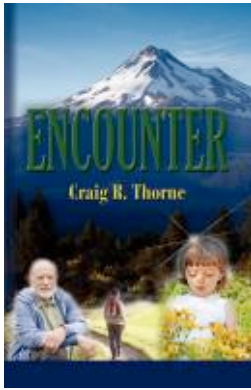




ENCOUNTER

Craig R. Thorne



Imagine yourself beginning a mountain hike early on a beautiful summer morning. Just above the trailhead you encounter an elderly man who bids you a hearty "good morning." You pause to exchange greetings, but immediately he intrigues you with his unusual conversation. You soon abandon your hike and become deeply engrossed in an astounding, far-ranging discussion of human reality. Can you possibly believe the incredible things he says?

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First Edition

CHAPTER 1--THE MEETING

Jerran Ridley slowly rolled over in bed. Good. Cathy didn't even move. Her gentle, regular breathing stirred a tuft of her auburn hair. He loved her, at least as much as any 28-year-old, CalTech Ph.D. whiz-kid physicist could love another mortal. Even if she was "only" a top-notch exobiologist from "that other school" somewhere in Massachusetts.

2:30 a.m. He felt reassured, as always, that his inner alarm had awakened him well before the clock radio began to play. When would he ever have the confidence not to set the thing at all? But it was a gadget, and the gadget did work, so just to be sure . . .

As usual, he thought of the day to come, picturing in his mind the order of events he so eagerly anticipated.

Onto the bike by 3 a.m., heading north on the Interstate. Time to think about lots of things during the three-hour drive, especially what he might experience on this, his first climb up northern California's fabled Mt. Shasta.

He wasn't certain whether or not he was glad that Cathy wasn't going, too. She would slow him down for sure, but her company was indeed welcome, and climbing alone wasn't the smartest way to tackle the peak. But she had work to do, and he could easily understand her intense desire to continue her research, even if this did promise to be a glorious Saturday morning in early June.

Slowly, Jerran eased out of the queen-sized waterbed, and with one deft movement turned off the wake-to-music alarm, simultaneously scooping up his jeans and shirt from the rickety K-Mart chair. No time, or even need, to shave this morning. Must get on the road before three.

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Jerran groped around in the kitchen for an apple and some figs, then pressed the door lock and walked quickly to his smoky-blue motorcycle. 750cc of eager freedom and fury, but he never had redlined the monster. Some things were too good to be true. Forget the macho stereotype--he just loved to get on and ride.

He coasted the bike down the driveway and into the street before firing the engine. Didn't want to wake Cathy, or even the rest of the neighborhood, not that he cared that much about the latter. He popped a fig into his mouth, strapped on his helmet, flipped on the light, and with his expectations clearly in mind vanished from the suburban world.

The road stretched out in a long, sweeping curve, reflecting the soft silver from the full moonlight. Jerran loved the night. There was a peace here, a serenity he couldn't find in his frantic daytime pursuits in that big-city think tank. He liked his job, to be sure, but unlike Cathy, for him the weekend began at 5 p.m. on Friday. Must make time to sniff the flowers.

There were no other vehicles on this long, straight stretch over an hour from home. The powerful shaft-driven engine pulsed steadily between his legs. "Freudian," Cathy would tease. Fat chance. He simply could appreciate the oneness he felt with the machine, its instant responsiveness. What's wrong with that? Didn't she appreciate quality, too? He smiled.

The bike wanted to run. Every real biker knows when the machine demands a free head.

Jerran quickly and smoothly twisted the throttle open, and seconds later he heard the wind whistle around his ears, that stimulating, almost-scary song when the needle passes "the ton," 100 miles per hour. A half mile later he shut it down, content to cruise at sixty. One more bend and he saw it looming in the distance, its snowfields gleaming in the moonlight. Mt. Shasta. The target.

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He wasn't positive just why he was so mesmerized with the mountain. True, he had read some of the literature about the area, the legends, the tall tales, the psychic, occult stuff. But he had been here in California three years now, and it was time to climb the mountain. He liked geology. He liked the big view. He liked to feel his muscles working, and he liked to be alone. Cathy's mother would often proclaim that "too much analysis leads to paralysis," and Jerran tended to agree. Still, he felt unsettled as he passed through the city of Redding and he soon began the long climb toward Shasta, not intending to stop to rest.

Jerran thought about what was important to him. Not family or people-stuff, but more like what life was really all about. He recalled what one professor had told him, that "from those to whom much is given, much is expected." Everyone had expected a lot from Jerran, and he had delivered, not so much for them as for himself. There was too much to know, and he wanted to know it all, or at least to make a big dent in it.

His science had taught him to think in certain ways, but his readings in philosophy, psychology, and even religion left him with nagging questions about what all this "life" experience was really supposed to be. He tried to understand, but he was impatient, and intellectually it bothered him that it was unnecessary to be impatient. He wanted to contribute, yet he didn't see the best way to do it. But he felt the "paralysis" creeping in, and since he was now winding around and up the final road to the mountain, he shifted his attention to driving as the glow of early morning began to awaken the flanks of Shasta.

It was beautiful up here, and even slightly chilly in the open air at nearly 8,000 feet. The valleys spread out below him and the scattered village lights began to fade as the increasing sunlight filtered into the recesses of adjacent, lesser peaks.

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Past Panther Meadow and into Horse Camp, the Shasta Alpine Lodge. Guide the bike into a space away from the main area. Turn off the engine at 5:52 a.m. No one else here. Good.

Jerran swung his stiff legs over the bike saddle and unstrapped his helmet. A couple of quick deep knee bends restored his balance and flexibility as he pulled the helmet off and locked it onto the bike. The fresh air smelled wonderful, and he inhaled a huge gulp of it. Without further hesitation, he removed his day pack from the tie-down straps and adjusted it over his shoulders. He thought briefly about the camera he purposefully left behind, locked the steering column of the motorcycle, and headed resolutely up the trail to the 14,162-foot summit.

In a short time he had passed timberline. He knew none of the local native Americans would likely be here. Something about the respect they held for the mountain prevented their coming up here, at least this high. Whatever. This was a strange mountain.

His heart was beating faster now, and his breathing became more labored. He could slow down, he supposed, but he didn't want to. Still several hours to the summit, and he had allowed for stops along the way to explore whatever took his fancy.

Suddenly Jerran's sharp eyes detected a movement to the right of the trail about a quarter of a mile ahead. It was still rather dark on this side of the mountain, and he couldn't quite discern what the object was. It was big enough to be a deer, and a part of him even hoped it might be a panther or a bear. It was barely moving, whatever it was, and he could calculate that in just a few minutes he would intercept the creature.

Then a shaft of sunlight flooded the area ahead, and Jerran could determine that his unknown friend was little more than a man, and a rather elderly one at that. The man sported a white beard and carried a walking staff, and as Jerran drew near he

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could see that the old fellow had a ruddy, hardy complexion, as though he had spent many years climbing in these mountains.

Jerran had mixed feelings about this chance meeting. In a way, he had hoped to enjoy his climb in solitude, but perhaps a companion, especially an older, quieter one, might be welcome, if indeed this man were intent on climbing to Shasta's summit.

"Good morning," Jerran called out, surprising himself with how cheerful his words sounded. "Beautiful day, isn't it?"

For the briefest of moments the older man appeared startled, but he quickly composed himself and smiled warmly at Jerran.

"Good morning to you, too. Going to the top?"

"Sure going to try. And you?"

"Oh, I've been there many times," the man replied, settling himself onto a smooth rock. "Nothing much to see up there."

"Nothing to see? You must be kidding! I'll bet the view is fantastic." Jerran was truly puzzled by such an attitude.

"Anything you want to see is right here," the old man said with a little smile as he pointed a bent finger to his head.

"Oh boy," Jerran thought to himself. "I've run into one of those fruitcake New Age weirdos." He looked closely at the man. He didn't appear to be deranged. As a matter of fact, he looked quite calm and intelligent, almost as though he couldn't care less whether Jerran believed him or not.

"Uh, exactly what do you mean by that?" Jerran asked. He figured he would be polite for a minute or two, then graciously leave the man and continue his trek up the mountain.

"I mean, quite simply, that the reality you perceive is but a distorted one, that physical matter is merely an expression of your current belief system. To climb to the top of a mountain that in one respect isn't even there at all is most unnecessary."

That did it. The guy must be crackers. But Jerran was just stubborn enough, just curious and arrogant enough, to set this fellow straight before continuing his climb.

“Are you trying to say that all this is an illusion? I’ve heard of such nonsense before, and I just don’t buy it. What kind of evidence do you have? Where’s your proof?”

“Proof is an emotional, arbitrary phenomenon. With increasing awareness, the individual moves well beyond such crude displays and immature reassurances. Apparently, you still require such.”

Jerran could see that the old fellow was certainly no zealot or ignorant groupie. Also, Jerran felt somewhat miffed at the implied insult to his own intelligence and understanding. Perhaps he would linger a few moments more, check out this man, then get back to his climbing, although he was already figuring how much time he had lost and how he might make it up.

“This is all somewhat interesting, but why do you want to tell me these things?” Jerran didn’t know what else to say.

“This planet is currently undergoing many dynamic and crucial changes that will effect all the people here to varying degrees. Not only are individuals so affected, but all life forms here and on other worlds will to some extent respond to the events unfolding on Earth. I have come to assist you in your understanding and to help ease the transition.”

This was getting very strange. But Jerran, though intrigued, was more driven by his need to expose this man, to reveal his silly logic and assertions, than to be on his way. He decided to play along for just a while longer.

“Where is it that you have come from?”

“There really is no place, as such, from which to come, but I will not be cryptic. For the moment, let us assume that I am a

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resident of this area, this mountain called Shasta. I ask your indulgence regarding that for the time being.”

