

Chapter 4

Transcending the Categories

All there is, is Consciousness.

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We have now reached the climax of this book: the complete unification of science and spirituality, reason and religion, mathematics and mysticism, and East and West, without which we cannot live fully in Love and Peace. In essence, what we need to do is show how the concept of the Absolute—the Absolute Whole—can be formed in exactly the same way as all other concepts of the relativistic world of form. This utterly consistent process of reasoning leads to great joy and bliss, which the mystics have described throughout the ages, thus establishing God as a scientific concept.

On page 65 in Chapter 2, ‘Building Relationships’, we saw that we form concepts by closely examining the similarities and differences in the data patterns of our experience. This is the fundamental law of interpretation, by which we turn meaningless data into meaningful information and knowledge. We then saw how domains of attribute values could be associated with classes, which provide a context for these domains. Any act of interpretation requires a context or environment in which this process can take place.

So what is the overall context in which we can interpret all the data patterns of our experience as a coherent whole? The challenge we face here is that science and religion have two quite different contexts. And until these merge, there can never be Peace on Earth, we can never know whether what we are taught or learn for ourselves is true or not.

This schism between our spiritual and mundane experiences goes back a very long way. For instance, the opening words of the Lord’s Prayer, also called *Pater Noster*, which Jesus himself taught, are, “Our Father which art in heaven.” This prayer is central to Christianity, as Wikipedia reports: “On Easter Sunday 2007 it was estimated that two billion Protestant, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox Christians read, recited, or sang the short prayer in hundreds of languages in houses of worship of all shapes and sizes. Although many theological differences and various modes and manners of worship divide Christians, according to Fuller Seminary professor Clayton Schmit ‘there is a sense of solidarity in knowing that Christians around the globe are praying together..., and these words always unite us.’”¹

But what do these opening words actually mean? *Father* is one of the words that are used to denote God in the Christian Trinity (God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). And we are taught as children that heaven is somewhere in outer space, among the stars. But God is supposed to be the Supreme Being having power over all our lives. So why should the Supreme Being reside somewhere in outer space? What is the relationship between God and the physical universe? Can we merge these two concepts so that there is no longer a war going on between science and religion?

Indeed we can. And by doing so, we are in heaven, for *heaven* figuratively means, ‘a place of supreme bliss’. We are no longer split down the middle, between all the opposites, a division that is encapsulated by the word *schizoid*, from the Greek word *schizein*, meaning ‘to split’. We can heal the fragmented, split mind by focusing attention on Wholeness, on the Absolute Whole.

So how can we establish Wholeness as a scientific concept, formed in exactly the same way as all other concepts? Well, we can begin with a few reflections from David Bohm’s *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*:

In the very early phases of the development of civilization, man’s views were essentially of wholeness rather than of fragmentation. In the East (especially in India) such views still survive, in the sense that philosophy and religion emphasize wholeness and imply the futility of analysis of the world into parts. Why, then, do we not drop our fragmentary Western approach and adopt these Eastern notions which include not only a self-world view that denies division and fragmentation, but also techniques of meditation that lead the whole process of mental operation non-verbally to the sort of quiet state of orderly and smooth flow needed to end fragmentation both in the actual process of thought and in its content?²

So by establishing Ineffable, Nondual Wholeness as a scientific concept, we shall develop a world-view that is closer to the East than the split world-views that pervade Western thought. To explain what is happening here, Figure 4.1 reproduces Figure P.5 on page xxviii in the Prologue. The ontogenetic path followed by most people in the West is a divergent one, leading to a deeply fragmented mind, accelerating further away from Reality with every day that passes. In contrast, the traditional spiritual path in the East is depicted by the small bell-shape curve in the diagram, illustrating how practitioners can return Home to Oneness, through ‘no-mind’.

In this chapter, we see how the Middle Way between these traditional Western and Eastern paths can be completed. First, we climb to the peak of convergence at the glorious culmination of 25,000 years of human learning and fourteen billion years of evolution as a whole. Then, we turn inwards, like the mystics of all ages, but in an involutory process whereby the mind becomes translucent, enabling the brilliant light of Consciousness to shine radiantly through.

