. Call it divine if you like, but that is just another concept that does nothing to help educate us about it or connect us to it. You cannot define something and call it divine without defining what is not divine. At the end of the day, the distinction between the mundane and the divine is completely artificial. There is nothing that is not divine.

Imagine

And that statement says nothing meaningful at all about the universe, yet it is true.

What matters about skills and best practices, is not how they can inform your personal theology with a deeper understanding of what it means to be spiritual. It is how they help drive you further down the path to transcendent experience. We follow that path out of pure faith. It is not a faith in a supreme being, or in the goodness of the world, or in any other theological concept. It is a faith based on hope and intuition that there is something worth seeking and indeed there is. Some of us have found it and the best practices we apply are what helped move us closer to it, bit by bit, day after day, until we reach a moment when the walls come tumbling down, and unexpectedly everything is revealed for what it really is.

Life and death are suddenly perfectly balanced. What we get and lose in life are in perfect harmony. Good and evil are seen as just more concepts that are too often misused by those who believe they are doing good, when all they are doing is making things worse... sometimes much worse. Bad things happen to all of us. Some of these things are done by people acting badly. Sometimes these are troubled souls, deeply lost in their attachment to their personal sense of self which is filled with strong emotions that have been blown out of all proportions. The reasons why some individuals get caught up in the darkness of egoistic thinking is complicated. That is why forgiveness is so hard to practice. The more we are attached to our personal sense of self, the harder it is to forgive those who hurt us. This is true whether the harm was intended or not, whether it was even real or not. Who knows in any given circumstances? It is not worth trying to sort all this drama out when you can simply forgive and let it go.

Practice forgiveness enough and it will become an easy skill to apply. Use it freely and as often as necessary. Its application will leave you with a light heart and a good feeling about yourself and the world at large.

Compassion grows the more you learn how to give up your attachment to your personal sense of self. That this is so should be obvious because when you love something or someone else, you are focused on them and not on yourself. Self-transcendence is required for love. It is the way you nurture it in your own life. The more you learn to love, the more you can love. Compassion, like forgiveness, grows in strength the more you practice it. Love and forgiveness go together like salt and pepper. They complement each other and like good nutrients, they help grow you spiritually, even without you knowing it.

So why should you care? Why would you want to become a more loving and forgiving person? Why would you want to become more grounded in your spiritual center? Why would you want to discover the most beautiful thing in the universe, your true nature as a spiritual being, and the deep and powerful connection to the divine nature of the universe? I don't know. Perhaps just because it sounds like a good idea. It certainly sounds better than living your life as a bitter and angry person. It is better than living your life in ignorance of the truth of all this. It is better than giving up all hope that we live in anything other than a Godless universe. If you are an atheist, I am not suggesting that you cannot be a loving and forgiving person. These skills can be practiced by anyone. I know many agnostics and atheists who live ethical, loving, and happy lives. It just happens that the path to transcendence will lead you there regardless of your beliefs. It also leads to the breakthrough point where your attachment to your personal sense of self slips

Imagine

away and you can experience your true nature directly, one with the very foundation of Being. We can argue over concepts and ideas, and even get to the point of thinking that an atheist can experience this too, and still not believe that the essence of Being is divine. From my point of view, this is nothing more than just arguing about concepts. I am comfortable describing it as divine. I don't know what else I would call it, speaking from a commonsense point of view. But if you have experienced transcendence and insist that you are still an atheist, well then that is fine with me. I would never question your experience. That is all we have, individually, as human beings. Making sense of your experience is completely up to you. It is a subjective judgement, and no one can argue that you are wrong. They can argue that your actions or words may be mistaken. They can argue that your ideas about science and history are wrong. They can argue that your opinions and views are senseless. But they can never argue that the fundamental way you understand yourself and your basic world view is wrong.

