

R. Griffith Turner, Ph.D., Nearvana, A User's Guide to the End of the World, offers fresh insights and practical steps for waking up in time to cope with the imminent collapse of our current world system.

Nearvana: A User's Guide to the End of the World

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NEARVANA:
A USER'S GUIDE TO THE END OF THE WORLD

R. Griffith Turner, Ph.D.

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ACT I
IN THE TWILIGHT OF DYING GODS

OVERTURE

Every work of art, including literary-intellectual word-sculptures like this one, stands on premises that point to conclusions. In this book, the conclusion that our current world system is nearing collapse stands out. And my words are intended to illuminate both the why and the what-to-do issues demanded by that conclusion. The backdrop of our current crisis is accelerating ecocide. However, the canvas required to depict that backdrop is too deep and wide to be contained in a book such as this. I must trust that many who may read this book are already somewhat familiar with the social, economic, and ecological forces that are presently rending the tapestry of global civilization. So let me begin with a metaphoric perspective that may speak to your inner vision.

* * * *

For millennia humanity's dramas have played out on stages of preconception, capriciously lit by worldviews tinted in shades of fear and death. The childish narratives we relate to one another are read from whimsical scripts, heavy with re-writes, scratch-outs, and furious comments by an unruly crowd of ideological and theological dictators posing as directors. Or gods. Among the few who have dared rise above this dreaming, those who've not been ignored have been silenced by calumny, by ignominy, or the sword. In all of this, men and women have felt themselves merely players, arbitrarily cast by fate, faith, or folly. Century by century, the voices of those who've strived to make sense of the tragedy, the comedy, the living and dying have seemed but whispers drowned in the gale winds of time. For millennia wisdom and

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compassion have whispered from the wings, but force and fear yet tread the boards.

In our time, with Earth feverish and diseased by her burden of human folly, more and more of us are searching the horizon for insights and options. In the words of Ray Bradbury, we sense that “something wicked this way comes.” We sense that we have arrived at a time of choosing and that a new kind of human play must be cast. We must depart from the tyrannical directives of ancient gods, gods of guilt, sin, thunder, and plunder that wear three leering masks – *patriarchy*, *hierarchy*, and *misogyny*.

Patriarchy is male dominance within communal, economic, and governing institutions. While, in Western cultures, the prerogatives of the phallus and of cold rationality have oft been questioned, their shades yet guide our ways and our days. Women are yet devalued and women who rise to power oft serve the ancient patriarchal credo.

Hierarchy, sired by patriarchy, is the organization of social institutions into pyramids of power and privilege, thus assuring that conformity shall remain the currency of survival. Independent thought is strongly discouraged and often punished.

Misogyny, typically defined as the hatred of women, is an ambivalent current in social worlds. For both men and women seek love and redemption through the feminine complement of cold rationality. This is so even as all of us are encouraged to devalue and suppress the feminine virtues of cooperation, compassion, non-judgment, and forgiveness.

We must un-imagine these ancient gods. In no other way can we rise above endless cycles of oppression, violence, exploitation, and legal mass murder. We are in need of new conceptions, new scripts, and new roles – human roles for actual human beings and actual human needs. That is the purpose of this book.

One
FIRST THINGS

*Humans are a dangerously insane and very sick species.
That's not a judgment. It's a fact.
It is also a fact that the sanity is there underneath the madness.*

Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now*

Our age is one of darkness, and sorting out probable futures is not for the faint of heart. For as I – along with many others – read the available evidence, it seems clear that humanity is drifting toward global catastrophe. Far sooner than most seem to imagine, a blood red sun may rise to gaze pitiless upon stark desolation and very little evidence of human habitation. On the other hand, human knowledge is uncertain and surprises happen. We may yet change our ways to pursue some happier path. Perhaps sooner than most are likely to imagine, our local star will rise like cosmic laughter to illuminate the green tendrils of a new world. In either case, though, it appears highly unlikely that our current world order will survive another fifty years, much less this century.

I would much prefer the cosmic laughter and the green tendrils option. I would much prefer that we wake up and change our ways. And I do think that is possible. Call me optimistic, but I yet think a more promising world may arise from the ashes of our grievous errors. But if this is to be, many of us must be determined to honor Abraham Lincoln's words. He said, "As our times are new, we must think anew and act anew; we must disenfranchise ourselves."

While struggling to uncover practical understandings and remedies for humanity's collective enthrallment – and my own for that matter – I've been drawn to reflect on a poem by Mathew Arnold. Published just two years after America's Civil War, both its imagery and its themes help me think about the mess we are all in.

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Here's the last verse of the poem:

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! For the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
We are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Matthew Arnold, *Dover Beach* (1867)

Let our love be true that we may find the courage to see the world as it is. That is a message I see in these lines. And that's the message that invites the brighter colors of my imagination. Might we not, through the painful process of seeing through our preconceptions, learn to think and act anew? Then, disenthralled, might we not brave the struggle and the pain of birthing a radically different worldview? Could we not make a home for the better angles of our nature? I say we can. If we are determined to seek out the meaning of the word "love," to return to that place, perhaps to know it for the first time, I say we can. The reference in Arnold's poem seems to be romantic love. But love by any other name is love. And love is both life's energy and its substance. So, as many a spiritual master has suggested, we must learn to do that impossible thing, to dream that impossible dream, and discover what it means to love one another. Or, as poet W. H. Auden phrased the matter for our times, "We must love one another or die."

Setting the Stage: Our Crisis in Brief

If a summary brief by the prosecution in re *Galactic Federation v. Humankind* were offered in some court of cosmic jurisprudence, it might read as follows:

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“We will here demonstrate and attest that humanity, having been born into the cycles of giving and taking known as the Earth system, is engaged in grievous error. Human adaptive strategies, made ever more technologically complicated, ever more alienated from the human potential for compassionate wisdom, and, therefore, ever more prone to unintended consequences, continue under a lethal assumption. To wit: The strategies that gave humankind dominance would work forever more. In fact, as evidence given before this court will show, the adaptive growth-strategies of humankind, carried to their logical conclusion, will make their planet uninhabitable for many Earth species – including humankind. The universal principles of sustainable, interdependent cycles found in all webs of life can be bent for a while, twisted for a time, ignored for a season. But, in the end, the selfish and impulse-driven ways of an adolescent species must give way to the wisdom of adulthood lest catastrophe be the inevitable result.”

The prosecution rests.

Silence fills the courtroom.

Let us reflect on our folly.

* * * *

Humanity is destroying all the nice things about Earth's biosphere that have allowed our species to thrive. If we continue on our current path – which I pray is unlikely – Earth will survive our time here, but the next dominant species may be aggressively carnivorous cockroaches, mutated marmots the size of Volkswagens, or ET refugees. For many of you who are reading these words, this is not news. The mounting ecological crisis, relentlessly driven by unchecked population growth and an inherently destructive global economic system, has caught the attention of millions. Knowledge about the dimensions of the problem vary, but just about anyone who is capable of seeking out information, evaluating evidence, and thinking independently realizes that humanity has become the proverbial frog in a pan of water-about-to-boil.

Any adaptive response to humanity's current crisis will require a shift in consciousness – a radically revised worldview that may birth radically revised social institutions. That's an idea that's been going

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round and round for a number of years – or millennia, actually. Meanwhile, in recent decades, it has also been suggested by many that any such shift will be, must be, a sort of quantum jump. It must happen massively, collectively, and very rapidly. I agree. Our time is short. And, in that light, I fervently assert that any hopeful, healthy paradigm shift must embrace compassion over judgment and empathy over blaming. Soon. In my view – a view by no means unique with me – the next step in human evolution requires no less. We must learn the arts of peace, not only in regard to our fellow humans, but, as well, with all life on this planet. Only by these gentle arts will we melt the flawed premises and inherent insanities that foster ecological destruction, human oppression, and chronic warfare. Only by a radical shift in our collective consciousness can we survive the twilight of patriarchy, hierarchy, and misogyny – the gods of our species’ stormy adolescence. Only by imagining, then actualizing a new kind of worldview can we make social orders that are amiable for people, respectful of the planet we share, and antithetical to concentrated power.