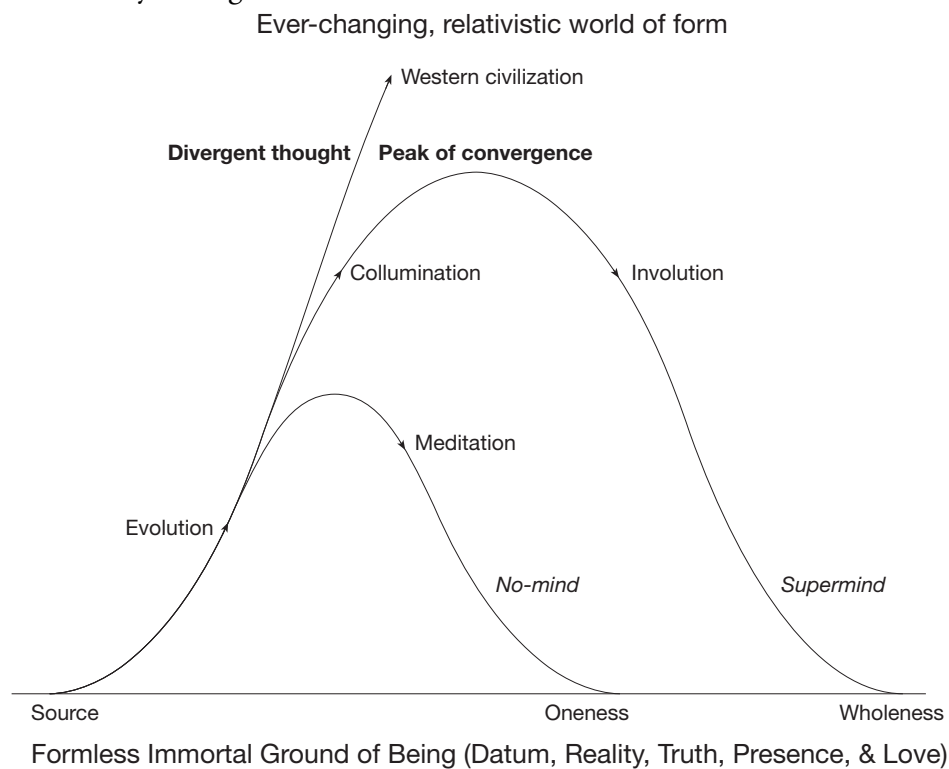


Figure 4.1: *Three major paths of human ontogeny*

The Absolute Whole

As we saw on page 51 in Chapter 1, ‘Starting Afresh at the Very Beginning’, the word *being* in IRL denotes the Absolute just like any other being in the relativistic world of form. So the Absolute, the Supreme Being, exists, at least. To deny this is like saying that human beings consist of subatomic particles, atoms, molecules, cells, thoughts, emotions, skills, feelings, and so on, but they do not exist as either an aggregate of these constituents or as a unity.

This aggregate is most often called the Universe, denoting the physical universe, today. But none of us can actually see, hear, touch, taste, or smell the physical universe as a whole; it is a mental construct, formed by extending our experiences of the world about us without paying attention to what is within us. So how can we form the concept of the Universe or Absolute without any preconceptions?

The questions we need to ask are: “What attributes does the Absolute possess?” and “Is the Absolute real?” Well, in order to maintain the logical consistency of IRL, we can only answer these questions in exactly the same way that we determine the qualities of any other data pattern in the Universe. That is, by carefully examining the similarities and differences between this data pattern and all others.

Now there is only one Absolute in the Universe. For if there were many, they would not be Absolute; there would be relationships between the different Absolutes. So we can call the uninterpreted data pattern that is the Essence of the Absolute the Datum of the Universe, using a term from the data processing industry, recognizing that information and knowledge are data with meaning, as we saw on page 28 in Chapter 1, ‘Starting Afresh at the Very Beginning’.

So what do we discover when we look at the relationship between the Datum and all the other data patterns in the Universe? Well, in conformity with the Principle of Duality, we must make this comparison in two ways: by viewing the Absolute as a unity, consisting simply of itself, and as a whole, consisting of both itself and the aggregate of all its parts.

When we view the Absolute as a unity we can see that it differs from all of its parts, for the Datum is the only data pattern that is not limited in some way. When we define a data pattern relativistically as a part we give it boundaries, we say what it is and what it is not. This is obvious from the root of the word *define*, which comes from the Latin word *definire* meaning ‘to limit’ or ‘to end’.

But because the Datum is beyond the limits of all parts of the Universe, it is not possible to define it or to give it any qualities whatsoever that belong to the world of form. For if we were to do so we would be treating the Absolute relativistically, and it would no longer be Absolute. We can therefore see that the Absolute is, and will forever remain, unknowable, indefinable and, of course, unanalysable, qualities that can best be described as transcendent with respect to all beings in the world of form.

On the other hand, when we view the Absolute as the Totality of Existence, we can see that the structure of all its parts is exactly the same as the structure of any of its parts. This situation arises quite simply because the Universe has an underlying unified structure, described as an infinitely dimensional network of hierarchical relationships, as we see on page 89 in Chapter 2, ‘Building Relationships’. But as the structure of each part of the Universe is determined solely from these relationships, we can see that ultimately the Universe consists of nothing but these relationships. These relationships lie within everything that is; they are the glue that holds the whole Universe together. We can therefore also say that the Absolute possesses the property of immanence with respect to all beings in the world of form.

The Absolute thus has the properties of existence, formlessness, transcendence, and immanence, and to use adjectival forms, it is unknowable, indefinable, and unanalysable. It is thus, to all intents and purposes, attributeless. This is as far as reason can take us with a completely open mind, free of all conditioning that leads us to behave more like machines than the Divine, Cosmic beings we truly are. However, this does not yet make the Absolute a scientific concept. To do this, we must actually experience the Absolute open-heartedly; otherwise we are just engaged in philosophical speculation, of little practical utility.