Ignorance of your true nature is not ignorance in the common way of thinking about ignorance. Real ignorance is lack of knowledge about the physical world in which we live. Ignorance as I use the term in this book, is ignorance of your true nature. I say your true nature is spiritual, but there is no need to argue over these words or what is, or isn't, spiritual in nature. The average person does not split hairs like this, but I recognize that if you are reading this book, you may be highly philosophical and probably highly intelligent. In that case I would only ask that you try to go beyond concepts and try to understand transcendence from a practical point of view, as you would if you were examining an ordinary, everyday object. A chair is just a chair, until you see

through the name, and then you can see that it is whatever you see, perhaps a well-built construction of wood and fabric, designed for sitting. When you see through the name, a chair is not a chair. Of course, it can still serve the commonly used purpose for which a chair is designed. But when you see a chair as a physical thing, you can see it for what it actually looks like and how it is made, apart from whatever purpose for which it was designed. When you see through your personal sense of self, you are not a person even at the same time, you are. Both views of yourself are equally valid. They are just different ways of understanding who and what you are. That is the ultimate, mystical paradox. Smart people can have a hard time seeing the truth of this.

The truth is that you are two things at the same time. You are the personal sense of self you have always believed yourself to be, and you are also, pure consciousness, streaming through the spiritual lens of your mind. It is just that your personal sense of self is nothing more than a self-delusion. There is no fixing the human part of yourself. The spiritual part of yourself needs no fixing. It is perfect just as it is, and it always has been. There is no perfecting yourself so that you can become spiritually better. There is no such thing. There are just people acting nicely and people acting badly. Once you transcend your personal sense of self, you will see your true nature, as a conscious being, one with the world, continuous in being with the whole. Certainly, anyone that has seen through this self-delusion cannot take themselves seriously anymore. They cannot buy into the egoistic way of viewing the world, and that includes all the useless drama that fills our lives with endless distractions and emotional upheaval. Once you see through the self-delusion you will naturally tend to behave better. It is not a choice so much as it is simply a way of being... of being a nicer

Imagine

person, not because you feel you must, or because you feel it is the right thing to do, but simply because it is the most comfortable way to live your life.

So, if you think any of this is true; if you think any of it might be true; if there is even a chance that it might be true, then I would think that you would have reason enough to explore more deeply. That is why you should care; not because you should do the right thing, or the best thing, or anything at all; only because you would be curious. Spirit is curious. That is why the human mind is ever striving to understand the physical world. Science has uncovered the most amazing things about the physical universe. A spiritual journey uncovers the other side. It is the side that fills our world with consciousness. It may seem wrong that conscious beings should suffer pain and pass away, but in the greater scheme of things, there is nothing wrong with any of this. Consciousness is eternal. It is only your identification with your personal sense of self that gives you reason to fear death. Once you let go of that, you will discover that you have nothing to fear at all... and everything to gain. Isn't that reason enough to care? To unmask your own spiritual experience, you only need to unmask your egoistic way of thinking about who and what you really are.

# Why It Matters

We have reached the other shore on this journey beyond theology. We have described the nature of spiritual experience without reference to religion and theology. Now I must break the premise of this book and talk about religion. I begin by asking a simple question: does any of this matter? Should we try to save all souls from a life of ignorance? Some think so, but that is just a theological position. Many religions are highly competitive. This is not necessarily an inherent character of religions in general. It is a characteristic of certain sects that insist that they represent the one true path to salvation. More often than not, these same religions have a mystical side, one that is not bent on converting others to their beliefs. Transcendence is a mystical experience, and it leads to an open and accepting view of other religions. Mystical views do not insist they hold the absolute truth about all things theological. Just the opposite. Mystical ideas begin with the core idea that concepts hide the truth. Theology is nothing but concepts and the manipulation of words and ideas. It is absolutely mind boggling how deep these ideas go. You could spend a lifetime studying just one religion and never get to the end of it all. There is no end to all the information you can find, from original texts, inspired as gospel, collected and collated in various forms over the centuries, copied and recopied, with multiple variations on things said and done, analyzed endlessly by other texts, with never ending concepts layered upon concepts, leading to endless confusion about it all. Pick a spot in theology and join the debate. You will never run out of things to talk about. All the while, transcendent truth remains quietly sitting in the corner, waiting to be discovered

Imagine



by the restful mind. The restless will argue endlessly while the idle mind is free to uncover the secret of transcendent experience.