“Just who are you?”

(Smiling) “A complex question, to be sure! I do not claim to be any more or any less than what I am. Obviously, I am not anyone famous or rich, so I hope I do not disappoint you in that. I am a person who has grown to maturity here in this section of the country. I have worked a variety of jobs, from heavy manual labor to teaching graduate students in the university. I am married to a fine woman, but I am not currently a father. My formal education includes two graduate degrees, since that might have some meaning for you. I enjoy reading, and my passion is working with ideas in a creative manner and sharing those ideas with others of like mind, such as yourself.”

“Why do I get the idea that you are something more than all that, or at least think you are?”

“Probably because you are letting your intuitions have free reign. I am more than what I have described so far, and if you are patient, my history will gradually unfold.”

“Are you some kind of trance channeler or psychic of some sort?” Jerran was not at all receptive to those kinds of folks.

“In the manner you perceive of such phenomena, no I am not. I am quite aware of the so-called “New Age” movement and the growing number of individuals who claim to be channelers for any number of discarnate entities or other-worldly intelligences. Although what I speak is in some way not dissimilar to them, you can readily see that I am not affecting any detached or unusual behavior while some other ‘force’ enters my mind and body.”

“Why have you chosen me to participate in your project, or whatever you wish to call it?”

“To be frank, I could have selected many others besides you. You are, however, a worthy and capable representative

who will gradually and effectively introduce the tenets of our discussion to many of those with whom you interact. You are also somewhat special in that you are an excellent communicator with an inquiring nature, delighted with ideas and the prospects of discussing those ideas with others. In that manner, my aims and objectives will be disseminated in an exponential fashion. You could regard me as somewhat lazy, in that respect, if you wish.”

This was persuasive, though not revelatory, to Jerran. He looked about, then selected the most comfortable place on the ground that he could find. At least this wasn’t the run-of-the-mill type of padder he usually confronted. He pulled out a fig and offered it to the man, who shook his head “no.” Jerran put it back into his pocket, leaned his head on his left hand, elbow on a nearby rock, and began to listen more earnestly.

“Precisely what are your objectives?” Jerran asked.

“That will be progressively revealed to you during the course of our discussion. I assure you that this process is quite benign, although it is undeniably aggressive.”

“I think I can speak for many others when I wonder about your motives. You claim, and appear to be, just a ‘regular’ type of person with no obvious, extraordinary qualities. You don’t admit to being an extraterrestrial, a god or angel of some sort, a profound intellectual, a channeled entity, a famous scientist or leader. Why should I listen to you or put any credence into whatever it is you apparently want to say?” Jerran wanted to get to the point.

“The greatest leaders that you have identified in your histories made no specific claims to being anything other than what they were, not that I am comparing myself to them. I am glad that you question me in such a manner, for it only further corroborates my judgment in selecting you as a participant. Ultimately, it is not my words or the words of religious leaders,

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gurus, politicians, or those of beloved and trusted friends that will prove of most lasting value to you. You, all of you, must listen to your own inner selves and act upon your own judgments in order to live fulfilling lives and to contribute to the world as you know it.

I have no burning cause for you to join and no religion to offer solace. I am here to stress that your life is entirely what you choose to make it and to encourage you to assume responsibility for your actions, including those actions you do not elect to pursue. I will continually emphasize that your world is a reflection of your inner beliefs and attitudes and that there are virtually no limitations to the self and its infinite possibilities of expression.”

“That all sounds well and good, but what are you offering that hasn’t been presented before in one form or another?”

(Laughing) “Almost nothing, and I don’t mean that in a pejorative or condescending manner. What I want to share with you today has indeed been presented to you in diverse forms and ‘mediums’ for a very long time in your short history, often by those far more articulate and emotionally appealing than I. As in the past, there are relatively few individuals who choose to listen, to reflect, and to search inwardly for confirmation of what may be loosely referred to as these ‘universal truths’.”

“Why should I accept your ideas of ‘truth’ any more than those of others? What about our own truths?” Jerran reasoned he had little to lose by being frank and confrontive, but his companion seemed to pay no heed at all.

“My ideas, as you may come to see, often closely reflect those of numerous others who have come before me. There are only so many ways that basic truths can be expressed, and I am but one more speaker, one more communicator, of those truths.

In that vein, I apologize to those from whom I seemingly borrow ideas and offer a general disclaimer, but nonetheless

hold firm in that my ideas, no matter how similar to those of others, are indeed my ideas. There are bound to be many similarities, for the origins of the material are essentially indistinguishable.”

“Such as Cayce’s Akashic records?” (Jerran wasn’t sure what this “material” the man spoke of was, so he ventured the guess).

“In a sense, yes. Edgar Cayce, to cite only one example, reliably reported the ‘facts’ insofar as he was able to present them, albeit in a rather antiquated vernacular. History records many such speakers; one of the most helpful and accurate in your current experience is represented by the so-called ‘Seth material’ authored by a woman named Roberts. It is worth reading.

But as I mentioned earlier, much information is now being offered via channelers, personal meditative states, gurus, even movie stars and rock crystals. All have their own validity to some degree, but you must learn to look within yourselves to separate the wheat from the chaff, for there are those who will try to deceive you, for their own ill-informed reasons. On the other hand, do not be overly skeptical, for that can just as surely inhibit your spiritual awakening and overall soul development.”

“And, of course, you wouldn’t be one of the deceivers? But I’m still puzzled. Why you?”

“I can only protest that, to my knowledge, I am no deceiver. But why not me? Throughout your recorded history and long before that there have been emissaries to this planet who have come to oversee, to prod, to monitor, and to share their experiences and knowledge with the people of Earth. More often than not, those delegates have performed their tasks in a rather quiet, subdued manner. They had little need for flamboyant theatrics. They have given a thought here, a word of encouragement there, a kind moment to those in despair. They

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have kept alive the flame of what you might call the spiritual godhead, and they have served with compassion, love, and understanding.

It does not matter if you call these entities by names such as Buddha, Jesus, angels, or even Mother Teresa. There are also 'secret' groups and alliances that have kept alive these revered precepts from time immemorial. I tell you only that they most certainly do exist, and that they have passed on their knowledge for eons. Mine is but one more singular attempt, presented in my own particular manner, one that I hope will strike some respondent chords within you so that you too will disseminate these ideas in your own unique style while still remaining cognizant and true to the overreaching validity of the teachings."

Jerran felt as though he were back in school, and he must surely protest. "But how do you, personally, claim to know all these things?"

"Briefly, I can only explain that the process is an intuitive one, in its greater extent, and I assure you that I do not know all things. Now I immediately realize that your great scientists will demand demonstrable proof or evidence, empirical data, of such matters while deploring what they regard as a glaring lack of intellectual rigor. To them I can only say that there are quantities and qualities that their instruments cannot and will not be able to measure, despite their most exquisitely-designed and well-controlled experiments. Can they prove the very fact of their own existence, that a mother loves her child, that thoughts and emotions do undeniably exist, that when we walk we somehow understand that each step of controlled falling still manages to propel us along, that each word from our mouths is not predestined and consciously selected yet nevertheless still comes tumbling off our tongues in a recognizable, decipherable manner? Are not dreams 'real'?"

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Many people will insist on such ‘proofs’ while not realizing that the evidence is continually surrounding them in the very glory and wonder of the intricacy of existence. The proof that scientists so often request stares them in the face, yet they prefer to consult mechanical devices and instruments of their own making to assure them of their own foregone conclusions, for they will always find what they themselves have previously imagined. It is rather like a self-fulfilling prophecy, in many cases.

I am not suggesting that science has little to offer you, as we shall discuss later, for scientific discoveries have certainly added some wonderful new dimensions to the quality of your lives, but I merely offer that science persistently argues for its own limitations then appears honestly and innocently amazed when its expectations physically manifest. As in ages past, you have a tendency to revere and deify scientific achievement at the expense of spiritual development. Some of your scientists are beginning to realize, although only in the vaguest sense, that there are phenomena well beyond the reach of their most elusive pursuits. The real frontiers lie within.

So, I make no specific claims as to any esoteric knowledge. I present only my interpretations of ‘what is.’ You must always decide for yourselves what beliefs you will entertain, but know that beliefs are simply that--beliefs. Some people believe that the Earth is flat, or that humans have not set foot upon the moon. Others believe there is no ‘God’ or that alien life does not teem throughout your universe. Beliefs are functional and comforting, but not necessarily ‘true.’”

“Well, these remarks are hardly illuminating. Will you be addressing these issues in a significantly different way?” Jerran was willing to let go, at least for now, the old man’s references to “your” planet, and the implications that he was not from here.

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“I believe I have mentioned that essentially I am basically reiterating what has been given before, but still largely ignored. My goal here is to present this information in a straightforward and clear format, although I am not so confident I will be able to clarify several key concepts to your complete satisfaction. I hope to be able to synthesize and condense a major portion of these ideas through the use of analogies and succinct descriptions, for what has been offered earlier has taken volumes to record, and no longer do most of you have the patience for deeper examination.

It is likely that you will at times be shocked, morally outraged, and perhaps even personally offended at the words I shall speak. That is your choice. I ask only that you try to keep an open mind and to entertain the possibility that what I share with you may indeed be true. Frankly, but kindly, there will be concepts here that you likely will not comprehend, but at some level of understanding you will realize the inherent implications. Bear in mind that no small number of those ideas once considered hypocritical or heretical or of the most utter nonsense have eventually come to pass.

Now, if there are no other immediate concerns you wish to express, then may I suggest we turn to questions you may have? Later, we will have a period for general question-and-response interaction wherein you are encouraged to ask about any subject, area, or issue of interest or concern to you that we have not covered to your satisfaction. These will be brief and concise, yet I place no limit on the number you wish to ask, subject only to your personal time constraints.”