The evidence

As the Absolute is beyond compare with no attributes, we cannot experience it with our physical senses or understand it with the intellect. We need to go beyond the mind, utilizing our great gift of self-reflective Intelligence, sometimes called the Witness in spiritual circles. Once again, we can do this in one of two ways.

First of all, by meditating, we can look deeply into ourselves as the mystics have taught to discover that our true Essence is Stillness and Emptiness, resulting in the exquisite sense of Nondual Love and Peace, which has no opposite. We are now in union with the Divine, in Oneness, in a state of Unity Consciousness, experiencing the radiant light of Consciousness pouring through us. From this perspective, the Divine is immanent.

Alternatively, we can feel into the Cosmos as an aggregate of all its parts, letting go of all the concepts and forms that constitute the Universe as a whole. We begin this involutory process by viewing the Universe as a mathematical graph, consisting of nodes and the relationships between them, illustrated in Figure 1.8 on

page 36, rather like the web of life of systems theorists.³ Each of these nodes in the graph is a structure of meaningful relationships between forms, rather like a fractal. We then let all these nodes dissolve into singularities, much simpler and more general than Einstein’s space-time singularities. This leaves us experiencing the Universe simply as a web of relationships, which we can call the Field, again simpler than the single-point field of quantum physicists.

Then, as we sink deeper into ourselves, even these relationships disappear, and we are left with the magnificent feeling of Wholeness or Cosmic Consciousness that is limitless and has no divisions or borders within it. It is a seamless continuum, full with the utmost potential. It is in this state that we feel awash with the vast ocean of Consciousness, that such writers as Romain Rolland (in a letter to Sigmund Freud)⁴ and Stanislav Grof⁵ describe in their writings. And from this perspective, the Divine is transcendent.

What I have just described in the previous paragraph is the exact opposite of evolution and so can best be called involution, in a sense quite different from that used by Aurobindo Ghose, Ken Wilber, and other evolutionaries, explored further on page 242 in Part III, ‘Returning Home to Paradise’.

I use *Consciousness* (with a capital C) to denote the Divine because this word derives from the Latin *cum*, ‘together with’ and *scire*, ‘to know’, cognate with *science*. So when we integrate all knowledge into a coherent whole, our individual consciousness expands and deepens to such a degree that it becomes coterminous with Consciousness itself. We then realize that God is everywhere and everywhen, within and embracing everything. As the mystics of all ages have discovered, this perception and conception leads to great joy and bliss, which Jesus called Heaven and Hindus and Buddhists *Nirvana*, which means ‘extinction’ (of the sense of a separate self).

To use a metaphor from Nature, realizing a state of Cosmic Consciousness is rather like climbing to the summit of the mountain of all knowledge, from which vantage point we are able to see everything that exists as a coherent whole with no obstructions hindering our vision. And realizing Unity Consciousness arises when we dive to the bottom of the ocean of Consciousness. These opposite points are just mirror images of each other, most dramatically illustrated by the fjords in western Norway. Some of the mountains there are 1000 metres high, plunging into the fjords up to a 1000 metres deep, depicted in Figure P.6 on page xxviii.

But while the Absolute clearly exists, is it real? How can something that we cannot see, hear, touch, smell, or taste possibly be real? Well, by forming concepts in the rigorously consistent way described in this book, the conceptual model that arises shows that nothing in the relativistic world of form is real in an absolute sense. All the data patterns that have form or structure arise from the Datum, the overall context for everything that exists, and return there at the end of their lifespans. All forms, structures, and relationships are just appearances in or abstractions from Consciousness, called *maya* in the East, literally ‘deception, illusion, appearance’. This constant movement in the relativistic world of form is also delightfully called *lila* or *leela* in the East, ‘the play of the Divine’.

Only the Absolute, which is a seamless continuum, with no divisions or borders anywhere, is Reality, which we can know with absolute certainty, not in an intellectual way, but gnostically. In the East, this way of knowing is called *jnana-yoga*, the path of abstract knowledge, *jñāna* having the same Proto-Indo-European root as *gnosis* and *knowledge*. Furthermore, unifying all opposites in the way described in this book is the ultimate yoga, for the Sanskrit word *yoga*, which is cognate with the English words *yoke* and *join*, means ‘union’.

In summary, there are two pairs of dual ways in which we can understand and experience the Absolute, given in this table, an application of the Cross of Duality, depicted in Figure 3.10 on page 102, thus establishing God as a scientific concept:

	Oneness	Wholeness
Conceptual	Transcendent	Immanent
Experiential	Immanent	Transcendent

Table 4.1: *Absolute dualities*

This universal model thus restores the *a priori* approach with which Johannes Kepler began his cosmological studies in 1595, described on page 361 in Chapter 11, ‘The Evolution of the Mind’. As we see there, he discovered his three laws of planetary motion by unifying geometric and trigonometric astronomy with causal physics,

grounded in his own deep mystical experience. But then the scientists separated the results of Kepler's creativity from their Divine Source, leading to materialistic and mechanistic science, which dominates Western thought today. We have thereby gained much in the form of creature comforts, but at the cost of great spiritual discomfort, far removed from Reality.