However, agreeing that our survival requires a new worldview must ascend beyond abstraction, beyond mere idealism. Creative pragmatism is in order, and, looking about the world, we do see evidence of that pragmatism unfolding. Some governments, like those of the Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway, have become proactive about global climate change. Here and there, organic farming and stewardship of the land is gaining ground against the ecologically insane practices of factory farming and corporate agribusiness. New paradigms in health care are emerging to offset the damage done by mechanistic narrow-mindedness that would offer “health care” as just another kind of “free market” commodity. Ecologically friendly ideas are beginning to inform alternative approaches in architecture and community planning. Men and women are questioning the dreary baggage of ascribed gender roles. The arts of nonviolent conflict resolution are practiced and taught. In the efforts of pioneers like Daniel Quinn, unobserved and unnoted amid the fatuous fare of the mainstream media, new approaches to our current political and economic order are being considered and, in a limited way, even tested. So, what do I have to offer?

A Pragmatic View of Human Consciousness

Amid the chorus of diverse progressive voices, I offer a radical model of human consciousness. The idea-model I call matrix theory synthesizes the work of many thinkers – Plato, Carl Jung, William Irwin Thompson, E. F. Schumacher, C. S. Lewis, and many others – to propose that human consciousness has a basic four-fold structure. The ancient notion that we are body, mind, soul, and spirit corresponds to those four dimensions, but in ways few may ever have contemplated.

I offer my ideas out of roughly 30 years of reading, writing, pondering, and probing – not to mention direct experience of many of the thousand shocks to which mortal flesh is heir. At the outset, my inquiries and insights into the nature of consciousness keep company with a few ancient ideas: Socrates was right: the unexamined life is not worth living. The Oracle of Delphi gave good advice. “Know thyself.” Jesus, whoever he may have been, spoke truth in exhorting us to love one another. The latter teaching, of course, suggests that there really is such a thing as love – and I am happy to embrace this affirmation. However, I don't think Sixties style bumper sticker admonitions like, “Make Love not War,” will do much to further that vital agenda. One who observes this world with eyes wide open may come to the same conclusion. For, clearly, humanity's historical drift has been and is characterized by great roiling tides of blood and fear that can hardly be called loving. In fact, I think most of us would agree that dominant attitudes among humans more often resonate to a dismal octave in the key of *Angst*:

Apathy,
Brutality,
Conformity,
Despair,
Egocentrism,
Futility,
Groundlessness,
Anxiety

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In my perspective, groundlessness, the seventh note of this metaphoric octave, touches on several overtones of despair – all of which generate our latent and explicit anxieties. For many of us, groundlessness means lives lived without purpose or meaning. We race frenetically through disjointed, stress-laden activities, hour piled on hour, in search of self-worth. Yet, it seems, few of us have much insight into what we are actually worth. As the saying goes, we know the price of everything and the value of nothing. In our social worlds, groundlessness is manifest in all kinds of familiar ways. “Me-first” egocentrism, indifference to those who we perceive as different, childish ethnocentrism, nationalism in service to bloodlust, and the absence of civility, come immediately to mind.

Finally, though, at the deepest level, groundlessness is the absence of awareness. Awareness is open to experience. Awareness sees what is there, not what some corporate, government, or priestly authority tells us is there. Awareness knows that the deep, timeless music of feeling, as opposed to the rising and ebbing tides of mere emotion, is the *experience* of meaning. Awareness, fully blossomed, does not judge, does not attack, but does forgive. Awareness, fully blossomed, is self-knowledge.

Yet, by way of a sacred paradox, self-knowledge must find, beyond mind and ego, that there is no self without Self. That last statement is necessarily obscure since it requires a mode of understanding that is mostly lost to us. Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essay on self-reliance, written in 1841, proposed that true self-reliance draws on the transcendent wisdom of what he called the oversoul. Emerson seems to have retrieved that idea from the Hindu concept of the capital “S” Self, the *atman*. Be that as it may, the idea of a transcendent self as basic to human nature is no longer prominent in American intellectual discourse – if ever it was in the cruel social tumult of the nineteenth century.

Yet, believe it or not, an eerie echo of the idea of our transcendent ground is nestled amid the memorabilia of the Enlightenment. The American founding fathers acknowledged what might be called mystical premises for meaningful lives. You’ll recall that many of these men – like Washington and Jefferson – were

Masons. Masons sought to cleanse human failings through the light of reason, proclaiming, “A New Order for the Ages” (On the back of a dollar bill, you’ll find that assertion in Latin: *Novus Ordo Seclorum*.) Moreover, Jefferson and others also acknowledged a transcendent ground to human nature in the assertion that every person has inalienable rights to life and liberty. Such ideas are first premises, you see. They are intuitively compelling, yet as Aristotle noted, first premises can be neither proved nor disproved by mere reason. And there’s the rub. Reason bereft of wisdom, reason shorn of a way of knowing that transcends reason, is an orphan. In practice if not in rhetoric, concepts like *liberty*, *justice*, *freedom*, and *equality* become homeless waifs. Look around you with open eyes and you will see the evidence. So, among other purposes of what I call matrix theory, rescuing our homeless children is high on the list.

Mother Theory?

Matrix theory, a central motif in this book, is meant to help us understand why our current world order is terminal and, at the same time, why that assertion may be seen as either a declaration of doom or a message of hope. The essence of my hope is suggested by the title of this book: “Nearvana.” The word, you may have guessed, derives from *nirvana*, the Hindu concept of transcendent bliss. My twist on the word is more modest. It implies that access to a happier, healthier worldview is available within each of us – if we chose to re-member it and put it to use. For, I do believe that option remains for each and all of us. Indeed, it as near to us as the mysterious well we call consciousness.

Now, in fact, the term “matrix” derives from the Latin for “mother.” So, perhaps to disabuse those who fear ideas that sound in any way mathematical, I might have called my construct mother theory. But, given the dominant mentality of our culture, any system of ideas called “mother theory” would not garner much undivided attention. And, be assured, I would not be writing this book if I did not think my topic was of utmost urgency. Besides, I’m not a mother, merely a

father, and I have no ambition to become a 21st century version of Benjamin Spock.

Matrix theory may surprise you with new insights. I pray that it will. But please keep in mind that the matrix model of consciousness is testable through your own direct experience. For example, the model embraces the hypothesis that all of us have precisely four core needs – corresponding, in fact, to the ancient quaternity of body, mind, soul and spirit. But the core needs (to be introduced below) are recognizable simply by paying attention to your personal experience. They become self-evident. No equations need be mastered. However, determined attention to your thoughts, feelings, hunches, and behavior is highly recommended. In some traditions, this is called paying attention.

The Book in a Nutshell

There have been (at least) two long cycles of human history. The first of these ended in the Bronze Age, back when God was a woman. The age we live in arose about 4,000 years ago as the earliest urbanized civilizations fell under male domination. Thereafter, the creatures we have been pleased to call civilizations have been characterized by hierarchically organized class inequality, patriarchy, and the suppression of women. Each of these long cycles – the historical and the pre-historical – was marked by a predominant worldview; each was characterized by unconsciously projected embodiments of the sacred. Always, these celestial projections have had personalities that expressed the mentality of the societies that embraced them.

In our time, as an ancient order dies, we are, consciously or unconsciously, in search of new gods. Or, put another way, having seen that we face a dark horizon, many of us are in search of a worldview that balances reason and wisdom in the service of actual human needs. One etymological analysis of the word “human” suggests that the syllables – *hu* and *man* – represent the two faces of human nature. *Hu* is humankind’s spiritual and timeless aspect. *Man* is our species’ biological and sensory presence in the domain of space-time. So, it

could be said that our era urges us to search for kinder and more life-affirming ways of balancing the timeless and time-bound dimensions of “hu” and “man,” to discover – or rediscover – what it means to be a human being. That, in fact, is the main thesis of this first chapter, not inappropriately called First Things.