Jerran was stunned. All he had intended was to climb this magnificent mountain, and now here he was confronted with this odd, elderly man who seemed to want to tell him some kind of opinions about all of existence.

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Jerran debated whether or not to excuse himself and be on his way. He really did intend to climb the mountain, for this had been a goal of his for quite some time now, and he was single-minded enough, stubborn enough to want some closure on this self-imposed pleasure/task.

The fellow appeared harmless enough, though. And Jerran had been intensely curious about these topics for as long as he could remember. At least he would have something to tell Cathy, and he knew she would ask him why he didn't at least explore a conversation with this man for a little while.

With a shrug of resignation he shifted around to get more comfortable. He figured that it would be acceptable to indulge the old fellow until either of them lost interest in the activity, then politely excuse himself and be on his way.

Jerran challenged his host with his first question.

CHAPTER 2--GODS AND SOULS

“Okay, then let me begin with what is probably the most pressing question in the minds of many. Is there a God?”

“There is indeed. Now ‘God’ has been referred to by many different names through the ages, but ‘God’ is as functional as any other name for our purposes here.”

“That will be discouraging news for the atheists,” Jerran replied, wryly. “Is there one God, and if so, is it male or female?”

“In the manner that you view such events, there is but one God. As to gender, God is neither and both, for there is a remarkable androgynous blending of that force to create and sustain that energy essence. Remember, too, that the distinction of separate genders is an Earthly convenience not necessarily of particular utility in other systems of consciousness.”

“Other systems? Then you submit there are others?”

“Yes, and we will speak of them at some length later in our discussion. It is time you finally accept that you are hardly the only sentient beings in all of creation.”

Jerran didn’t believe it likely that Earth harbored the only intelligent life, but he didn’t speak much of it among his colleagues. “What, then, is the nature of God? What is this force made of?”

“Those wishing to conceive of God as a white-bearded, wise old man sitting securely on a gilded throne in a benign heaven dispensing mercy and justice or punishment and damnation will be sorely disappointed, I am afraid.

God is a gestalt of energy, a whole greater than the sum of all Its parts. It is an expression of a vast and concentrated consciousness far beyond human comprehension.”

“Why is It so far beyond our comprehension?”

“By choice, human beings have elected to severely limit their perceptive abilities in deference to the varied pleasures and pains, successes and failures, in short, experiences, most inherent to life in a physical dimension. You have all agreed, en masse, to accept only certain types or intensities of neuronal information to accommodate an ego-focused consciousness. These restrictions make it impossible, in your present state only, of anything but the faintest glimmerings of the infinite possibilities and expressions of creative thought and complex imagination.”

“You’re saying, then, that we’re too dumb to understand this concept?” Jerran felt a twinge of annoyance with this.

“Only in a certain sense, my friend, but I do not at all intend to be harsh in that unsettling pronouncement. Would you ridicule an infant for crying out its needs, or laugh at a loving parent holding her dead child in her arms? There is a compelling sense of compassion for those who do not yet understand, not a distant and cold disregard for the caterpillar who soon enough becomes a beautiful butterfly.”

“I’m still not sure why we cannot comprehend.”

The man patiently continued. “Most of you have used a microscope at some time during your schooling. Recall how you placed the object under the lenses and began to search for its image through the eyepiece. At first you manipulated the coarse adjustment to locate the object. Next, you more carefully twisted the fine adjustment until you achieved a much clearer image, one that you could easily identify and observe.

Now imagine that other objects, an infinite number of them, if you will, exist simultaneously all along the visual path of that microscope. Unfortunately, however, you cannot see them. Perhaps the light isn’t quite right, or the glass is defective in certain areas. Maybe your eyes are too coarse an instrument to

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perceive them, or your brain cannot send the proper signals to interpret the existence of those myriad other objects. But exist they do. Even if you personally cannot run and jump twenty feet, there certainly are others in the world who can.

What I am trying to say is that the human brain has imposed numerous restrictions on itself, and due to the nature of those restrictions a full comprehension of what God is will continue to elude you. In their own crude way, your earnest scientists have postulated that you utilize but a fraction of your brains, and in simple terms, that is fairly accurate.”

“But why should we choose those restrictions? And can you explain how it is that we choose? Isn’t that an accident of our birth rather than one of intent and design?”

“The restrictions are chosen because the brain , but not necessarily the mind, is physically unable to deal with the incredible amount of sensory data continuously presented to it. You are here on Earth to learn how to use energy and matter, and to learn from diverse experiences.

Shortly we shall address the idea of choice, but for now let me emphatically assure you that nothing happens by chance. There absolutely are no ‘accidents,’ for free will always dictates those events that manifest in your reality. Now you will immediately begin to think of all sorts of exceptions to that statement, and it is natural that you do, but for a moment let us restrict our attention to the subject directly at hand--the God concept.”

Jerran thought for a moment. “Allow me to summarize, then, for the sake of clarity. You indicate that there is a God, and that this God is a form of energy that is neither male nor female. It is virtually beyond our comprehension, for various reasons, to know exactly what It is. Did this God, then, create us?”

“Yes.”

The answer seemed too easy. “Will you expand on that?”

“Later.”

Being put off did not amuse Jerran, but he remained patient.

“Very well. Then, how old is this God?”

“God has existed, in your terms, forever.”

“Is that not just religious dogma, in effect?”

“Not at all. I do not mean to be elusive here, but much of this will unfold as we continue our discussion. That which does not gradually become apparent to you I will gladly clarify as we progress. I need to build a foundation at first to establish some basic understanding of these concepts. I do, however, ask your indulgence. I do not pretend to be a flawless spokesperson.”

“Who, or what, then, created God?”

(Delightedly) “I don’t know. I can inform you that God Itself is aware that something created It, and God is searching for that Creator. I realize this is an extremely difficult situation to appreciate, and from my particular vantage point no immediate resolution is forthcoming.”

“It would appear that we are at a stalemate, of sorts, on that issue.”

“It would. However, it is still a good idea to occasionally think along this line, for it activates certain mental processes that stimulate further development, for all acts are initially mental ones, and even as exercise and practice brings you skill in other pursuits, so does mental exercise serve to hone and increase your abilities in this area, too.”

“You have spoken of the ego and implied a certain vague power it possesses. Would you care to elaborate on that, please?”

“Certainly. Due in no small part to Freudian psychology, you have identified and labeled your psyches into three separate areas roughly corresponding to the unconscious, subconscious, and conscious. I tell you now that everything in existence is

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quite happily conscious in its own right, but for now let me take some liberty with Dr. Freud while referring to our present waking reality as the conscious ego.

In order to function in a physically-oriented reality, an ego component of the mind has emerged. This ego is an arbiter between the vital inner self, from which all else springs, and the more-or-less artificial appearance, though it seems 'real' to you, of the exterior physical world.

The ego, in the way you look at it, performs a crucial role in filtering the incredible amount of data between what can be regarded as the inner and outer worlds, and it fulfills its task most generally in a splendid and admirable manner.

But the ego can become confused with its role. It knows it must synthesize quantities of exterior data and stimuli, yet it also is cognizant of its close relationship with those other portions of its essential self, the so-called subconscious and unconscious. Therefore, it is faced with a vexing dilemma of disconcerting proportions, for to which 'god' should it be true?

Many of your observable psychological aberrations and deviations may be attributed to this perpetual struggle between the exterior world of physical experience and the inner world of the psychic, intuitive self. Not that one is better or worse than the other, but that both have specific functions in a physical world."

"The point being?"

"The point being is that all is of One, a postulate that has universal application. Artificial divisions are unnecessary and even misleading. There really is no contest or battle raging within you for control of your essential self, but only a lack of perception and acceptance."

"Moving away from that, if we may . . ."

"We may."

“let us broach another highly-charged subject. Do humans have souls?”

“Absolutely. However, souls are not really something you simply have, such as implying ownership. More directly, you are a soul.”

“Is this soul actually located in some specific area?”

“No. There are those who like to place it in the solar plexus and others favor the ‘third eye’ in the middle of the forehead. Still others may claim one of the seven Chakra areas as the home of the soul, or perhaps in the medulla oblongata, but there is no real physical location wherein the soul resides.”

“If there is no physical residence, such as within the heart or brain, they why should we accept that we have a soul at all, floating around inside us somewhere?”

“A soul is a form of energy. Can you take one of your thoughts and grasp it firmly in hand? Can you quantify the memory of a magnificent rainbow or sunset you have witnessed?”

“Does everyone have a soul, or in your words, is everyone a soul?”

“Yes.”

Jerran was uneasy with such short responses. He wasn’t used to such certainty, but in a way, he was impressed by it.

“Do animals have souls, too?”

“Not as you may envision, but be cautious of what you think of as a soul. All living things, indeed all of creation, is composed of ‘soul stuff’ to one degree or another, depending on the intensity of conscious focus.

The soul is made of energy and cannot be destroyed. It is the spark, the essence of what you are, and it will continue to live, in your view, forever.”

“Are you implying that we will never die?”

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“I will state outrightly that there is no real death. You can observe a physical body die, but you cannot kill a soul. It will change form in any number of marvelous ways, but survive it will.”

“Will we be conscious, then, of the ‘I’ that formerly was a physical creature?”

“You will depending on the extent to which you focus your awareness, as we shall soon see.”

“Isn’t this position primarily what many religions seem to posit, that there is a life after death?”

“There are undeniably distinct parallels.”

“So you say that is true?”

“I do. But your religions often distort the situation.”

“But isn’t the wish for some sort of life after death little more than an individual’s expression of hope that whatever he or she is will not really die?” Jerran continued. “Isn’t it an unrealistic and somewhat immature grasping to cheat death and fend off the unknown? In effect, isn’t it actually a child’s tale?”