In practice, of course, there is no separation between the theoretical and empirical views of the Divine described in this section. Transcendence and immanence merge in Nonduality, and Unity and Cosmic Consciousness unify in Consciousness, leading to the Principle of Unity.

The Principle of Unity

By including the Absolute in an all-inclusive, self-reflective model of the Universe, as described in the previous section, the Principle of Duality, illustrated in Figure 3.5 on page 97 in Chapter 3, 'Unifying Opposites', becomes the Principle of Unity, the fundamental design principle of the Universe. This universal, irrefutable truth, valid in all possible situations, can be expressed in just seven words:

Wholeness is the union of all opposites.

The Principle of Unity can also be expressed in just six mathematical symbols: $W = A \cup \sim A$. Nothing could be simpler. Indeed, this is the simple equation that Einstein was seeking at the heart of his unified field theory, which he fruitlessly spent the last thirty years of his life trying to develop, as a BBC documentary called 'Einstein's Unfinished Symphony', first broadcast on 20th January 2005, explained. This equation is a natural development of Newton's $F = ma$ and Einstein's $E = mc^2$, which lie at the core of their own syntheses. It thus marks the glorious culmination of all scientific inquiry on this planet. For as Michio Kaku said in the programme, if Einstein had been successful in his endeavours, "The theory of everything would have been the Holy Grail of science; it would have been the Philosophers' Stone. It would have been the crowning achievement of all scientific endeavours ever since humans walked the face of the Earth."⁶

As Wholeness is the union of all opposites, it is the union of Wholeness and Oneness and of Nonduality and duality. Using Hegel's logic, if Wholeness is the thesis and Oneness the antithesis, Wholeness is the synthesis; if Nonduality is the thesis and duality is the antithesis, Nonduality is the synthesis. There is thus a primary-secondary relationship between the Nondual Absolute and the relativistic world of form, with all its contradictory and complementary opposites, and between Wholeness and Oneness. These relationships are simply shown in Figures 4.2 and 4.3.

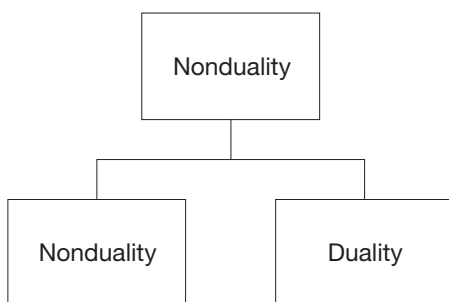


Figure 4.2: *The primacy of Nonduality*

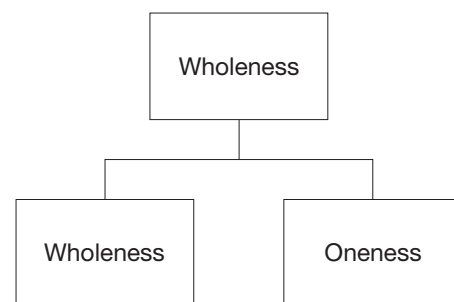


Figure 4.3: *Wholeness, the union of Wholeness and Oneness*

The meaning of the relationships depicted in these diagrams is not new, for they have intuitively been known by the mystics throughout the ages. For instance, in Saying 11 in *The Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus said, "On the day when you were one you became two. But when you become two, what will you do?" answering his question in Saying 106: "When you make the two into one, you will become children of humanity."⁷ However, not many are familiar with these sayings, for as we see on page 316 in Chapter 11, 'The Evolution of the Mind', in 367 CE, Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria, issued an Easter letter demanding that all the 'secret writings', including the *Gospel of Thomas*, be destroyed.

It is perhaps not surprising that there have been very few both-and thinkers in history, for when we embrace the Principle of Unity in the depths of our beings, our identity as separate beings is totally shattered. We then realize that the True Nature of all beings in a holographic Universe is Wholeness. In ancient times, the most pre-eminent figures who knew this were Lao Tzu and Heraclitus. Both intuitively knew, like Jesus, that the Principle of Unity is the fundamental design principle of the Universe but that it is so well hidden that it is not easy to discover. As Lao Tzu said, “The Tao is the hidden Reservoir of all things,”⁸ and “My words are very easy to understand and very easy to practice: But the world cannot understand them nor practice them.”⁹ Heraclitus called the Principle of Unity ‘The Hidden Harmony’, the title of a book of Osho’s discourses on this Greek mystic. As Heraclitus said, “Opposition brings concord. Out of discord comes the fairest harmony,” and “Nature loves to hide.”¹⁰

Unifying science and mysticism

By applying the Principle of Unity to all our learning activities, we can see that while ending the long-running war between science and religion is incredibly simple, it is far from easy. For if it were easy, it would have happened long ago. For aren’t Love and Peace what nearly every one of us longs for more than anything else in the world?