Chapter Two offers a discourse and exercises intended to help us understand the two modes of consciousness and, in that light, the two ways of knowing. You might say, there is a “Hu” way and a “Man” way. We need “Hu-knowing” to guide our ways and find meaning in our experience. We need “Man-thinking” to adapt to Earth’s environment in order to survive. We need both to live lives enriched by spontaneity, sensuality, and playfulness. We need both to employ our curiosity and our innate sensitivity to beauty in productive, creative, and humane ways.

Act II, Scene 1 consists of three chapters that introduce matrix theory. In Chapters Three and Four, the four dimensions of consciousness are laid out. Novel connections and insights are offered in light of the ancient insight that we are, indeed, body, mind, soul, and spirit. As I’ve already noted, the matrix model will, among other things, explain how the four dimensions of consciousness are the foundation of four fundamental, universal, human *core needs*. The need for identity and place in a social world and the need to keep the body intact and functional (survival) are our two “man” needs. They are mainly served by self-absorbed head thinking. In these anguished times our much lauded thinking is mainly preoccupied by all manner of calculation aimed at gathering esteem through attaining a survival advantage over others. In any case, our core needs for social identity and survival may be called our *objective mode* core needs.

The *Hu* needs are also two. We have a deep and abiding need to give and receive life energy (love). That core need corresponds to what we call soul. We also have a largely suppressed need to find timeless meaning in our experience. This core need, however, can only be fulfilled through awareness of our transcendent nature, our timeless spiritual ground. Thus, the need for cosmic grounding corresponds to the dimension of psyche that has been called spirit.

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In the context of discovering our core needs we uncover the frightful costs of over-emphasizing our social identity and survival needs over our love-life exchange and spiritual grounding needs. We discover that the nasty habit of living our lives in two-dimensional “man” consciousness is at the core of our present global dilemma.

Chapter Five, the closing chapter in Act II, Scene 1, is aimed at understanding how our conscious or unconscious *core need strategies* become crystallized. That happens as patterns of socialization create typical ways for interacting with each other. These patterns, having become ingrained as social habits, then inform the nature of our social institutions. The *New Testament* of the Christian bible reminds us that “As a man thinks, so is he.” It also turns out that as we engage in heartless thinking, we create unhappy ways of dealing with other people and, thereby, literally lethal ways of organizing social institutions. But cultural norms are human inventions, not genetic scripture. Nor are they incontrovertible realities handed down from on high. We can face that fact, drop our weapons of mass delusion, stop wounding ourselves, and invent cultural norms that actually serve human needs. However much we may tremble at so arduous a prospect, it must be that or a million-year silence.

Act II, Scene 2: The Sins of Two-Dimensional Consciousness, offers dismal but crucial understandings that expand on the issue of two-dimensional consciousness. We may prefer denial, projection, reaction formation, and all other manner of defense mechanisms before facing up to our half-wittedness. But a problem not faced cannot be resolved. So, to the end of evaluating our plight we must come to terms with three issues: First, making women the second sex had momentous and grievous effects. I’ll explore that issue in Chapter Six, The Great Reversal. But the main idea is simply put: The oppression of women at the outset of the first civilizations had a major impact on human consciousness. Specifically, the core needs for giving and receiving life-energy and spiritual grounding were, and still are, relentlessly devalued and suppressed. Moreover, the social and cultural oppression of women and the devaluation of the feminine face of consciousness were, and are, inevitably and demonstrably correlated.

Second, specific social and psychological outcomes of this Great Reversal disaster have encouraged mind-numbing submission to limited and limiting consensus realities – flawed virtual realities. As a result, just about all of us suffer from narrow and toxic worldviews based on spurious ego identities. All of this is dealt with in Chapter Seven, *Sleepwalking to Apocalypse*.

Third, in the context of the suppressed feminine, all of the major religious traditions have, for the most part, embraced patriarchal, authoritarian, dogma-ridden agendas. In different ways, the spiritual insights of Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and other traditions have been co-opted, thus, inevitably, to obstruct rather than encourage independent thought and expanded awareness. All of this, complete with liberal measures of controversy, is explored in Chapter Eight, *The Two Faces of Religion*.

Act III: *Beyond the Consensus Trance*, offers messages of hope and a handful of suggestions. I like to think of the suggestions as seeds that might be planted in the fertile soil of expanded awareness.

Chapter Nine is, called *Science, Scientism, and the Spiritual Dimension*. The expansion of awareness will gain nothing at all by abandoning the bright fires of imagination and exploration guided by reason. We do not need less of either science or reason; we do need to infuse both of these things with compassionate wisdom and the insights of the heart. We must, in short, create a bracing new openness to hypotheses, theories, and world-models that honor both ways of knowing. I fully understand that this will require an epistemological revolution. That word, *epistemology*, derives from the Greek verb *episteme* – “to know.” For a very long time, particularly in Western civilization, the grand epistemological error has been the devaluation or outright rejection of direct knowing informed by feeling and intuition. Yet, only by re-joining the apparently opposed paths of head and heart can we explore both the physical universe of energy and information while learning ever more about the deeper aspects of consciousness that are not now, nor have ever been, separate and apart from the sensual worlds of daily life. Our fundamental human needs, you see, are not

ideals. They are built into the nature of consciousness and, thereby, into the nature of the realities we suppose, propose, and construct.

Chapter Ten, *Invitations to Transcendence*, draws forth ideas and insights from different sources, including matrix theory, to introduce a bit of clarity about the better angels of our nature. Having trashed socially induced ego-trance states and the sinister effects of social identity addiction, I offer a happier alternative vision of our state of nature. The Christian spiritual adept, Meister Eckhardt, taught that consciousness awakening is not a matter of adding on but of taking away. And, if all has gone well at this point, this book may have given you some ideas about just what needs taking away. A condensed list includes preconceptions, conditioned beliefs, and, in short, “what everybody knows.” As a rule, anyone’s personalized list for discard is quite long, long enough to include just about all one’s habitually treasured mind junk.

Having “taken away,” you may wonder, what remains? You must find that answer for yourself. But let me suggest this: Why not honor an ancient thought: “And a little child shall lead them”? Why not entertain the notion that the child in question dwells in each of us as our own unique natural self? Have you not noticed that healthy children are curious, sensual, playful, spontaneous, and entranced by beauty? Why would you think you were not given the same gifts? I say you were. I say all of us were. But, for goodness sake, don’t believe me. Do a little self-exploration. Find out for yourself.

Expand your awareness by paying attention to your thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and values. Discover for yourself how carefully most of us have been taught to ignore the currents of our own consciousness. Then, having explored the idea of the natural self, it makes sense to learn a bit more about how the flow of inner knowing can complement the jangle and jumble of sensory perception. So that topic gets some attention as I explore ways to balance inception (inner knowing) with the relentless static of conditioned sensory perception.

To close the chapter, I borrow ideas from C. S. Lewis, the Greeks, and matrix theory to help you and me and all of us think about the different frequencies of life-love energy. (Hint: There is a typical frequency for each of our core needs.) I don’t know about you, but I’d

prefer not to leave my current semester in the Earth School without learning as much as I can about the arts of living love.

Chapter Eleven, Transcendence, is my essay on the most controversial of topics – immortality. I use a mode of inquiry that boldly dips into strange waters to identify and summarize areas of actual research that may open gates in the walls of our conditioned perception. In effect, I propose a “connecting of dots” that can, for some of us at least, demonstrate a convergence of empirical evidence and experiential insights which, taken together, fully support the idea of human transcendence. For some, the evidence may suggest a startling conclusion: Transcendence is not a conditional reward for embracing dogma but, simply, the nature of the human ground state. To sharpen this point, giving ourselves permission to join heart and head in a crucial balance, we may entertain yet another startling proposition. Namely, re-discovering the immortal foundation of human consciousness and of human existence will be, must be, the foundation for the next step in the evolution of our species.