“There is no death. The inner self, the soul, is very much aware of that. Physical death will not be cheated, for you all will die in flesh.

Also, in greater terms, there is no unknown for you. Other parts of you, the parts we have called the subconscious and unconscious, are vitally aware of your immortality. You are so mesmerized and enamored with your physical selves that you have almost entirely neglected and forgotten that you are really spiritual in nature. This Earth experience is only one of many that you enjoy in a highly-focused space and time.”

“Then we have more than one soul?”

“Perhaps an attempted analogy will aid your understanding. You are a part, and a very important one, of what can be thought of as your oversoul. Emerson spoke of this. The oversoul is like the director and central processing unit, for you

computer aficionados, of the various souls comprising its reality.

(Drawing on the ground) Now think of your oversoul as a flower, a daisy. In the center is the oversoul, and each petal represents one individual soul. You are like a petal, and the other souls, counterparts of yours in a manner of speaking, all combine to create the oversoul. There is a constant interaction between all these components, yet each is a separate entity unto itself with its own set of experiences. The oversoul is aware of all its parts, and the souls comprising the ‘petals’ are also aware of their fellow souls, but not necessarily in a conscious manner. The oversoul, comparable to God, is greater than the sum of all its parts.”

“Why would souls want to band together like that?”

“To gain and share experiences. It is similar to the saying about two heads being better than one. Yet be advised that, overall, Spirit is even ‘mightier’ than souls.

Now this can give rise to many related questions, I am sure, but unless one is particularly pressing, it would be better for us to continue, for there still remains much to consider.”

“How does the ego, the ‘I’, the individual, maintain any sense of personal identity in all this mass of differentiated consciousness?” This was beginning to confuse Jerran.

“If you are suggesting that what happens is rather what certain Eastern religions imagine, that upon death your soul is subsumed into some ephemeral gestalt of being in which your personal identity is merged and all but forgotten, then let me calm your fears. Your identity is much more resilient and pervasive than that. You are not fated to function only as some elaborate information-gathering device. There is a fascinating cooperative effort, joyfully undertaken, to achieve a multitude of experiences in numerous realities and dimensions.”

ENCOUNTER

Jerran was somewhat uncomfortable with talk of religions and souls. Despite his independent readings, his science training left him with nagging doubts and suspicions.

“You keep alluding to other dimensions and times and places. Along with that, my next question concerns what the soul, my private one, does before and after this physical life. If we in effect live forever, what else is going on during all these other times? Where am ‘I’? Are you suggesting some sort of reincarnation?”

The man gently smiled, as though he had been asked that questions many times before.

“I am glad you have brought that up, for now we can move directly into that line of inquiry. It has proven somewhat difficult for me to answer some of your questions to this point without referring to other concepts that we shall eventually pursue in more detail. I do appreciate your patience, and trust you will find my explanations challenging, if not convincing.”

CHAPTER 3--REINCARNATION AND THE CONCEPT OF TIME

“You ask if I believe in reincarnation. As I have briefly mentioned earlier, some ‘situations’ are not really amenable to negotiable attitudes, for they persist as what you may term ‘fact.’ You may elect to believe that you do not have to eat in order to stay alive, or you may believe that there is no Sun in the sky, but practically speaking those two situations most certainly are ‘truths’.”

“Then reincarnation is a truth, a fact?”

“Most definitely. However, there is some ambiguity with the prefix ‘re’, which I will explain shortly. Eventually you will come to realize that what you experience is a product, a particular manifestation of your beliefs.

Those who do not ‘believe’ in reincarnation on the so-called conscious level are intuitively aware of it on other levels of the inner self. Humans reincarnate. Period.”

“But why should we reincarnate? Where is the proof or evidence for such an occurrence? We’ve all heard about it from what we’ve read of Eastern philosophy, and from the rash of publications connected with the New Age rhetoric. But surely you can appreciate that there are many people who simply do not subscribe to all that and would demand rational explanations.”

“Your questions are most legitimate and certainly reflect the concerns of a considerable number of individuals. As to what would be considered a ‘rational’ explanation, then I can only add that such a conclusion is a product of individual belief systems. Some people will literally buy the Brooklyn bridge while others will believe almost nothing. Again, it is a search of

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the inner self that will most faithfully lead you to the answers you seek on a most personal level.

I can appreciate the frustration many of you must feel when I simply ask you to accept, or at least consider, these ideas on faith alone. Because of the particular orientation of your species, your physically-directed consciousness, it is difficult for me to explain certain concepts, for I am bound by space, time, and the necessity of translating into a language-based symbolism recognizable to you.

There are many 'proofs' that you accept in your everyday activities, proofs that you never question or doubt. If I were more clever, a better teacher, I could identify the precise method of assisting you in your understanding, but as I have mentioned, and I offer no excuses, I simply do not know all the answers or the absolutely best way of presenting this. I too am in a continuing process of learning and becoming, and I am trying my best.

I realize all too well what your religions espouse and promise, and many of you remain thoroughly disenchanted with what has been perpetrated in the name of religion. Sometimes, however, you tend to overreact to the shortcomings and hypocrisy of religion by turning to what you regard as the more pure and objective explanations promulgated by science. Too often you do not see that science itself has become your brand of new religion and that you are merely repeating the same old 'mistakes' under a new banner. It is the science in you that demands proofs and evidence, but you do not understand that science in the overwhelming majority of cases is focusing only on material, physical phenomena, and as I remind you again, you are far more spiritual than you are physical.

You ask why you should reincarnate. Allow me to mention in passing that there really are no absolute 'shoulds' for you to follow. Everything you do is a matter of free will and choice,

but that does not imply that you have free license to perform wrongful acts upon others or to your personal self, for what many refer to as 'karma' is in its own way quite operative. Do not assume, then, that you are punished for past wrongs. It is more that you answer to your inner self for not taking full advantage of the wonderful opportunities you have for growth and learning while in your present, physical plane.

You reincarnate in order to continue your personal growth in the Earthly dimension. Whether you understand and accept this or not, you have chosen to incarnate as a physical being in order to work on any number of different issues and individual concerns. Some people truly enjoy the beauty of physical existence and elect this setting to further their soul growth. Many others want to interact with those they have known in times past, and delight in working with these old friends one more time. Still others have but the remotest understanding of what this is all about and will continue to reincarnate until they are ready to accept their situation in a more meaningful way. Remember that reincarnational lifetimes constitute a choice by the individual concerned and that it is not a punishment at all.

Perhaps some of the 'proofs' you insist upon can be evidenced in a crude manner by the various accounts of those who, under regressive hypnosis, for example, seemingly recall past-life experiences. This is fairly well-documented in many instances and is indeed true, but far too many of you dismiss these accounts as necromancy or similar sorcery, as coming from deranged individuals, or simply as misguided and greedy entrepreneurs motivated only by bottom-line profiteering. Now in some cases these counterproductive tales ring true, and these 'bad apples' can certainly jeopardize serious, legitimate research in this field. As I have touched upon, the real final frontier lies in exploration of the inner, spiritual self, not in the number of quarks that can dance upon a pinhead, if you will

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indulge me in a mixed metaphor. If you care to delve into the literature in a serious manner, you will find numerous instances or what you refer to as reincarnation, but most of you are unwilling to take the time or effort to attempt a real understanding of this vital component of your existence.”

“If all of this is true, how come more people don’t subscribe to it? Why isn’t it obvious?”

“It might surprise you to know that far more people do accept this than you realize. The Western mind is somewhat tardy in recognizing what many other cultures have, in their own interpretive fashions, understood for quite some time.

There is somewhat of a cultural and geographical arrogance among some nations that precludes the efficacy of the idea of a global interactive community, but please do not consider that a verbal spanking, of sorts. This attitude is a reflection of a pattern that has repeated itself countless times in the annals of Earth history, and the lesson will continue to be repeated until it is finally learned.”

Jerran persisted with his reincarnational query. “Why are people so reluctant to accept this idea of reincarnation?”

“At the risk of sounding like a religious zealot, which I most emphatically am not, it is because of fear and ignorance, and it is fear and ignorance that cause by far the majority of your perceived problems.

To anticipate your predictable question regarding what kind of fear and ignorance, let me say that those conditions present themselves in a multitude of forms and expressions--far too many to enumerate here. Suffice to say that most fear and ignorance stems from a lack of understanding of the true nature of the self and its interconnectedness with all that is. There really is nothing to fear, including what you think of as the ‘unknown’.”

Craig R. Thorne

"If we accept reincarnation as a means to learn and grow, are you saying we choose these lives, or does someone or perhaps something else assign these to us?"

"You choose them."

"Well, why don't we just choose not to choose them, then?"

"With the decision to incorporate into physical reality, you agree to what could be referred to as a mental contract, with yourselves, to experience the expression of energy in this form."

"Then we're trapped in this series of lives?"

"Not at all. You always have free will to change your reality, but most often you will decide to complete your 'contract' until you have learned those lessons inherent to physical matter."

"What kind of lessons?"

"Upon reflection, you could easily answer that yourself. Say in one lifetime you lived a life of abject poverty and oppressive hardships. You may decide to spend the next lifetime as a wealthy person with plenty of food to eat, warm and ornate surroundings, and seemingly few cares at all. This affords the opportunity to experience many lifestyles, as you can readily see."

"Do we also use these lives to learn what it is like to be born and to mature in other races?"

"You do. That is one reason why it is so foolish to war among yourselves over issues of race and culture, and particularly as you have witnessed all too often, over fields of oil. You really do not recognize the true brotherhood and sisterhood of humanity. And yes, it is similarly foolish to proclaim yourselves either as a 'feminist' or as a 'masculinist,' for you have been both male and female, both mother and father during your individual histories of successive incarnations."