As pointed out on page 29 in Chapter 1, ‘Starting Afresh at the Very Beginning’, the central problem here is that God and Universe are the incompatible contextual concepts for religion and science, respectively. So if we are ever to live in love, peace, and harmony with each other, we need to establish a Universal Context for all our learning. Many believe such a healing synthesis is impossible. But if we are willing to look afresh at our beliefs, then it is quite easy to discover that which we all share in common, no matter what our cultural background might be. It takes just six steps, along the lines of the mathematical-like proofs that Benedict de Spinoza used in *The Ethics*.

1. John wrote in his first Epistle: “God is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him,”¹¹ words that Pope Benedict XVI took as the text for his first encyclical ‘*Caritas Deus Est*.’¹²
2. The Sufi poet Rumi said, “Love is the sea of not-being and there intellect drowns,”¹³ ‘not-being’ being *Anatman* in Buddhism. So as many people today are discovering in their own direct experience through meditation and other spiritual practices, Love is the immanent Divine Essence that we all share. They can thus say, “I am Love,” if they will.
3. Therefore, from (1) and (2), “God is me,” a statement that is true for all beings in the Universe, not only intelligent human beings.
4. In the collective, we can thus say, “God is the Totality of Existence”. There is not anything in existence that is not God.
5. But the Universe is the Totality of Existence
6. Therefore, from (4) and (5), “God is the Universe,” a transcendent view of God simply expressed in *Consciousness Speaks* by the late Ramesh S. Balsekar, a former President of the Bank of India and an Advaita sage, in these words: “All there is, is Consciousness.”

We can thus see that Love is the Divine Essence that we all share and Consciousness is the Cosmic Context for all our lives, no matter where we might live. If everyone on Earth could thus realize this Truth, there would be no more Holy wars—wars about the Whole—or wars between science and religion. All this needs is for the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to say, with the Hindus, for instance, “*Tat tvam asi*” ‘That thou art’, and for the scientists to accept that Ultimate Reality is Consciousness, not the physical universe of our senses.

QED ‘Quite easily done’.

Consciousness is all there is

The world-view described in this book helps us particularly to make sense of the field of consciousness studies, which has come to the fore in recent years. In particular, we can address the hard problem of consciousness stud-

ies, first identified by David Chalmers in 1994:¹⁴ How is it that consciousness arises from the brain? Well, this is not a difficult problem to solve; it is impossible. For as we have seen, all forms, including mass, space, and time, arise from Consciousness, as the Datum of the Universe. Western civilization is thus a culture that is upside down, putting second things first.

This is a great pity, for when we put first things first, we experience the marvellous joy of living freely in Consciousness, denoted in Sanskrit by *Satchidananda*, a compound of *Sat*, ‘absolute, eternal, unchanging Being’, *Chit*, ‘absolute Consciousness’, and *Ananda*, ‘bliss, absolute joy’.

We can metaphorically visualize Consciousness in two ways, as an ocean and as radiant light. The Ocean of Consciousness is like a vast ball of water, whose surface is the materialistic world of our physical senses. The depths are the Cosmic Psyche, including our minds, while the centre of the ocean is the Divine Source of Life, of all energy in the Universe. Many have poetically described an oceanic feeling of Oneness with the Cosmos, when the ocean becomes an undivided, seamless continuum, so there is a wealth of evidence supporting this vision. This photograph shows a prototype of a model of the Ocean of Consciousness, which shows in my outer world what I can see, feel, and sense in my inner.



Figure 4.4: Prototype of model of the Ocean of Consciousness

The Ocean of Consciousness is a natural nonlinear extension of David Bohm’s notion of the holomovement in the implicate order, which he used to unify the incompatibilities between relativity and quantum theories, although the physicists, struggling with string theory, still do not recognize this far-reaching synthesis. These two fundamental theories of physics are incompatible because relativity theory has the attributes of continuity, causality, and locality, while quantum theory has these properties: noncontinuity, non-causality, and nonlocality.

Bohm likened the holomovement to a river, enabling him to unify these incompatibilities. As he said, “On this stream, one may see an ever-changing pattern of vortices, ripples, waves, splashes, etc., which evidently have no independent existence as such. Rather, they are abstracted from the flowing movement, arising and vanishing in the total process of flow.”¹⁵ In human terms, we are all just the waves and ripples on the surface of the ocean, having no independent existence, interrelated in the depths and conjoined at the centre, the Ground of Being, which we can simply call Love, our Cosmic Soul or Divine Essence. Amit Goswami similarly regards Consciousness as primary in the popular movie *What the Bleep Do We Know!?* As he said, the findings of quantum physics tell us that the material world around us is “nothing but possible movements of Consciousness”.¹⁶