Coda

We do indeed live in interesting times. We may choose to see our interesting times in the sense of the old Chinese curse or as the paradoxical wrappings of opportunity. But either way, a great cycle is drawing to a close and, once again, we live in the twilight of ancient gods.

Two
OF HEAD AND HEART:
THE TWO MODES OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

*The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement,
but the opposite of profound truth may be another profound truth.*

Neils Bohr, Theoretical Physicist

Two Ways of Knowing

The search for expanded awareness is the most worthy of grail quests. But preparation for any such quest requires an “attitude adjustment.” Namely, we must be prepared to learn – or remember – that *there are two ways of knowing*, not one. Ordinary thinking, structured by language and socially conditioned mind processes, is one of them I’ve named this typical consciousness of everyday life, *objective mode knowing*. Others have called it “left-brain” knowing. That idea serves as metaphor. Areas of the brain critical to language, especially in males, are located in the left temporal lobe. And language is a central feature of objective mode knowing. On the other hand, the metaphor encourages us to assume that mind is a biochemical product of the brain. In my view, that’s rather like assuming that a radio generates voices and music from its electronic circuits. In any case, I’d say a better common language name for objective mode knowing is head thinking.

The other way of knowing is nonlinear and non-verbal. Its meanings are known directly, subjectively, and experientially, through feeling and intuition. You know that you long for love, perhaps even suspecting you are searching for it in all the wrong places. You know what the stranger on the bus will say before she says it. You simply know that a loved one is in crisis – as did my Aunt Ruth when she placed an urgent call to my uncle’s office to just after he’d had a heart

attack. Mozart, it is reported, directly perceived his great works all at once. He would then dictate the notes to his patient wife. First violin, second violin, cello and oboe... And so on. To relieve the tedium of this “left brain” translating process, he might browse through a book while dictating. In a dream, a research chemist by the name of Friedrich Kukele was presented with an archetypal icon, a serpent with its tail in its mouth called an Ouroborus. At the time he was trying to figure out the molecular structure of benzene. Consulting his dream, he shortly discovered the benzene ring. You hear a song in your mind and turn on your car radio to hear that song playing. I’ve done that one a number of times. In search of an answer, a book all but leaps from a shelf and falls open to just what you’re looking for. That sort of phenomenon, I suspect, helped me complete my doctoral dissertation on time and with less agony.

This other way of knowing is more ancient and more basic in us than objective mode knowing. Indeed, it is the creative womb, the “mother principle” and the deep unknown beyond socially constructed egos. I call this ancient aspect of consciousness *relational mode knowing*. Some, based on physiological evidence of left and right hemisphere specialization in the cerebral cortex, have called it “right-brained” knowing. But, as I’ve already suggested, that sort of idea is misleading. Karl Pribram, a pioneer in brain research, put the matter to me succinctly in our first phone conversation. “The mind is not the brain.” Now, Pribram’s research stands on years of accumulated data and mega-watt intellectual power. To approach it, one must master arcane details of central nervous system biochemistry, the principles of holography, and certain principles of quantum physics – not to mention the mathematical logic of Fourier transforms. Nevertheless, with my own meager intellectual gifts, coupled with years of paying attention, I have come to the same conclusion. The mind is not the brain. Apparently, mind uses brain to the extent that the biochemical apparatus is in working order. In that light, I think many tribal cultures have it right. A better common-language name for the relational mode of consciousness is heart knowing.

In Western or westernized societies, most of us imagine that head thinking is *the* way of knowing anything worth knowing. For

example, describing the intellectual landscape of his time, Freud, in *The Future of an Illusion*, argued that the fabric of religion, associated as it was with faith and, presumably, heart knowing, was childish wish fulfillment and, thereby, godly creeds and webs of dogma offered only illusion. In that light, he concluded, only science – head thinking – could yield effective tools for coping with reality. Quoting the poet Heine, he proposed that all else must be left “to the angels and the sparrows.”

Freud’s psychoanalytic theory no longer dominates psychology, but his worldview remains central to the assumptions of most modern intellectuals, including most scientists. What can be weighed and measured matters; that which cannot be weighed and measured is the discard offered to angels, sparrows, and, perhaps, newspaper astrologers. In this way of seeing the world, as I’ve said, “the mind is the brain,” and consciousness is simply a peculiar by-product of biochemistry – of “meat mechanics” if you will. Yet, for one who begins to recover the arts of relational knowing, Freud’s rational materialism is both grievously limited and seriously distorted. His observations about religion are not trivial. Even if we reject Freud’s scientific materialism, we might agree that the herd mentality so typically informing dogmatic religiosity can be mean-spirited – virtually and literally. On the other hand, Freud’s insights fail to suggest that transcendent, non-verbal and primal insights inform awareness in valid ways.

Now, oddly enough, in his later years, Freud got very interested in telepathy and other paranormal phenomena – having second thoughts, it seems. One may speculate here. If Freud’s second thoughts had occurred to him earlier in his career, he might have suspected that socially organized religiosity, not expanded awareness, is the enemy of self-knowing – which is, presumably, the aim of *psyche + logos* – psychology. He might even have concluded that the “oceanic,” all-is-one feeling he took pains to discount in his book about religion-as-illusion was evidence of another side of knowing – although I doubt it. Intellectuals of his time were fond of assuming that religion, not unlike the Marxist-envisioned state, would wither away in the light of reason, social revolution, or some mixture thereof.

Be that as it may, it cannot be denied that proposing two fundamental dimensions of consciousness confronts us with perplexities. As many have noted, the primal pre-verbal and the symbol-encoded verbal domains of awareness are in a dialectic relationship; they are opposed *and* complementary – a bit like Yin and Yang. That means, among other things, that we have to look upon the world not as A or ~A, but as A *and* ~A. People like certainty; they get itchy skin when faced with paradox. And, in fact, embracing the understanding that there are two complementary modes of consciousness, two ways of knowing, does present us with both paradox and uncertainty. “Should I follow my head or my heart” is a common expression of both that paradox and that uncertainty.

The idea of two modes of knowing has been around for a long time. The table, below, summarizes some approaches to that idea.

Table 2-1
Selected Representations of the Two Modes of Consciousness

<i>Relational</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Source*</i>
Heart	Head	Many cultural traditions
Feminine	Masculine	Many cultural traditions
Moon	Sun	Many cultural traditions
Left Hand	Right Hand	Many cultural traditions
Unconscious	Conscious	Modern psychology
Right Brain	Left Brain	Modern neurophysiology
Immortal Soul	Mortal Body	Plato (1)
I-Thou	I-It	Martin Buber (2)
Noumena	Phenomena	Emmanuel Kant (3)
<i>Gemeinschaft</i>	<i>Gesellschaft</i>	Ferdinand Tönnies (4)
Ideational	Sensate	Pitirim A. Sorokin (5)
Tacit Knowing	Explicit Knowing	Michael Polanyi (6)
Being	Becoming	Metaphysical philosophy
Yin	Yang	Taoism

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**Table references for numerically specified sources: (1) Plato, Timaeus; (2) Martin Buber, I and Thou; (3) Emmanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason; (4) Ferdinand Tönnies, Community and Society; (5) Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics (4 vols.). (6) Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension. Complete citations are offered in the Chapter Notes.*

The perplexity of admitting two modes of knowing reminds me of cartoon characters having mental arguments represented by a devil and an angel. The voices of the two metaphors are opposed, yet it is apparent that both are aspects of human consciousness. We may hope that the angel wins most debates, but there is no denying a continuous tension between the drive-to-survive and the altruistic-compassionate “better angels of our nature.” Perhaps Socrates was right in naming ignorance as the root of evil, but the perplexing dialectic remains. What we perceive as good may imbed the seeds of evil; what we perceive as evil may nest the seeds of the good.