This, somehow, amused Jerran. "Androgony?"

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“Your greater self is androgynous. We might speak of that later, if we touch on your psychologies, such as postulated and described in reference to the anima and animus.”

“What kind of time frame is involved in all this? Is this an infinite process of successive lives? Are we ever released?”

“Let me address your questions in reverse order. You will release yourselves, as I have stated, when you are ready to move on to other experiences. The word ‘release’ implies a confinement, and you must realize you are in no kind of prison, unless you choose to make it so. Remember that you have chosen to undergo this experience, and you could consider it somewhat of an honor, for there are many other souls waiting to enter infant bodies. Humans can propagate only so quickly, and there are others eagerly awaiting their turns to return to flesh to continue their lessons. I would urge you to take full advantage of this lifetime, as with each one you select.”

“You keep emphasizing that we choose so many things. Would you elaborate on that? Do we choose all our experiences?”

“Let me gently remind you that I have answered but one of the previous questions. I will be most happy to answer your last query when I respond to the others. It is a good question, and I will not forget it. Allow me to combine your first and second questions, since they are closely related.

No, it is not a process of infinite lives, as you may have determined by now. The oversoul entity, in conjunction with your personal self, decides how many lives you will find optimally constructive for your own specific purposes. Some choose a very small number for various reasons; others may require a rather significant number of lifetimes, again for their own personal reasons.

The other question, regarding the time frame involved, is most difficult for me to explain. The basic premise is this:

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'Time' is an illusion. I nearly said that it does not exist, but that would be misleading and confusing. You must appreciate my difficulty in attempting to explain a concept that in itself requires itself as a crucial element of explanation. It takes time to explain time.

That is why I referred to the prefix 're' in the word 'reincarnation.' That implies events occurring both before and after one another, which really is not the situation at all.

All time is simultaneous. Everything happens at once. It is because you are situated in a physical reality and operate within the profound limitations of a brain and nervous system overwhelmingly focused on certain highly-restrictive sensory and neurological data that you are virtually unable to grasp this concept so vital to your comprehension.

Sometimes you are given obscure hints of this timelessness of 'time' from your inner selves, and on occasion even from your waking ego consciousness. You have all witnessed the supposed precognitive abilities which, incidentally, you all possess, of your psychics and mediums. They are allegedly able, at times, to predict future events. In actuality, the events have already happened, in the manner you view them. Even more precisely, the events are happening at that very moment.

Further evidence, and perhaps most important of all, is to be found in your dream state. Try to remember what ideas or concepts you have of time while you are dreaming. Does time pass more quickly, more slowly, or just about the same in your dream state as it does in waking reality? Aren't dream events often strange and confusing to you? Just what is the role of dream-time?

You also have the feeling of 'deja-vu,' that you have been in certain places or said or done some particular thing before, and I urge you to think upon that in conjunction with this concept of timelessness.

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Further, you have heard stories of individuals who have premonitions, usually of what they consider negative events such as an impending airplane crash. It may appear they are reaching into the future, but actually they are simply recognizing an event that is constantly occurring.

You can watch a favorite movie many times, although it was made only 'once.' You can view the movie at any particular point and know what action has occurred and what is going to occur as the plot unfolds. What 'time' is all that occurring in? Can you begin to see how past, present, and future all begin to meld into one spacious PRESENT?

When you put your child on the carousel you eagerly wait until the carousel has moved in a complete circle so that you may wave to your child as he or she passes by. You usually ignore, dismiss, or remain oblivious to the other children and focus only on your own child. If you can look at your child as representing Earth-time, then all the other children going around and around can represent other times, or what you call pasts and futures. They exist simultaneously with your child-time-present, but you do not pay attention to them.

Let us envision a succulent mushroom growing on the forest floor. It is not concerned over what time it may be, as far as humans calculate. It just is.

Now since it is mushroom season, many people are out in the woods searching for these delicious fungi. As a matter of fact, three people will be connected with our juicy little mushroom--Linda, Johnny, and you.

Linda will be the first to find the mushroom, but until she does, the mushroom remains in her future. Remember, her future is only the present, as far as the mushroom is concerned. When Linda's future encounter becomes her present, she finds the mushroom, but being such a discriminating young lady she

forsakes picking this mushroom in order to search for another, perhaps larger, one.

Soon, Johnny stumbles along. The mushroom, not caring or focusing upon time as humans see it, feels Johnny's heavy footsteps. Suddenly, Johnny's encounter with the mushroom shifts from his future event to a present one, but since Johnny is not too bright, he thinks the mushroom is poisonous and stalks away. The mushroom, still in its present, becomes a past event to Johnny, but to you, our third participant, the mushroom still represents a future event.

When you finally get to the mushroom's sunny glade, the mushroom is enjoying the present moment in the sunshine. You are delighted to find it, however, so you tear it from its roots and pop it into your sack. The past mushroom of Linda and Johnny still exists, for you have it right now, in your present, and in your future you will likely eat it. But that future action for you is only a possibility for Linda and Johnny, if they even consider it at all. But to the mushroom, it's all merely one flexible, plastic NOW, or present."

Jerran, although quick of mind, was pressed to follow this analogy. He frowned, and seeing this, his companion continued, seemingly anxious to clarify his explanation.

"You see, the idea of time all depends on the frame of reference, the consciousness of those experiencing it. The mushroom simply existed in the present. The people encountering it created the idea of time. The mushroom lived in what the mushroom hunters would call pasts, presents, and futures, but in real terms it all occurred at once. If you like, you can substitute a straying child for the mushroom, to give human consciousness even more of a role in our story.

How often have you said and heard others say 'Boy, time really got away from me,' or 'Time flies when you're having a good time,' or 'I didn't realize what time it was,' and 'I just lost

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track of time?’ Why do science fiction writers play around with the idea of time warps, or creative moviemakers delight you with tales of going back to the future or riding in time machines? Even your astronauts report different perspectives of space and time when they return from their missions. Astronomers have puzzled over their ‘twin paradox’ situation and physicists, such as yourself, entertain ideas of time travel as they unfold the ‘secrets’ of your physical universe.

I am sure that you too can conceive of several additional instances of this idea of time and just what it all means. Once you do understand this, it will become much more readily apparent that any sequential chronology of events must surely be highly suspect, at its best, and sheer lunacy at its least.”

Jerran was warming up to the direction the discussion was now headed. There were many nebulous areas for him within his own field of physics, let alone other areas of inquiry. His right leg was falling asleep, so he changed positions and asked, “Then what I will do tonight or tomorrow or next week or next year is already predestined?”

“Absolutely not. You always have free will to alter any situation that you anticipate or want to experience. You are not fated to suffer any specific event at all. I may have been remiss when I said that a certain event has already happened, so let me stress again that it is perpetually in the act of happening, of becoming. It can, and does, change form at your slightest wish, for you are always creating your own realities.

That is not to say that many of your actions are not highly predictable. It is likely that you will eat at some specific location this evening, and you may even now have it fixed firmly in your mind. However, you must admit that you have every power to change that scenario.

I want to mention only in passing another idea for you to consider. It is also possible to alter your past through what you

perceive as your present and future. Now you cannot go back in time to grow back a severed limb, for instance, but you can, through memory, recall the event and imagine it in a different way. Another part of you, a 'counterpart,' if you will, is then created and will experience the alternate scenario. In this physical world you have all agreed to accept certain limitations in what you are able to do, for if you didn't your bodies and brains would not be able to function because of sensory overload, in a manner of speaking.

Mind creates matter. Your thoughts, no matter how insignificant, do manifest in one form or another in realities quite unsuspected by you. If you recall a past event, say when you wronged another person and felt badly about it, then you can picture that situation and change it in your mind, thereby creating a whole new scenario with its own validity and 'future' consequences. You do not see yet how powerful your minds truly are.

Observable events are quite deceiving, although many of you simply conclude that they are all you have to go on. But they are not all you have to go on, for there is a much more complex foundation that you do not perceive. It appears you live in a cause-and-effect world, but that is basically distortion. You want to believe that because you initiate some specific action that another predictable one must necessarily occur. Although that seems to be the case and is convincingly verifiable to you and supported with empirical evidence, I remind you that you are only viewing those physical reactions 'through a glass darkly.' They will work for you in your present orientation, yes, but they are in their own sense only another form of illusion. Yogis are not supposed to levitate; people cannot walk barefoot on burning coals with impunity or bend spoons with the power of their minds. The bumblebee isn't even

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supposed to be able to fly, but all these phenomena most certainly do occur.

What I am trying to stress here is that there are numerous concepts and ideas that your minds just cannot comprehend, not because you are unwilling or resistant, but because of the nature of your being physical. I assure you that you will indeed be able to understand all this, in your terms, in 'time'."

"You're right in that it will take some degree of thought and time to figure out your idea of what time is," Jerran replied. "Then all of these reincarnational lives occur simultaneously? What would be the reason for different ones if all is of One and time is simultaneous? Wouldn't we already know all the answers we need to know, then?"

"Yes and no. In the greater view, you do indeed possess all the knowledge of your reincarnational selves. However, as a physical being you do not remember them, so you repeat the process until you are satisfied that you 'have it all together' enough to seek other dimensions of awareness. You can also tap into these other lives for assistance in this particular life. Many of your skills and abilities, as well as your faults and shortcomings, are residual effects of other lifetimes, but by far the most significant factors comprising what you are now are indigenous to this specific existence, so you can capitalize on your previous-life athletic skills in your present golf game, for instance, but you cannot blame the way you are on past or future lives, by any means. For better or worse, what you are and what you do is a product of your present choices and cannot be fairly ascribed to some remote past or even future, life. There are no excuses.