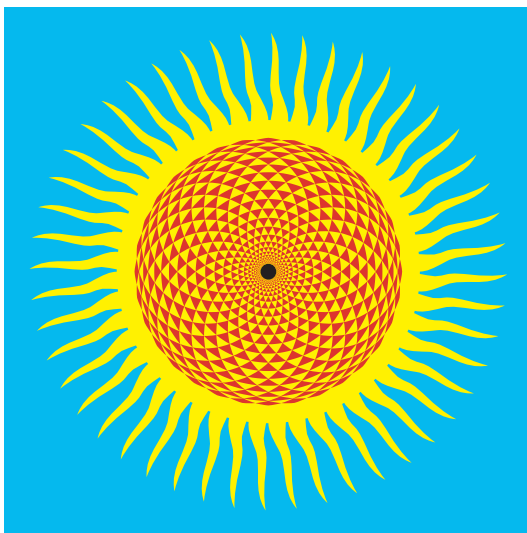


Figure 4.5: Radiant light of Consciousness

Consciousness is also like the Sun, but radiating coherent light, more like a laser beam than the diffuse light of a light bulb, enabling us to view the Universe holographically, illustrated in Figure 4.5. It is this radiant, coherent light that enables us to look into the depths of the psyche. Jesus of Nazareth referred to this light when he said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”¹⁷ But not all can see this brilliant light, for there is a ‘cloud of unknowing’ preventing this light from shining through us all, as an anonymous fourteenth-century English mystic pointed out. This is called *avidya*, ‘ignorance’ in Sanskrit, whose opposite is *jñāna* or gnosis, deep inner knowing of the Divine. This symbol depicts the coherent light of Consciousness, paradoxically emanating from blackness, reproduced from *Energy, Matter & Form: Toward a Science of Consciousness*, published by the University of the Trees in 1975.¹⁸

Now in order to know oneself, we need eyes to do so. The word I use for this purpose is *Intelligence*, sometimes called the Witness in spiritual circles. The vitally important role of self-reflective Intelligence in our self-inquiries was clearly expressed in these words of the pre-eminent Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart: “The eye with which I see God is the same as that with which he sees me.”¹⁹ It is our self-reflective Intelligence, the marvellous gift that we were given some 25,000 years ago, which distinguishes us from the other animals and our machines, such as computers. So Divine Intelligence is the eyesight of Cosmic, Unity Consciousness. This explains why Meister Eckhart saw no distinction between God’s aperspectival view and his own.

Two other important words that denote this divine world are *Love* and *Peace*, for God is Love, as mentioned on page 112, when unifying science and mysticism. And in Paul’s epistle to the Philippians, Paul referred to “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding”.²⁰ For me, being grounded in the Stillness of Nondual Love and Inner Peace is the only way that I can live beyond conflict and suffering.

We can see clearly that Love is our Divine Essence from the word *kind*, which is the native English word for *nature*, having a Germanic root, *gakundiz*, ‘natural, innate’. In turn, *nature* derives from the Latin *nasci* ‘to be born’. And everything that exists in the relativistic world of form is born from our divine Source, which is quite natural, not supernatural, as is widely believed today. So kindness is our true nature, expressed as compassion and charity (*agape* in Greek) in Buddhism and Christianity, respectively. Despite the fact that “we are the cruellest and most ruthless species that has ever walked the earth”, as Anthony Storr points out in *Human Aggression*,²¹ our innate nature is not evil, as the Christian notion of original sin seems to imply.

Ineffable Truth and Freedom are also to be found in this divine, mystical world. As Jesus said, “ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” J. Krishnamurti described the Truth as a ‘pathless land’ when dissolving the organization that wanted to make him a world teacher in 1929. As he said, “you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. ... Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, ... cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or to coerce people along any particular path.”²² Any such organization would be a crutch, not liberating.

I must emphasize here that making these changes to the concepts of God and Universe has no effect on Reality. We human beings have been living in the Cosmic Context of Consciousness, grounded in Love, our Divine Essence, ever since we began to form concepts many thousands of years ago. If this were not the case, it would have been quite impossible for us to create all the wonderful works of art, music, poetry, literature, and architecture we have created through the millennia. If we were machines, and nothing but machines, as some scientists apparently still believe, nothing new could ever arise; we would not be able to make the scientific discoveries we have made during the ages, enabling many of us to live in comparative comfort today.

In a similar manner, when Copernicus showed that the Earth circles the Sun, rather than the other way round, as the Aristotelians and Christians believed, nothing changed in the solar system; the Earth continued to move around the Sun, as it had been doing for some 4.5 billion years. Not that Copernicus was able to eliminate all of Ptolemy’s epicycles. It was left to Kepler to do this with his three laws of planetary motion, and to Newton to unify Kepler’s extraterrestrial viewpoint with Galileo’s terrestrial perspective in the *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. In *The Sleepwalkers*, Arthur Koestler splendidly narrates the hundreds of years of struggle that led to this epoch-making synthesis,²³ as we see in Subsection ‘The first scientific revolution’ in Chapter 11, ‘The Evolution of the Mind’ on page 348.

Similarly, in today’s heliocentric revolution, many in both spiritual and scientific circles are becoming conscious that it is the radiant light of Consciousness that enlightens all our lives. But there are still quite a few ‘epicycles’ hanging around in the form of clouds, which have built up over the years as our cultural conditioning, which prevent us from being fully awake. It is only when we let go of the past completely, integrating all knowledge into a coherent whole, that we can disperse all the clouds that inhibit our vision, that prevent our minds from becoming translucent at the pinnacle of human learning.