Most of us can sense this tension by reflecting on our life experience. How many of us have not felt compelled to seek personal advantage over the common good? How many of us have not taken pride in defeating others in competitive struggles for status, money, “love,” or power? And yet we may also have noticed that self-interest may serve the common good just as the best of intentions end up harming others. That’s life ... so far, at least. Even so, mucking-about as we will in the tides of human paradox, all of us must, sooner or later, come to understand that heart must inform and guide head thinking if we are to realize what it is to be *human*. Cooperation must outweigh competition just as compassion must outweigh sterile self-interest. And that is the crux of the matter. In no other way can our better angels hold sway over our choices. Yet, having arrived at that insight, we immediately see that a happy balance of heart-over-head is mainly notable by its absence from our world.

Why that’s the case should become increasingly evident as we proceed.

Figure 2-1

Some Characteristics of the Two Modes of Consciousness

<u>Relational Mode</u>	<u>Objective Mode</u>
Non-verbal, non-linear*	Language-and-symbol encoded
Directly experienced	Understood through abstract concepts
Emphasizes the “Big Picture”	Takes things apart to study the pieces

* *Non-linear means not constrained by time. Relational knowing is not time-bound.*

Reflecting on the Figure 2-1, you'll notice that thinking per se is *not* a direct path to the relational mode. Thinking is word-encoded and words are second-hand goods. Words are not what they name. When we imagine that words or symbols have an inherent meaning, we are making a mistake called *reification*. Not many of us would think that a picture of a rose is an actual rose. But that's roughly what happens when we tacitly or explicitly think and act as if words like “democracy,” or “fatherland,” or “morality” are objective things, not unlike pizza or stop signs. When we speak of “faith,” “sin,” or “virtue,” we probably have emotions or sentiments that seem to define what we speak. But, in fact, all three of these ideas tend to be reified (objectified) cultural concepts. Their deeper meanings are hid in the fog of assuming and supposing. In America 2007, many of us realize these words like “democracy,” or “free trade,” are some kind of counterfeit currency. But even when spoken in sincerity – maybe over a dining room table in Omaha – these same word-things are fuzzy, ineffable. I sometimes suspect that some impartial observer from an enlightened planet, having visited Kansas, might conclude that “faith” designates some kind of ideology, “sin” is thought or behavior requiring retribution without end, and “virtue” typically means conformity to traditional cultural norms – sane or insane. For, as you may have

noticed, talk of virtue often seems to be about “my way or the highway” – regardless of where the highway may lead.

Here’s another example: In America it’s culturally and politically correct to affirm that one believes in God. No politician who wishes to be elected dare leave home unprepared for such declarations. Yet, with but a little reflection, we realize that people are often simply affirming an idea that identifies them as “good people” or, perhaps, as “good Americans.” As Harris has put it in his book, *The End of Faith*, we want to believe in believing. While I may not agree with many of Harris’s observations or assumptions, that one gets my nod. What we call “God” may be very real indeed, yet, where self-honesty pokes it’s head above ground, we must realize that very few who speak of God know whereof they speak.

Here’s one way to understand why words mislead us:

The objective mode of consciousness is dependent on symbols – most specifically, language. If you don’t believe that, try thinking without words. And, yet, there’s the rub: The fatal limitation of unadulterated head thinking is its dependence on language. And, as anthropologists have noted, assumptions expressed in Japanese may have an entirely different flavor in the minds of people thinking in French, Arabic, or English. Ultimately, concepts like *love* or *compassion* only have meaning through direct experience, experience that has no necessary dependence on words or symbols of any kind. In this perspective the ancient Hebrews were wise to designate their one god as YHVH (often pronounced Yahweh). This set of four consonants (called a tetragrammaton) designated the *unnamed* god. Later on, of course, Yahweh would enter the marketplace of word-coined concepts as Jehovah. The example is instructive. YHVH was unnamable mystery; Jehovah suggests a Charlton Heston look-alike with a staff and a white beard. Relational insights are what they are precisely because they *cannot* be objectified or visualized. When Gertrude Stein wrote, “a rose is a rose is a rose,” she was telling it as straight as words can tell. And she had still not captured “rose-ness.”

Words like “freedom,” “truth,” “evil” or “guaranteed,” can mean all kinds of things – or nothing at all. And none of these concepts refers to anything nearly so obvious as a stone in one’s shoe or the

ingenious tapestry of a sunrise. The noted linguist, Alfred Korzybski, taught us that, “The map is not the territory.” That’s a lesson that suggests another mode of knowing. Our linguistic coding of “rose” and the experiences we may have of roses are different things.

On the other hand – without question – language and symbol are basic to everyday cognitive processing. And, without doubt, the elaborated human capacity for language and symbol are distinctive to our species. Word thinking is very much a part of human cultures of all kinds. Bees buzz, flowers bloom, humans symbol. People need wording and symbols (like numbers) to buy groceries, share gossip, agree to disagree, or find out how to get to Aunt Sue’s house in Wichita. Symbol-making and, in particular, the abstract symbol systems of mathematics, are vital to science and, indeed to all the accoutrements of what we are pleased to call modern civilization. All of this is true. But beyond words, most of us also know that intellect without heart knowing is not all that useful for getting what we want “in our hearts.”

Learning to Tell Head from Heart

There is no strictly intellectual word-path to self-knowledge, no broad rational-verbal highway to pragmatic heart knowing. Direct experience that transcends language is required. So, to the end of probing your awareness in search of the wordless way of knowing – the relational way – here are three simple exercises. They’re designed for us addicted “left-brain” folks and based on my experience with college students they may confuse you at first. Our culture does not speak relational. Patience is called for.

Exercise 1: Where Am I?

Get quiet and private somewhere. Pose the mental question, *where am I?* As you do, remember that you are looking for the wordless sense of I, me, and myself – not your location on a map. Ultimately, how you do it isn’t really important. Just follow the question where it leads. Do watch out for stumbling blocks that come

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from “what everybody knows” here in the Land of Nod. For example, if you say to yourself, “Oh, of course, I am in my brain,” or something of the sort, your exercise is in a ditch. Try again. (On the other hand, trying to find yourself in your brain can evoke some weirdly entertaining mental images.) Different approaches to meditation embody this sort of exercise. However, just getting quiet enough to observe your thoughts without reaction will often do the trick. For, in becoming an observer of your mind you discover that there IS such an observer. Again, no special technique is required. Playfully practicing “not-doing” and “un-thinking” in any way that pleases you can suffice.

Here’s what you’re aiming for: *You are trying to locate the center of your personal existence as an immediate, direct experience.*

What you will arrive at – sometimes more or less immediately, sometimes after a few tries – is an experience that cannot be named. That is, however briefly, you’ll get to a mental place that is absolutely “there” and absolutely “you.” You’ll also notice that it’s a place you cannot make or un-make with word thinking. So, if your name is Celeste you will not arrive at “Celeste.” That’s just a nametag someone gave you. In fact, if all goes well, you’ll get to mental place where you can observe “Celeste” in about the same way you’d recall a dream or detect the smell of bacon. Stated simply, the purpose of this exercise is to arrive at a direct sense of “I am.” The direct knowing of “I am” is the primary place you go to understand that *your existence is your consciousness.*

Exercise 2: What Is It?

Try defining any or all of the following words.

LOVE * FEAR * NOW

Use mental wording until you reach an immediate and direct understanding that words won’t cut it. That’s the exercise. Sit still somewhere for a while and, as they say, just do it. Work with your newly discovered observer. The idea is to get to a direct realization that all of these ideas are ultimately meaningless in the objective world. *All*

of them have to do with your immediate sense of I am. Love is a state or attitude of “I am.” Fear can be understood as a state or attitude of *separation* from “I am.” “Now” is where you actually are, but it is not a place in space. Or time. Past, future, and even present are consciousness constructs, rather like the sensory images we get from watching a passing train. Discovering that “now” – the word – may actually refer to an experiential and timeless Now, is to locate something that can only be known directly and experientially. Getting from the thought-constructed “now” to the timeless *Now* of *I-am* is a central teaching in Zen Buddhism. For that matter, it’s also found in the mystical teachings of other major spiritual traditions if you look deeply enough.