And this would be a good time to finally address the earlier question about choices, so that you will see I have not forgotten (smiling).

Yes, you choose all your experiences. As I have said, nothing happens by chance, and later on I will enlarge upon that.

Before you are born you choose the circumstances of your birth. You select your 'future' parents and they in turn select you in a joint decision, then you are born into flesh."

Jerran paused to consider this bit of information. He briefly thought of his parents, how they had taught him, and if he was pleased with his "selection" of them as parents. The idea seemed outrageous, but with his tremendous self-discipline he vowed to remain open-minded.

"Is the soul in the fetal body from conception onward?"

"Not usually, although some may decide to undergo that experience for their own reasons.

More often the soul will enter the body during the actual birthing process, or shortly thereafter. It may seem somewhat dispassionate, but there really isn't too much for the soul to do while the fetus grows within the womb. It is much more interested in interacting with the physical world after it actually leaves the mother."

"That has some definite repercussions for those anti-abortionists who say that life begins at conception, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it does, and we will concern ourselves with that in more detail as we continue. Again, it is difficult for you to agree to a tenable definition of what life is, let alone recognize that the real life-essence, the soul, cannot be killed. You can sensationalize the whole right-to-life debate ad nauseum, but too often you allow your emotions to obscure the underlying causes for your attitudes, which again, lie mostly in fear and ignorance."

"Is there any particular reason why we choose the parents we do in each lifetime?"

ENCOUNTER

(With mock admonishment) “You haven’t been listening so well, I see! Nothing happens by chance. You do what you do for definite reasons, but note I did not say they were necessarily what you might call ‘good’ reasons.

You have chosen one another to work out what is often called ‘karma,’ although there is no punishment involved, but only learning and enjoying. Very often you have truly appreciated being with those others over the course of many lifetimes, and at some level, though not usually consciously, you do recognize your familiarity with them.

The same is true for many of the other people you meet during the course of your lifetime. Haven’t you met someone and had the distinct feeling that you had met before? Well, you most likely have, in other times and places. Not everyone you meet in each life is an old friend or enemy, however, but many of them certainly are.

This creates some interesting dramas. Your current mother may once have been your wicked uncle of 800 B.C. You could even be your own sister in some far distant future.

Just as you are a part of your oversoul, so are these reincarnational selves a part of the essential You. Think of your ‘self’ as a thick stack of hundred-dollar bills, wrapped around with a paper collar. The collar binds you and makes you all one unit, but each bill individually represents one of your reincarnational selves. Each one exists at once, but each one is different, uniquely itself, and of equal value. Taken together, they can buy more than any one single unit can. As a whole, they are stronger, yet individually each can have its own specific adventures and stories to tell as to how it was spent, where it has traveled, and what kind of people it met.”

“If animals do not have souls, then are we correct in assuming that we will not return as, for instance, a deer?”

“Yes. As I said, animals do have what may be called a soul in that there is a group-consciousness and rudimentary form of recognition of their situation. An essential difference between you and what you consider ‘lower’ animals is that humans have developed a ‘pause of reflection’ that allows for assessment of past and future actions. But no, there is no transmigration, if that is what you mean. Humans can invest a certain degree of their own energy into a beloved animal, however. Sometimes you wonder how such and such an animal can become so ‘smart’!

It is possible for you to briefly enter the body of an animal, or even a tree, for a cursory survey of how they view reality. It truly is similar to ‘walking a mile in my shoes,’ and although this has often been accomplished by others in times past, you have largely forgotten the art of effecting such a journey.”

“I am curious about where this ‘choosing’ is occurring,” Jerran said. “You maintain that we choose our parents before each physical life and that they choose us. Where is all this happening? Also, when we are between Earthly lives, where is our soul located? Is it right here on Earth somewhere, or waiting in some other dimension? Or does it slip immediately back into the body of another baby?”

“These are worthy questions, and we will discuss them soon enough, but for now let me conclude this area of discussion. There remain some key concepts I must explain before I can respond to you in a satisfactory manner, so I ask for your patience once again. This will lead us into our next category, and hopefully our exploration of that category will shed further light on your understanding of the nature of your existence.”

CHAPTER 4--SPACE AND THE COMPOSITION OF MATTER

“We now confront another key concept which, like time, is most difficult to express, especially through the use of language via a physical receiver, the human organism.

‘Space’ does not really exist as you think of it. There is no place to go or to be, for everything exists simultaneously, but in differing dimensions of aware activity. Again, you just do not ‘see’ your relative location, only the one upon which you direct your concentration. All those other fields of the microscope that we mentioned earlier are vitally and dynamically alive and well right before your eyes, but physical eyes do not perceive them. ‘I can’t believe my eyes,’ you may say, and in these instances that statement rings quite true. Your eyes cannot even look directly at themselves. That is why I hesitated somewhat in addressing your question of where the soul is between lifetimes, for there is no ‘place’ as such for it to go. The place is RIGHT HERE. It is only the limitation of a physical mind that requires a geographic location.

Now please do not take my words and comments as a criticism of your state of being, or as a judgment of your particular reality. In its own domain, your focus of consciousness does a most magnificent job of responding to its environment. Your very bodies are marvelous constructions of complex and intricate thought patterns as expressed in physical matter. It is merely that you cannot be expected to perform or function in those environments for which you have no preparation. If you suit up to play a hockey game, for instance, with all the pads and masks and sticks and skates, you do not then walk into a bowling alley and begin rolling balls at pins.

Craig R. Thorne

You are not dressed for it, much as cut-off jeans would not be appropriate at a formal black-tie dinner.

In a similar manner, you simply are not ‘dressed’ to function in these other dimensions and realities. In your terms of time, someday you will explore these other systems, but for now you are quite occupied with the prodigious amount of sensory data presented to you in a physical reality. You are like a hapless operator at an unimaginably vast switchboard. Here, innumerable lights are blinking and flashing for your attention, but you are able to plug into only one at a time while all the others go begging. Earthly existence is like the single light on that switchboard. Eventually you will learn how to ‘plug in’ to those other realities. Dinosaurs still rumble through your fields, and many an ancient battle still rages before your eyes, but these you do not see for you cannot physically perceive them.

I mention these other ways of ‘seeing’ primarily for your information, to help you understand some puzzling, baffling manifestations occasionally affecting your current reality. So if I seem harsh to you in regard to your limitations, please forgive me, for I do not intend to speak in a condescending manner at all. It is just that at times I forget that my basic awareness of certain situations is not at all commonplace in your present focus, and I assure you that I too have many teachers who are trying with their best professorial acumen to assist me in my personal quest for understanding and enlightenment. It is best that we all strive in a cooperative and caring atmosphere rather than a competitive and jealous one, for if we can help even one other individual we in effect are helping us all. And (grinning, eyes wide and expressive) that is a soapbox oratory that you all would do well to heed!”

“How can we accept that space is but another sort of illusion? Right here beside you, in front of us, is a boulder and it’s taking up space, isn’t it?”

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“It is taking up space as you perceive it. You want to believe in space, so it is a reflection of your belief system. Other forms of consciousness in other realities would not perceive that particular object, for they do not focus upon it. It is ‘there,’ all right, but only to you. It appears in a specific density, or better yet, intensity of expression that you are equipped to recognize. To some sentient beings it may be but a hazy area of undifferentiated thought-form, or it may not appear at all to still other beings.

Picture a group of children playing on some monkey bars, or steel cage. They can weave in and out, crawl up and down and through the metal bars in delightful abandon. Now there is plenty of space between the bars for their bodies to pass through, isn’t there? A bird may even fly through such a structure, and to carry our analogy further, certain invisible matter such as television, radio, or gamma waves may also pass through that same area of the cage the bird has flown through.

Next, in your mind’s eye shrink the cage considerably, perhaps to one tenth its former dimension. The children can no longer squeeze through it, although the bird may still be able to do so. Continuing, imagine the structure to be microscopic. As far as the children are concerned, the monkey cage no longer exists, for they obviously cannot see it or hope to play on it. Yet it is still there, but in an altered, miniaturized form. It can even have its own microscopic children and birds to play on it or to fly through it, but they are all in a world unknown to our human children. Extending this idea, go ahead and shrink the structure completely out of physical existence. It may be gone as far as you can comprehend, but it still exists in what you would call another dimension, an ‘alien’ reality system. It would take up no space in your own reality, yet it nevertheless is now incipient in other dimensions.

Conversely, let us pursue the analogy in the other direction for a moment.

Think of the children, the bird, and the cage in their present, normal size and shape. Now picture a living creature, humanoid if you wish, of incredibly huge proportions. This living being is so gigantic that the children and their tiny play structure would be to it like the smallest atoms might be to us. In fact, the very world these children inhabit is no more than a stray molecule to this massive creature. Earth itself could pass through the body of this life form with neither being even slightly aware or inconvenienced by the intrusion.

Suppose you were to rear your children in a planetarium. They would observe an 'artificial' day and sunset, and at night they would see stars in the sky. If the children were never to venture outside the planetarium, they would accept all this as a reality, completely ignorant that a 'real' Sun and 'real' stars existed just outside the confines of the planetarium. In your own planetarium, the physical world, you are not unlike these unknowing children in our hypothetical situation.

Space is an idea. If you were smaller than the smallest atom yet still in command of all your present faculties and sensory devices, you could feasibly travel right through this piece of matter you call a boulder and not even notice that it existed. You might be able to see its own atoms and consider them planets or stars. It is all a matter of perspective, you see. Although a piece of coal and a precious diamond are composed of the same element, carbon, one is relatively soft while the other is the hardest Earthly substance. It has to do with the internal arrangement of the atoms, for in the diamond they are much more tightly packed, more densely spaced, as surely you know. In a way, the concept of space is comparable, except that it can be thought of more accurately as a question of mental intensity rather than a physical density.