Some people deride, what they call organized religion, for causing all the trouble in the world. It is not religion, organized or not, that causes problems. It is the use of concepts to brutalize groups of people who disagree with your views, that is the problem. Mystical thought stands in contrast to these endless debates. It can be found in every religion, although some are more open to it than others. Take care that you assume a transcendental religion is better than one that holds dear to its dogma. Transcendent religion can have its dogmatic proponents just as easily. Literalists, who cling to literal interpretations of scripture, can be found in any religion. Not to confuse the matter even more, but even fundamentalists can transcend their own rigid concepts and become transformed by mystical truths hidden in their own

## Why It Matters

scriptures. So, don't judge a book by its cover. In fact, try not to judge at all. Open societies can only exist when they are filled with open minds.

If you believe in a personal God, defined as a human like, father figure, you may find it hard to accept a mystical view of spiritual experience. On the other hand, transcendent experience might well make a lot of sense to you. It may even help explain some of your own spiritual experience in ways that make it easier to understand your relationship to God, and how you experience that in your own life. Now that you have followed the journey described, beginning in chapter one with the effort to go beyond theological ideas, and imagining a world without religion, in order to unmask spiritual experience, I hope that you at least have a better appreciation for what spiritual experience looks like. If you are still doubtful, you might try reading the book one more time, replacing the word 'divine' with the word God, and see if the description of spiritual experience makes more sense to you.

If you have never thought much about spiritual experience and perhaps even question whether it is a real, tangible experience, I hope that you may open your mind, at least to the possibility that it may be real, more real than even your own sense of self. If you do open your mind to transcendent experience, you will likely begin to discover it in your own life.

This book is not written to change any minds regarding these matters. That is a goal far beyond the scope of anything I can even imagine. This book is written to share the truth of transcendent experience. It is written for those who care to explore this truth. And for that reason, it matters, not for society, but for the individual, for you, the person who is reading this book. It matters

Imagine

for you and only for you. It is an opportunity for you to think deeply about your nature as a human being, and to explore what you find when you learn how to let your mind idle itself. so that you can simply observe the world go by. Everything you need to know is right there... right here... right now. You need no one to show you or explain it to you. You only need to experience it for yourself. If you do, you will likely find yourself becoming curious about it all. It is a good thing to be curious about what it means to be a human being. Perhaps we will come and go and no other intelligent species anywhere in the universe will ever know that we were ever here. That may seem sad to you, but it shouldn't be.

Consciousness pervades the entire universe. Intelligent species wherever they exist, will be filled with consciousness just as we are. They will be equally curious about themselves and the world at large. Some will turn their attention inward and look beyond the concepts of their worlds to discover the very same thing that you can discover for yourself. When they do, they will be just like us. From a biological perspective, we are all just bugs, some with exoskeletons, some with endoskeletons, and some with no skeletons at all, or maybe something else completely different that we haven't even imagined. Yet, at their core, extraterrestrials will be filled with the same pure consciousness that flows through you and me. We are all the same. So, it doesn't really matter what species comes out on top. It is an endless game the universe likes to play with itself. And make no mistake about it, this is all play. The universe is in love with its own creation, including you and me. We are all one. In that sense, it doesn't matter at all. Just enjoy the ride and explore its depths both inside yourself, and outside yourself. The whole is continuous with all of it. Inside and outside are just ways to talk about subjective experience, but that is all that

## Why It Matters

we really have. This could all be a great dream. We could all be God imagining reality, nothing more than a complex dream that may never end. What matters is the reality in which we live, and how we engage with it, how we embrace it, how we come to love life in all its forms. You can live in fear, or you can explore your true nature and follow the best practices I have described in this book. It will take you to a magical place filled with love and joy. In the end, what better life is there than one that is filled with love and joy? That is why it matters, even at the same time that it doesn't really matter at all. Paradox. That is the nature of this world, but it is not maddening. It is liberating once you see through the artificial distinctions that we ordinarily make between what we perceive as "me", and what is not "me", between what is divine, and what is not divine, between what is love, and what is not love. Stop thinking about it and just watch it as it rolls by. It is beautiful. It is marvelous. And it is filled with the passionate joy of Being. When you can see past concepts and theological ideas, you can unmask your spiritual experience and see it for what it really is. This is what you really are. The seer has become one with the seen. Welcome to your world. Welcome to your true self.

## END NOTE

If you would like to learn more about the ideas discussed in this book, you can read a more expansive discussion in my book, *Transcendence and Liberation*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Transcendence and Liberation, H. Bruce May, New Light Books, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, 2020.