Turning to feeling and intuition, to relational inquiry, you may now suddenly grasp the wisdom of Kermit the frog, “Wherever you go, there you are.” Getting to that in-sight is a big part of getting in touch with heart knowing because it’s a necessary step. One way or another, a person has to take that step in order to wake up to the nature of his/her consciousness. If you work with the exercises suggested here – or any others that might work better for you – you will eventually get in touch with your wordless I-Am. At that point, given patience and persistence, you may begin to realize that what you call your self is indeed, *your awareness being aware. No word-spun idea you have about your self is, in itself, your actual self.* Instead, that which spins the ideas is the Self. “You” are the thinker; “you” are the dreamer. And the heart of “you” is that timeless “Now” where you encounter I-Am.

This is hard stuff to grasp at first bite. Just go with it for a while. You may well be glad you did. Heart-mind work-play of this sort can help us get in touch with what the word “spirituality” may refer to when it refers to anything at all.

Exercise 3: I-Thou and I-It

My coining of the term *relational*, to designate heart knowing, comes from the work of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. In his book, *I and Thou*, he helped us conceive two basic ways of seeing a

self – yours, mine, or whomever you may meet in the subway or run into in the mall. We can choose a relational or an objective mode perspective. That’s the exercise, actually: learning to shift awareness from one mode to the other in face-to-face encounters with people. They can be people you know or people you don’t know.

We can see each person we encounter as one profound truth encountering another profound truth. Alternatively, we can see the other as “a thing” that is merely a useful or useless tool for the designs of ego. Buber called the first way of encountering self and others *I-Thou*. In traditional Hindu culture, people may join their open hands in a stylized gesture, bow and greet one another with the word, *namaste*. The word means, “The sacred in me greets the sacred in you.” That lovely custom is a cultural form that expresses Buber’s concept of *I-Thou*. By contrast, the sterile opposite of *I-Thou* – *I-It* – might be translated as “What’s in it for me?” And, since self-honesty is vital to expanding one’s awareness, let’s face it: We are taught to clothe our ego-first attitudes toward others in acceptable quasi-relational attire. We are encouraged to learn the arts of sham sociability. Think about it. Is not “success” in our culture often achieved by becoming skilled at *seeming* to actually see and hear one another? Our culture is like that, you see. In fact, all cultures are like that to some greater or lesser degree. However, as regards Western culture, pay attention to commercials and to political rhetoric. Note how cleverly plastic trinkets are disguised as altruistic concern. Then begin to recognize the way we don social masks in response to other social masks. Facades address facades in prescribed scripts. How often does the banker in a three-piece suit actually see the waitress, as opposed to her cleavage? How often do any of us see actual people in a crowd? How many of us, ensnared in the clockwork gears of prescribed roles, can still actually see and hear our spouse?

Now, Martin Buber’s work is subtle and profound. He not only helps us distinguish *I-Thou* and *I-It*, he also helps us see the paradoxical duality of the two modes of consciousness. He helps us understand that the *I-Thou* and *I-It* modes of encountering one another are complementary in life-as-we-must-live-it. “Me-first” and “You-and-me” points of view are both part of trying to survive amidst predatory

social institutions. Both are part of the struggle to survive, acquire social identity, get love, and pursue goals that (at least seem to) offer meaning to our lives. So, Buber's two ways of encountering others also helps us see that the two modes of consciousness are, *apparently* opposed complements. There's that paradox thing again. And just as in the Taoist concept of Yin and Yang, this complementarity is not only basic to the human condition, but to the ways in which we decide what is real and what is not.

Explore the I-Thou and the I-It perspectives. It's not all that hard. As you encounter another person, imagine him or her as a mirror of who you are – and vice versa. Don't worry: You can hold this idea in mind without lapsing into a-social idiocy. However, you might find yourself smiling more. Between encounters, remind yourself that each person you come across is at the center of a world, just as you are. Glenda at the pharmacy is a complete self, just as you are. Paradoxically, Max at the video store is "you looking back at you" – even though Max is of the Ebo people, and a recent immigrant from Nigeria, while you were raised in Bangor, Maine by French-Canadian parents. Finally, as you are engaged with another, you can remember that each of you has two ways of knowing and, however expressed or suppressed, precisely the same human core needs.

This final exercise, by the way, is fun. Fun is good. It can help you take yourself less seriously, use your Observer, and enjoy the surprises. They happen. Unexpected moments bloom when I-Thou replaces I-It and lessons can be learned. Among other things, you may discover that being fully present to another pops you out of clock time into Now. And Now is almost always *humanly* interesting.

Your existence is your awareness being aware. The level of your awareness is the extent to which you may speak from your heart and know what you are saying.

Relational Knowing and Objective Thinking

Relational mode knowing is a current, a flow, of *inception*, of inner knowing, that modifies the trickery of perception. It can be ignored. Indeed, ignoring our intuitions and deep feelings is often habitual. But, when the effort is made, when our intention directs us toward expanded awareness, inception does inform perception. We are less likely to see what is *not* there amid the debris of what everybody knows. We are more likely to read between the lines when people speak one thing and mean another. When we are quiet inside and most open to this inner flow, we can sometimes unravel the conditioned thinking that rises inevitably through the culturally biased processing of sensory data. Put another way, we can often see more by thinking less. And, of course, relational knowing is the vital currency of artistic creativity, vision quests, divine epiphanies, sudden insight, playfulness, and that precious human quality – humor.

Near the end of his life, in an interview, the great psychologist Carl Jung was asked if he believed in God. “I do not believe,” he answered, “I know.” That’s an example of heart knowing translated into words. When the poet (Frost) wrote that the mystery at the center of our circular dance of supposing, “sits in the middle and knows,” that was relational insight translated into words. But words like those can only make sense by paying attention through your inner vision. However, come to think of it, one pretty-darn-good way to get in touch with your relational you is through poetry – read, spoken, or sung. Among poets that speak relational, T.S. Eliot, Emily Dickinson, William Butler Yeats, Walt Whitman, and W.H. Auden are high on my list. And Shakespeare. Also, Bob Dylan. (Pay careful attention to the lyric of “Gates of Eden.”)

Pragmatic Thinking, Pragmatic Knowing

One of the deep flaws of modern civilizations in general and mechanistic science in particular, is the assumption that things not visible and measurable *cannot* be real and, by fatal implication, heart

knowing, being direct, intuitive, and “merely subjective” cannot be “real knowing.” After many years of struggling to grasp the nature of things and the very real limits of our materialist science, I find that very sad. In fact I’d not be surprised if this error is the context of a famous line from the New Testament: “Jesus wept.”

On the other hand, even if you are not philosophically inclined, you may well be pondering just how one decides that either way of knowing, by head or heart, can be considered valid. For it is apparent that just as our understanding of empirical evidence may mislead us, so too may our hunches be dead wrong.

The problem is thorny. What and how we can know anything is a core issue called *epistemology* by philosophers – an issue I addressed briefly some pages back. If you’ve tackled epistemological questions from the perspective of philosophers like Plato, Kant, Whitehead, Bergson ... and so on, you know that already. But I intend this book to be practical. And in that light, I think a simple and practical answer can be understood and used.