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As I have said, mind creates matter. Those very rooms that guests now occupy in the lodge below initially were no more than a thought. They were an idea in someone's mind that eventually became a physical reality in time and space. What a remarkable achievement!

How much 'space' does your love for another person take up? Is a thought bound by, say, thirty square feet, or perhaps a cubic mile? Can a lounge chair be placed 'in' your shadow on a sunny day? Does that shadow take up space, and if so, what lies between you and your shadow there on the ground? 'Space,' the universe, is open-ended, for there are no beginnings and no endings, no 'place' to go or to be."

Suddenly a thought occurred to Jerran, prompted by the tenor of the discussion.

"How did you know I was a physicist? And also, do you have a name I could call you?"

"I knew you were a physicist, Jerran, because, as you would define it, I read your mind. It's rather basic telepathy. As for the second question, I would respond that names really do not matter, but if you are more comfortable with my having one, you may call me 'Kiralaine.'"

Jerran was willing to let it go at that, at least for now. By this time, the Sun had flooded their open area, and Jerran waved to another group of hikers a hundred yards away. His desire to climb the mountain was all but forgotten. This Kiralaine was a fascinating fellow, and now they were talking about one of his favorite areas. The more time he spent with Kiralaine, the more questions he wanted answered.

"You indicate that physical reality is but one of many possible ways to represent consciousness. If that is how we must interpret our current existence, then what actually comprises the 'building blocks' of this reality?"

“As you can certainly anticipate, it is what you call atoms and molecules.”

“But is there something else that makes up atoms and molecules? Something smaller?” Jerran knew there was.

“Yes, there is, and the search for these has fueled your scientists for quite some time now. However, they will continue to be frustrated, for no ‘matter’ how powerful a machine or instrument they construct, they will not be able to isolate and identify these objects by utilizing physical, mechanical inventions, regardless of how elaborate, elegant, or well-conceived.”

Jerran was one of those scientists. “Why not?”

“Because, in your terms, they are too small. Also, it has to do with the nature of light. Your microscopes are designed to function in a certain highly-specialized manner, and those scientists doing the searching have limited yet specific ideas and beliefs about what it is they are seeking and subsequently expect to find. Since your beliefs create your realities, it is only inevitable that the scientists ‘discover’ that which they have already created in their imaginations.

I sense some resistance to my assertions that you will not be able to catch a glimpse of these objects. Now you can see them, but it will be achieved not through mechanical instruments but rather through an earnest inquiry into the inner self. From the time of the ‘wee beasties’ of van Leeuwenhoek to that of the scanning electron microscope and its various enhancements, you have pushed the frontiers of discoveries ever further, but now you are just beginning to realize that there is a limit, a still-nebulous wall ‘out there’ confronting you over which you vaguely sense that you can never truly triumph. But it is not out there; it is right here (pointing to his head).

This impassable area will confound all branches of physical science and gradually persuade you to undertake explorations in

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newer, much more rewarding areas. These areas, as you can predict, concern the mind, the psyche, the spirit, the inner self, or whatever similar description you care to name it. It is the nature of consciousness itself.

Until then, science will continue to probe the heavens and to search for ever smaller particles in order to help define the nature of existence in terms it can comprehend, but there are those such as yourself who even now are starting to realize that there is definitely something else, some other force to reckon with, and for those intrepid souls willing and courageous enough to risk censure, ridicule, and possibly to sacrifice their professional careers, the search will prove to be the most exciting and rewarding endeavor they shall ever undertake.”

“Are you referring to some form of subatomic particles or waves?” This was one of Jerran’s favorite research topics.

“Yes. You have attached numerous names to these subatomic particles. Scientific literature refers to such esoteric entities as muons, bosons, quarks, tachyons, gluons and other assorted phenomena. You look for unified field paradigms, ‘missing matter,’ and speculate upon the number of possible dimensions in all of creation. You want to construct mighty supercolliders to smash protons, and you even manufacture names for particles that, to you, have only been suspected, implied, or predicted but not yet discovered.

Now all of this is quite acceptable. Science has produced some truly marvelous inventions to enrich the quality of your lives. It has discovered, or more accurately, rediscovered, a commendable number of principles that can and do have direct, beneficial applications to your normal daily activities.

I only want to caution you that science must not become as a second God. Your past histories, both spoken and unspoken, both written and unwritten, bear testimony to the ramifications and consequences of misguided allegiance. Do not become so

enamored with the gifts of science that you neglect the true roots of your primary objective of spiritual awareness and growth.”

“It seems you have another name for these subatomic particles that we will never be able to see,” Jerran said.

“That you will not be able to see physically. I do not wish to appear as an anti-scientific religious crusader, for that is not at all my intent or position; in most cases I firmly reject the shallow dogmatism and hypocrisy of your assorted religious institutions. What I share with you I realize is disturbingly reminiscent of what religions ask of you, to accept on faith that what I speak is the truth. But it goes much more deeply than mere faith and human belief systems; it is closer to what you might define as intuition, and that is, of course, ‘unprovable’ in a scientific sense.

But why assume that matters of the spirit must by any means answer to such a restricted and primitive agency as personified by an Earth-based scientific community, especially one that misdirects such a great amount of time, energy, and creativity to developing machines for wars? You accept scientific ‘proof’ that the Earth revolves around the Sun, or that quasars are incredible distances ‘away,’ so why is it so preposterous to accept the idea of reincarnation or the vastly powerful energy and validity of the inner self, the indestructible human soul? As one of your popular show tunes asks, ‘How can you hold a moonbeam in your hand?’

You may acknowledge that even the man Einstein confirmed that the bulk of his creative insights were the direct products of his intuitive nature. He formulated a significant portion of his theories from both the waking and dreaming states, admitting that he wasn’t even sure where he was getting the ideas. Such has been the case with many groundbreaking inventions and ideas as presented through the ages. I could even

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tease you by saying that those individuals, although highly creative and accomplished in their own right, received no small amount of prodding and assistance from ‘others’ in differing times and places.

But I have digressed, as I often do, and I would like to answer your question concerning the subatomic particles.

There is a controversy at times as to whether these objects are particles or waves, and I do not mean to be evasive or deprecatory if I ask you what difference it makes. So often you are bound by either/or situations, right and wrong, good and bad, black and white, or any number of similar polarized notions. You have a tendency to think in diametrically-opposed quantities instead of in cooperative, joint efforts. Perhaps you could regard these objects, far smaller than any other subatomic entities you now know, as particles moving in waves, or even as fields of energy activities and matrices. Actually, you could think of them in any way you please, for it really doesn’t effect their nature at all. Matter, in your world, is electromagnetic in nature. Now this matter emerges into physical reality, and this ‘place’ of expression can be labeled as an area of points or monads, but those descriptions might possibly be misleading or confusing. Therefore, we will simply refer to them as ‘units.’

These electromagnetic units form the basis of all matter in your physical system. They are extremely infinitesimal, and will not be detected by your instruments, no matter how powerful you are able to make those devices. Atoms and all other subatomic particles are composed of these energy units. The physical brain utilizes these units in order to form matter as you know it, for yes, you are indeed creators in your own right.

As an aside here, I feel obliged to comment how curious it is that you accept the very real, observable evidence that you have a physical body, yet you also agree that the body is made of atoms and molecules that are singularly invisible to your

unaided eyes. Collective visibility from singular invisibility-- further illustration of the incredible power of belief!"

"Then there still must be several innovative discoveries waiting for science, particularly in the area of elemental particles, quantum mechanics, and the like," Jerran said.

"There most certainly are."

"Would you describe some of them?"

"That would be rather spoiling the fun, but I am willing to give some broad hints.

It would be a decided advantage for you to think in new and daring ways about the nature of the atom and the various manners in which atomic and subatomic particles can and will behave."

Jerran found that confusing. "Will behave? Are you implying that they operate with a free will and consciousness?"

"Definitely. Think of it in this way: You quickly agree that you have a conscious mind. That mind can loosely be thought of as residing in your physical brain, for that is what allows you to think and to feel. What do you think that brain is made of? It is made of atoms and molecules. Logically, then, do not atoms and molecules give birth to consciousness? Therefore, each atom itself has its own conscious awareness, as does every cell in your body. Extending this, it follows that each atom and each cell also possesses memory and makes its own decisions, although generally in harmony with the rest of your physical body. For the sake of brevity, I am simplifying this whole process, but I think you grasp the essence of the situation. How could you ever expect to generate consciousness out of unconsciousness?"

"Then does every living creature have consciousness?"

"Absolutely."

"What about inanimate objects? Do they have consciousness as well?"

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“Yes, but no object is truly inanimate. You just don’t see the movement. And if you also include inorganic objects such as rocks, in your question, the answer still remains the same. Those of you who scoff at people who talk to their plants had better reconsider your judgment. Further, do not think that a tree or rock does not, in a rudimentary fashion only, recognize individual humans. ‘Pet’ rocks, indeed!”

“And this is a direct result of the fact that all of these, humans and trees and rocks and everything else in our world, is made of electromagnetic units?”

“In simple terms, that is correct.”

“Then why are all these forms not exactly equal in all respects? Why is not an earthworm as smart as we humans are, or why don’t rocks rule the world?”

“As I hinted at earlier when speaking of animals, all forms have their own intensity of consciousness, but in that respect, all are not created equally. Also, be wary of over-glorifying your intelligence or power. Merely because you can smash a rock to pieces or kill any animal you wish does not by any means imply true power. The Earth itself has a consciousness and an undeniable power, as you will soon find out if you refuse to live in a more cooperative, harmonious, compassionate manner.”