Maybe you recall an insight offered in the New Testament (Matthew: Chapter 7; verse 20): “By their fruits you will know them.” The insight is, of course, offered in the context of Christian teachings about false prophets. Although for what it’s worth, equivalent insights pop up in other religious traditions. The *Tao Te Ching* of Lao Tsu, comes to mind. Insight is in-sight wherever it comes from. In any case, the clue we get from Matthew is easily stated. The outcomes of people’s ideas and behaviors are the proof of their *human value* and, hence their actual validity in the light of our human core needs. With that in mind, here’s a rough and ready guide to how we can use the by-their-fruits clue:

Objective Mode Validity: What we know by purely objective mode reasoning is valid in its own terms if it follows the accepted rules of formal logic – such as the law of identity, conclusions consistent with premises, the law of excluded middle, and so on. However, it must be obvious that logical processes per se may not lead to healthy, happy conclusions for children and other living things. The formulae for nerve gas and napalm follow both the logic of chemistry and the logic of

selected geopolitical agendas. The economic law of supply and demand is valid, given its premises. But that doesn't mean that a high demand for low-mileage sport utility vehicles bodes well for atmospheric pollution or care-less carbon emissions. Pure logic may justify all kinds of things from either sound or questionable *human* premises. Committed head-thinkers, allowing themselves to be informed by whispers from the other side of their minds, can benefit from reflecting on that observation. And, in that context, it may be helpful to remember that psychopaths and sociopaths often have lofty IQ scores. Smart may mean anything but nice, kind, compassionate, or wise.

Relational Mode Validity: That which we know by allowing heart to inform head is most likely to be valid to the extent that it's fruits fulfill actual human needs. The matrix model you'll discover in these pages allows us to clearly identify those needs, which are, in fact, the four core needs I've already introduced. Objective mode motivations for thinking and acting are mainly based on our core needs for Social Identity and Body Survival. By contrast, Relational mode thoughts and acts rely more heavily on our core needs for Giving and Receiving Life-Love Energy and identifying transcendent meanings for our lives through the quest for Cosmic Grounding.

For practical humane purposes, relational mode attitudes and acts are far preferable to unadorned or uninformed objective mode thoughts and behavior, at least if human needs are of some interest to us. But it should also be apparent that the problem of *human* validity requires us to find proper balances among all four of our basic core needs – situation by situation. That's why great tomes are written and endless discourses proffered in the name of ethics. But, ultimately, the issue is one of dynamic balance, a balance that gets easier to find as awareness expands. Fostering spiritual insight may well be a missing key for educating healthy children. At other times a hot cup of tea is preferable to a sermon. Sometimes, body survival is less important than giving and receiving love.

Balanced Validity: In the context of the presently unknown or unrecognized potentials of expanded consciousness, the matter of

validity becomes hazier. The problem can be illustrated with two kinds of phenomena that require one to blend and balance head and heart, direct experience and empirical observation.

Out-of-body experiences (OOBEs) happen. If one credits pioneering work in this field, they happen often enough to be taken very seriously indeed. As it turns out, I credit thoughtful accounts of out-of-body explorations. Have to. I've been "out" and know what it's like. My experiences have been terribly modest compared to the remarkable journeys recounted by Robert Monroe, William Buhlman, P.M.H. Atwater, and others, but that's fine. Read it as you might, *experiential* facts remain. Also, the wealth of fascinating information retrieved by these intrepid explorers can be correlated. That is, the different accounts of the most credible explorers fit together well enough to provide us with a set of observations that can, in principle, be tested through further exploration.

For example, all of the advanced out-of-body explorers report that consciousness is the agency behind manifestations – including the sensory environments of everyday life-on-Earth. Or, put another way, the *primary* reality of human existence is not one's body; it's consciousness. In case you hadn't noticed, after all, bodies are temporary things; mind-consciousness, it would appear, is not. Indeed, as our understanding grows, it may be far more accurate to say that we humans are energy-information gestalts capable of operating in space-time from a trans-spatial, trans-temporal "home base." Meanwhile, should it trouble us too much that our present reality models offer no cozy hypotheses that make sense such radical conclusions?

No.

Seek the truth, come whence it may, come how it might.

Library wall inscription,
Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria

Science worth having is not about believing; it's about finding out. Beliefs are permeable things. We invent them. As often as not, they are obstructions, not guides, not practical, and not helpful.

In any case, what may be said about extraordinary direct experiences such as near-death episodes and out-of-body travels may also be said about what are called channeled materials. Based on years of direct explorations of hypnosis, trance states, and apparently "transmitted" material, I can attest that a lot of this kind of material should be taken with more than one grain of salt. On the other hand, I've given serious attention to several bodies of channeled material that have been taken seriously by serious people. I'm one of them, even if you don't take me seriously. I'll give but two examples.

The three volumes of *A Course in Miracles* were "scribed" by a psychiatrist employed at the Columbia School of Surgeons, Helen Schucman, over a period of seven years. The content is astonishing, impressive, and compelling. And the case is interesting given that the Christian-Gnostic slant of the material was written down from "inner dictation" by a scientist who was both Jewish and an avowed atheist. As of this writing, the *Course* has been the basis of best-selling books by Marianne Williamson – among others. Moreover, the *Course* now appears in an astonishing number of languages other than English, all over the planet. That fact suggests that insights offered in *A Course in Miracles* have seemed *relationally* valid for a lot of people.

Along with *A Course in Miracles*, the Seth books written by medium Jane Roberts are worthy of serious attention. Seth titles include *Seth Speaks: The Eternal Validity of the Soul*, and *The Nature of Personal Reality*. These and other Seth books transcribed through Roberts and her husband, Robert Butts, are remarkable for their intelligence, coherence, and intuitive punch. That is, for people with open minds, Seth often makes sense. In fact, through informal clues acquired over the years, I suspect that a few theoretical physicists have borrowed Seth's concepts as starting points for scientific explorations.

Be that as it may, in works such as these you may well be shocked by insights that resonate with something deep in your consciousness. You may suddenly see yourself and your reality in a

different light. You may get relational mode in-sights. Now, does that mean such personal epiphanies are *necessarily and universally* valid?

No.

All human knowing is hedged about with uncertainty. And, most certainly, it seems to me unwise to adopt any body of channeled material as the foundation for yet another religion. As Kenneth Wapnick properly suggests, reflecting on the teachings found in *A Course in Miracles*, formal religions attempt to reconcile the relational insights with the objective mode preconceptions of socially constructed worldviews. To borrow a metaphor from the New Testament, that's putting new wine in old wine skins. Bad idea.

On the other hand, flashes of intuitive recognition may be quite valid for you or me or whomever at a particular level of awareness. Waking to the Self is a process, after all. And it has to be up close and personal – for you. You can only truly know what you know, not suppose. In any case, for purposes of this book, the *relative* relational validity of what we may or may not know “in our hearts” should become a bit clearer as we learn more about the nature of our core needs and how they may either complement or oppose each other.

The Dog-Eat-Dog Error

Direct relational knowing is our only path to learning what love is, our only path to spiritual growth, and our only genuine option for living a fulfilling and meaningful life. Also, if more and more of us take relational “roads less traveled by,” the world will change. We may learn to imagine humane social institutions as we begin to create them. But the barriers we must un-imagine are formidable. High on the list of such barriers is what I like to call the “dog-eat-dog” error. To wit: In our “state of nature” we humans are beastly, amoral predators. And, sadly, evidence for that assumption is not lacking. But is it conclusive? To attempt an answer to that question, consider the nature of Earth's biosphere and its food chain.

Earth's primary producers are all those creatures capable of photosynthesis. They form the base of Earth's food-chain pyramid. Ascending the pyramid we find a general trend toward greater

biological complexity with alternating tiers of secondary producers (plant eaters) and their inevitable predators. A typical correlate of biological complexity is larger brains and increasingly complex social behavior, particularly among the most efficient, physiologically generalized higher-level predators, which includes primates and humans.