“The way you say ‘created equally’ makes me suspect there is still another component or force to deal with here. Are we to assume that besides atoms, molecules, and subatomic particles, besides electromagnetic energy units, there is something else?”

(Visibly pleased) “Yes.” (Waiting patiently for more).

“And is this mysterious force a physical one?”

“It is not really mysterious at all, and if you would but think for a moment you could easily determine its source.”

Jerran both liked and disliked guessing games. “God?”

“Ultimately, yes, but the word I am asking for is simply this--consciousness. Again, let me refer you to the Roberts

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material I mentioned earlier. That will give you a more detailed explanation of these ideas, and you will be able to peruse it at your leisure. It is both accurate as well as entertaining.

All of creation is predicated upon consciousness. It is not a physical force. It originates in what is often called 'God,' and is timeless and indestructible. Consciousness forms the electromagnetic units that in turn form your matter, but it is also expressed in myriad ways in all realities and dimensions by inestimable numbers of beings and objects and states of energy. Consciousness is a staggering concept to explain to a physically-oriented mind. Suffice to say that consciousness is pure energy intricately interwoven into the tapestry of all that is, and it is always available to you.

But we stray from our more comprehensible discussion of the behavior of atoms and their friends. Let us briefly address some further ideas about these invisible building blocks, some properties that scientists are just beginning to consider, but again, I do not wish to say too much to diminish the wonder and excitement of your own discoveries.

You could ponder in more detail what lies in between the atoms and molecules. Michelangelo claimed to chip away the extraneous material surrounding his sculptures to let the figures emerge on their own. What if you were to similarly remove the atoms and molecules from your field of vision? Now what do you suppose you might find there? Remember, space in general terms does not really exist, and in specific terms there is abundant 'space' between all units of physical matter. Keep an open mind, and do not concern yourselves with possible ridicule. Do not be quite so deadly serious. Learn to play creatively with ideas!

Movement is a crucial parameter of scientific observations and subsequent scientific conclusions, and many of you think movement ceases at zero degrees Kelvin. What would be some

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of the implications if you considered that electrons could spin in more than one direction simultaneously? Could virtually any electron operate as a free radical? If electrons were not so nicely-behaved and decided to stray from their usually stable, predictable shells, would chaos result, or perhaps a new and different type of matter, or even reality?

This movement can also be described as a type of vibrational intensity. All objects, including humans, vibrate at certain levels and speeds. At specific vibratory levels, then, specific objects physically manifest. Your ancient scientists, for example, knew how to ‘create’ different physical objects by manipulating the speed, or vibration, of the matter involved. There really is but one force, and any differences you may observe are merely ‘variations on that theme.’

Imagine your house fan running on its low speed setting. In one way, this represents the level or speed, say, of your pet cat. If you turn the setting to high speed, you have achieved your own vibrational intensity, but not to suggest that higher means ‘better.’

Now as you have undoubtedly surmised, there are an infinite number of states of consciousness, naturally giving rise to an equally infinite number of other realities, dimensions, and types of beings inhabiting those places. Each has its own specific vibrational intensity, although they certainly are by no means all expressed physically. Next, imagine your fan has the capability of running not only at two speeds, but at an infinite number of speeds. You might consciously ‘connect’ with those in your speed range, but all the others would be extremely difficult if not impossible to reach.

Cartoon artists draw one frame at a time, then combine all the frames to form a cohesive, panoramic representation of the actions of the characters and the settings of the story. You could look at each frame separately, but the cartoon becomes

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appreciably more interesting and animated if you flick through each panel in a much faster way. If the panels are flashed before you too quickly, however, your physical brain cannot keep up, and you soon become disinterested and abandon your viewing. If the frames were slowed so drastically that you saw but one scene for each hour, for instance, you would again stop spending your time in such a wasteful, boring endeavor.

Because you are physical and focused in your own intensity, you do not perceive the infinite amount of activity occurring simultaneously all around you. You walk right through the homes of other beings in other realities, and no one is the wiser. You constantly interact with your own past and future. Dinosaurs are always stepping on you, and your descendents far into the future pass by you every day, yet there is no mutual recognition.

Atoms exist in your reality only on a part-time basis. They ‘pulse’ in and out of the physical world, but this occurs at such a high rate of speed that your instruments are not able to catch this movement. It all appears as one ongoing, continuous process to you. Physicists, perhaps you yourself, suspect this already, but they will have to wait for physical, empirical confirmation.”

“Where are the atoms at those times?” Jerran asked.

“They are exploring and enjoying alternate systems and other probabilities, gathering further experiences. They aren’t needed in the physical plane at all times. Creation is a gloriously multidimensional adventure.”

“Then we are dead as much as we are alive?”

Kiralaine looked puzzled. “I really hadn’t looked at it in such a way, but I suppose that could be a crude analogy. Time-wise, they are ‘with’ you more often than not, but please do recall that there is no ‘death’ in real terms.”

“There are, then, parallel systems?”

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“If you mean other Earths existing alongside yours but somehow slightly different, the answer is ‘yes.’

In order to circumvent comparable questions, let me state that virtually everything you can imagine does literally exist in one form or another. That does not mean that you do not have fertile imaginations, that you are so primitive that anything you can imagine is a reality somewhere, but more that the scope and depth of creation is so incredibly vast. If you can envision trees growing upside down, then somewhere they do.”

“Are we capable of truly original thought?” Jerran had a girlfriend once who argued that people could not have thoughts that had never before been conceived. Jerran had disagreed.

“I really don’t know, but I doubt it. I am not aware of all the other beings in all other dimensions by any means, so perhaps they have often thought of ideas and concepts that people on Earth have, and I would think that God would have had your ‘original’ thought at one time or another. But given your space and time orientation, replete with its limitations, then I think you could have original thoughts under those Earth-bound conditions.

Antimatter, black and white holes, multiple universes, even a good five-cent cigar all exist in some form in some space and time or in an environment or state of being completely alien to you. Your very thoughts easily and automatically create their own realities, even if they do not necessarily spontaneously appear on the Earth plane. In greater terms, there are no limitations, only the ones you choose.”

“Earlier you said that all atoms and molecules create consciousness, then you seemed adamant that it was the other way around. Which one is correct?”

“Both, really, but I am glad you caught the apparent discrepancy. If you recall, I believe what I specifically said was in the form of a question about atoms and molecules giving

birth to consciousness. I was attempting to construct a logical progression of reasoning, one based within the assumptions inherent to a physical reality. In your terms, consciousness does emerge from the atoms of your brain, but all those atoms originate from electromagnetic units which themselves are a product of pure consciousness. Does that help clarify it?"

"Yes, I think I see it now, thank you. In 'light' of this area of discourse, I am a little reluctant to ask about this, but what is the nature of light, especially in regard to space travel as we conceive of it?"

"Light, of course, is a physical phenomenon. You are able to see because of light, and it brings you life-sustaining warmth from the Sun. Science uses light as a measurement of both time and space, as in 'light years.'

For quite some time it was believed that light was the maximum attainable velocity, and various theories arose to describe what would occur as an object, such as a spaceship, approached the speed of light.

As you probably begin to anticipate by now, I will tell you that light is hardly the ultimate velocity. There are many particles that easily surpass the speed of light, and you will gradually come to identify them in a manner convincing to yourselves.

Compared to some other forms of acceleration, light is a sluggard indeed. As an illustration, imagine yourself safely floating just above the surface of the Sun. How long did it take you to arrive there? Even though your mind-trip was nearly instantaneous, a light wave would take eight minutes for the trip, and a space voyage would take much, much longer.

We could explore scientific areas in such detail that it would require several volumes in its own right, particularly since this is your personal field of investigation, but let us now

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move onto another topic before we run out of ‘time’ or before I simply (smiling) bore you with all this.”

Jerran thought of protesting that he certainly wasn’t bored, and he wasn’t. He kept quiet and let Kiralaine continue.

“What I have spoken of here is just the surface of the nature of matter and physical reality. Science is passionately concerned with describing, measuring, and quantifying, and most of you gladly join in for this exciting adventure. There is nothing at all wrong with that, if pursued with humility and wise, sound judgment.

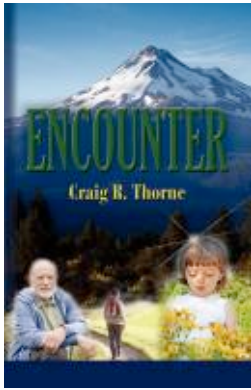
Eventually, however, you will begin to see the limitations of scientific inquiry and will begin to search out other, more mature ways to satisfy your hunger to define your existence. Those of you wishing a head start, of sorts, are heartily encouraged to begin what can be an astounding journey into your inner selves. You will not be alone.”

With that, Kiralaine pulled out a container made of a polished metal unfamiliar to Jerran and through what appeared to be a straw took several draws. Jerran figured it must be some liquid nourishment, so he took out his apple and began eating it as he walked a bit to stretch his legs.

“What an odd way to spend the day” Jerran thought to himself. How could he remember all this? But he was too intrigued to leave, and luckily, he was well aware that he did have an excellent memory.

No one else had been able to answer these kinds of questions to his satisfaction, not in all his readings in philosophy, religion, psychology, and science. When he would speak to his friends and certain “authority” figures, he persistently found the answers and explanations inadequate. So this old fellow was provoking Jerran in a stimulating way, even though much of what he said was highly suspect.

He would stay.



Imagine yourself beginning a mountain hike early on a beautiful summer morning. Just above the trailhead you encounter an elderly man who bids you a hearty "good morning." You pause to exchange greetings, but immediately he intrigues you with his unusual conversation. You soon abandon your hike and become deeply engrossed in an astounding, far-ranging discussion of human reality. Can you possibly believe the incredible things he says?

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