Currently, humans are Earth's dominant predators. But unlike falcons, leopards, orcas, and other predator species, only humans prey on members of their own species with the intent of enslaving entire classes of people and/or annihilating entire populations. Sigmund Freud framed the matter in the Latin phrase, *homo homini lupus* – “man is wolf to man.” And, no, the social arrangements of hymenoptera – bees, ants, and so on – do not negate that point. “Social classes” among ants and bees are genetically coded adaptations, not behavior that may be learned – or not. Meanwhile, there is no doubt that humans do cruelty as surely as Italians agonize over spaghetti sauce. And so we must wonder: Is cruel sociopathology inherent in us or is it taught some of us under specific conditions in social worlds?

I embrace the latter thesis. I agree with the famous diary entry of Anne Frank, “I think, at last, that people are good at heart.” Although I might add that people are good at heart when they are open to heart awareness. The American pragmatist, William James seems to have been of the same opinion as he wrote, “If your heart does not want a world of moral reality, your head will assuredly never make you believe in one.” Looking about the world it does seem apparent that there are a fair number of humans who have no awareness of, or interest in, a moral reality. So it seems, for our species....

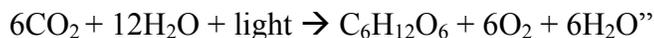
Something went wrong.

A big part of that something was the collective repression of the relational mode of consciousness and, thereby a crucial misinterpretation of Earth's food chain system. That system has its own Yin and Yang, its own pair of apparently opposed complements. Both predation and life's amazing opportunism – under all kinds of environmental conditions – can be thought of as the assertive, “Yang” face of the system. Inter-species cooperation and interdependence can be seen as the receptive “Yin” face. For example, nature's Yin and

Yang maintain an exquisite balance of habitats and species niches. Thus, within the original (pre-human) parameters of the Earth system, predation increased the adaptive capacity of secondary producers, maintaining population balances critical to both predator and prey.

In nature, cooperative interdependence flourishes. Arctic lichens are a marriage of photosynthesis-capable algae and particular kinds of fungus. Bees and other insects feed on pollen and thereby act as the inseminators of about three-fourths of our planet's seed-bearing plants – the angiosperms. These are the same plants that feed us, give us shade, and fill festive vases.

And speaking of plants, our breathable air comes to us courtesy of a comforting relationship between plants and our local star. And Creation said, "Let there be:



And thus, by way of a mystery of plants we call photosynthesis, carbon dioxide + water + light energy yields Glucose + Oxygen + Water. Let us be pleased. Glucose is the simple sugar at the base of the entire global food chain. The oxygen produced by photosynthesis transformed Earth's early atmosphere in just the right way for land animals to breath. Indeed, oxygen is required by both plants and animals to carry on the chemistry of life-as-we-know-it. And water? Well, if you are an Earth creature that creeps, crawls, swims, flies, or walks about in a carbon-based biochemical space-time suit, your body is mostly water. Hydrate or dehydrate is Earth speak for life or death. Which, by the way, is one of the main reasons that melting glaciers, the increasing severity of droughts, and spreading deserts is not a happy development.

In sum, life on Earth is a dynamic, cooperative balancing act that includes predation along with cooperative interdependence. However, as survival and social advantage became humanity's prime directives, the cooperative face of the Earth system was shrouded in a fog of forgetting. As that happened, and largely to justify human social orders based on structural inequality, insanities arose. "Might makes right" became a tenet of "realism." "Survival of the fittest" became a

“natural law” employed to justify predatory, inhumane, economic models and systems. Paramount among the latter in our time is the reign of multinational corporations and their lap dog governments, a partnership that fosters the greed-stricken madness we call “globalization.” Women became the second sex because male domination – a major aspect of human predation – became another tenet of “natural law.” Reflecting our collective descent into two-dimensional consciousness, sacred scriptures derived from fabulous celestial tales assured both men and women that a penis is holier than a vagina and that inferior persons, female or male, may properly be thought of as property.

Figure 2-3

The Taoist Symbol of Cosmic Complementarity



The symbol comes from Taoism; the concept of complementarity comes from modern physics. On receiving his Nobel Prize, quantum theorist Neils Bohr adopted this symbol into the coat of arms expected of Nobel Prize winners. He was honoring cosmic paradoxes like the wave- particle nature of light. But, in fact, complementarity is inherent in every aspect of the cosmic order – feminine-masculine, dark-light, assertive (Yang)-receptive (Yin), temporal-eternal, subject-object, mind-manifestation, the relational versus the objective ways of knowing, and the dynamic play of order and chaos. Notice in the Taoist symbol that the smaller circles represent seeds of the opposing complement. So, for example, the seeds of order are found in disorder; the seeds of disorder lurk in the architectures of order.

As the relational mode of consciousness was suppressed, human awareness of the predation aspect of the Earth system was amplified beyond reason and, most surely, beyond wisdom. Expanded awareness may birth a time when we don't have to live with this terrible error. In the meantime, as we creatively envision such a birthing, we can offer compassion to ourselves and to others while we seek to heal our collective insanity.

Coda

Any of us can understand, with a steady gaze behind our nose, that consciousness – awareness of different qualities and “frequencies” – is *precisely where we live*. Things outside of us, the objects of awareness are appearances. And what is perceived through the senses can be – and often is – misleading. By contrast, awareness, consciousness, is the incontrovertible substance of our personal reality. And, with a little effort, we can discover that it exists at the heart of our existing.

Owning this simple insight can be a reminder that there are two modes of consciousness, two ways of encountering the world that must be balanced if our human potential is ever to be realized. For, if our species is to survive on this planet, we'll need to learn or remember that heart knowing is the alpha and omega of all truly human deliberation. We must, insight by insight, come to know that head without heart is insanity.

At last then, our mission impossible, should we choose to accept it, must be nothing less than consciously re-creating the foundations of human life-on-Earth. Since my children and grandchildren are precious to me, since all children ought to be precious to someone, you may well share this sentiment – even if you have deeply shadowed views as to the prognosis for so radical an objective. Hope is allowed.

Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things.

And no good thing ever dies.

Screenplay: The Shawshank Redemption, 1994

INTERMISSION

Of Ego and the Natural Self

The ego is a perception collector that runs on guilt. Because the mystery called love is the fundamental energy of the cosmos, guilt is simply aborted love-energy. The ego's main rule is this: Whatever you do to become worthy of love will never be quite enough.

Your ego and mine are not as personal as we think. Since the ego has no inherent content, it must be filled with the garish, fetid content of the collective ego. Unhealed social worlds are egos replete with asphalt and stop lights. They are industrious consensus machines that run on fear. They produce the carnival trinkets, lies, and deceptions faithfully recounted on television.

The natural self is spontaneous; it dwells in the many-chambered mansion of Now. The ego is a clock.

The natural self is curious. The ego is a box of fictions that everyone knows.

The natural self is playful. The ego is a hive drone.

The natural self is sensual. The ego is a sinner, full of sin.

The natural self resonates to beauty and finds it everywhere. The ego puts art in museums to certify what is art and what is not.

The heart of the self-in-time is our natural self, innocent and open to experience. Yet we are taught that innocence is naïveté and weakness. In fact, our innocence is our power, just as the language of the natural self is the ancient and sacred code by which we can recognize one another in this strange place that is not our home.

ACT II: SCENE 1

THE MATRIX

There are hidden mysteries and secret things which are unknown to men. You will now see that I am revealing deep and secret mysteries.... which properly speaking are not fit for revelation so that they may not become a target for the wit of every idle person.

Rabbi Simeon de Leon (d. 1305)

*And now I a four-fold vision see,
And a fourfold vision is given to me;
Tis' fourfold in my supreme delight
And fourfold in soft Beulah's night
And twofold Always. May God us keep
From single vision and Newton's sleep!*

William Blake

The first landmark we have chosen for the construction of our philosophical map and guidebook is the hierarchic structure of the world – four Great Levels of Being, in which the higher level always comprehends the level below it.

E. F. Schumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed*

R. Griffith Turner, Ph.D., Nearvana, A User's Guide to the End of the World, offers fresh insights and practical steps for waking up in time to cope with the imminent collapse of our current world system.

Nearvana: A User's Guide to the End of the World

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