The mystical experience

It is vitally important to note here that Wholeness is not an anthropocentric concept. Wholeness embraces and lies within everything that exists. In human terms, we are always Wholeness, no matter what our state of health might be or the level of our consciousness. We cannot return Home to Wholeness because we have never left Home. As the Buddhists say, “You cannot become a Buddha, you already are a Buddha.” Well, not quite. To say that someone is a Buddha, meaning ‘awakened or enlightened one’, is an anthropocentric notion.

The principle that Wholeness is the union of all opposites is most critical and revealing here. We are all both divine and human. As divine beings, we can ‘experience’ the bliss or absolute joy of being in union with the Divine, called *ananda* in Sanskrit. I put *experience* in quotes because by being Wholeness, the sense of a separate self disappears completely; there is no experiencer who can be said to be experiencing bliss. But once we have realized this fundamental truth of human existence, bliss never goes away, even when we go through what John of the Cross called the ‘dark night of the soul’,²⁴ extreme agony as we seek to let go of everything that prevents us from realizing deep inner Peace. So we can be blissfully unhappy as well as blissfully happy.

What then is the mystical experience? What are its characteristics? Well, William James, in his classic work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, attempted to answer this question, even though he admitted to never having had a mystical experience. As he said, “Whether my treatment of mystical states will shed more light or darkness, I do not know, for my own constitution shuts me out from their enjoyment almost entirely, and I can speak of them only at second hand.”²⁵

From this second-hand knowledge, James identified four main characteristics of the mystical experience:

1. **Ineffability:** The subject of it immediately says that it defies expression, that no adequate report of its contents can be given in words.
2. **Noetic quality:** Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge ... and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for aftertime.
3. **Transiency:** Mystical states cannot be sustained for long.
4. **Passivity:** The mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power.²⁶

In *Mysticism*, F. C. Hoppold extended James’ four characteristics of the mystical experience with three more, without mentioning that he was apparently plagiarizing James’ work:

5. **Oneness of everything:** All creaturely existence is experienced as a unity, as All in One and One in All.
6. **Timelessness:** The mystic feels himself to be in a dimension where time is not, where ‘all is always now’.
7. **Egolessness:** The phenomenal *ego* is not the real I.²⁷

The one characteristic that I would take issue with here is transiency. Wholeness never goes away; it is ever present. Neither is Wholeness a state, mystical or otherwise, not an altered or nonordinary state of consciousness.²⁸ Neither is Wholeness a pure consciousness event, as Robert K. C. Forman describes in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness*. Why should there be a problem with Pure Consciousness? As Wholeness is ineffable, it is actually quite impossible to say what it is in words. To keep it simple, I usually say that we can *sense* Wholeness, the exquisite sense of Wholeness.

In recent years, with the great awakening of love, consciousness, and intelligence that we are witnessing today there has been a wealth of published material on people’s religious, spiritual, and mystical experiences, which cannot satisfactorily be explained in terms of either materialistic science or the theological teachings of the monotheistic religions. For instance, the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre in the UK has discovered that 43% of Americans and 48% of British people have had such experiences.²⁹ And Charles Tart, another scientist like Alister Hardy, collects descriptions of scientists’ spiritual experiences, which he publishes in *TASTE—The Archives of Scientists’ Transcendent Experiences*.³⁰

Yet the great tragedy of our times is that over half the population are apparently ignorant of the Divine Ground of Being that we all share. It is therefore not surprising that the world is in such a dreadful mess. It

makes no sense to deny the existence and reality of God or to fight holy wars—wars about the Whole—in the name of God. While we all have unique experiences of life in the relativistic world of form, there is one thing that we all share in common: the Absolute, viewed as Wholeness and Oneness, or Consciousness and Love.

Leibniz coined the phrase *philosophia perennis*, ‘love of perennial wisdom’, which Aldous Huxley made famous in his book *The Perennial Philosophy: An Interpretation of the Great Mystics, East and West*, as a generic term for all descriptions of this exquisitely beautiful mystical world. To Huxley, the perennial wisdom is “the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man’s final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being”. It “is immemorial and universal”.³¹

Some of these earliest writings are contained in *The Upanishads*, a mystical addendum to the ritualistic and hymnal *Vedas*, meaning ‘knowledge, sacred teaching’. These spiritual scriptures were written down during the first millennium BCE, but they were probably handed down by word of mouth for thousands of years before. It is amazing that what the Rishis discovered in the Indus valley millennia ago, we are only discovering for ourselves today in the West. The Sanskrit word *upanishad* derives from *upa*, ‘near’, *ni*, ‘down’, and *sad*, ‘to sit’. So *upanishad* means ‘to sit down near to’, “at the feet of a guru, in order to receive the confidential, secret teaching”, esoteric words not intended for the public. Shankaracharya, the founder of *Advaita* in the eighth century, related *The Upanishads* to *Atmavidya*, ‘knowledge of the Self’, and *Brahmavidya*, ‘knowledge of Brahman’, the eternal, imperishable Absolute. We can see this relationship most clearly in the *Katha Upanishad*:

*Knowing the senses to be separate
From the Self, and the sense experience
To be fleeting, the wise grieve no more.*

*Above the senses is the mind,
Above the mind is the intellect,
Above that is the ego, and above the ego
Is the unmanifested Cause.*

*And beyond is Brahman, omnipresent,
Attributeless. Realizing him one is released
From the cycle of birth and death.*³²

Similarly, the Mandukya Upanishad, the shortest of all, begins in this way:

*Aum stands for the supreme Reality.
It is a symbol for what was, what is,
And what shall be. Aum represents also
What lies beyond past, present, and future.*

*Brahman is all, and the Self is Brahman.
This Self has four states of consciousness.*

These states are *vaishvārāna* ‘the waking condition’, *taijasa* ‘the dream state’, *prājña* ‘the state of deep sleep’, and *turiya* ‘the fourth’, which is not a state of consciousness, but Consciousness itself, depicted in the familiar symbol of Aum, illustrated in Figure 4.6. The Mandukya Upanishad ends:

*The mantram Aum stands for the supreme state
Of Turiya, without parts, beyond birth
And death, symbol of everlasting joy.
Those who know Aum as the Self become the Self;
Truly they become the Self.*



Figure 4.6: Aum

The two dimensions of time

Having returned Home to Ineffable, Nondual Wholeness at the Alpha/Omega point of evolution/involution, it might appear that life has come to an end. There is nothing more to do or become, for we have reached the end of time. In a sense this is true, for time, like everything else in the relativistic world of form, is just an appearance in Consciousness, not real at all. In IRL, the concept of time is formed in exactly the same way as all other concepts, as we see on page 59 in Chapter 1, ‘Starting Afresh at the Very Beginning’.

Yet time feels real to us, as it guides our daily lives, from the past to the future in what we can call the horizontal dimension of time. Traditionally, there have been two basic ways of looking at this dimension of time: cyclic and linear. The cyclic view of time predominated in all cultures during the Great Mother Goddess epoch between about 25,000 and 5,000 years ago—reviewed in Section ‘The origin of the myths’ in Chapter 10, ‘Entering Paradise’ on page 255—because our forebears tended to look at time through direct human experience, most notably in the cycles of day and night, the phases of the moon, women’s menstrual cycles, and the four seasons in the year.

In the East, such a cyclic view prevails, encapsulated in the classic *T’ai-chi-t’u* symbol, or ‘Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate’, depicted in Figure 3.6 on page 99. The dots in each section indicate the potential of Yin or Yang to become primary when Yang or Yin is predominant. In Taoist philosophy, this cyclic process can continue indefinitely, in infinite time. We can simply illustrate that this cyclic view of time is actually linear with the mathematical sinusoidal curve, which has no limit in either direction:

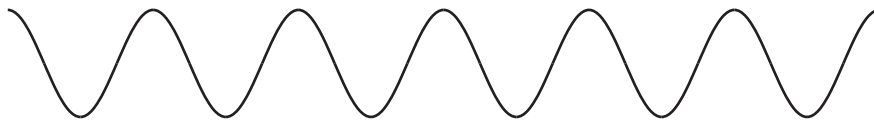


Figure 4.7: Cyclic view of time

The cyclic view of time has led to the belief in the continuous reincarnation of an immortal soul in Eastern religions. Surprisingly Buddhists subscribe to this belief even though Ultimate Reality in Buddhism is *Shunyata* ‘Emptiness’, realized when the delusional sense of a separate self disappears completely as *Anatman*, the union of *Brahman* and *Atman* in Hinduism. At the dawn of recorded history about 5,000 years ago in the Middle East, a directly linear view of time began to emerge, with a beginning and end. This view has led the monotheistic religions to believe in everlasting life after death. But as we have seen from the mathematics of infinity on page 101 in Chapter 3, ‘Unifying Opposites’, such beliefs are irrational.

This horizontal dimension of time also holds sway in science, not the least since the emergence of the Cartesian-Newtonian mechanistic paradigm. As a result, there is a widespread belief that every effect has a preceding cause. For instance, David Bohm wrote in the opening paragraph of *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics*, “In nature nothing remains constant. Everything is in a perpetual state of transformation, motion, and change. However, we discover that nothing simply surges up out of nothing without having antecedents that existed before. ... Everything comes from other things and gives rise to other things.”³³

Viewing change in the Universe as a long chain of causes and effects led Aristotle to postulate the existence of an Unmoved Mover, which set the Universe in motion.³⁴ Thomas Aquinas then took this notion as the basis for his five proofs for the existence of God.³⁵ However, as we see in Figure 1.1, ‘Mechanical processing’ on page 27 and Figure 2.1, ‘Basic data processing function’ on page 63, machines, like computers, function solely in the horizontal dimension of time, with a past and a present. So if we are to be liberated from our mechanistic conditioning, we can only really do so in the Eternal Now, starting afresh at the very beginning at every instant of our lives, as Figure 4.8 shows.

We can see why this is absolutely essential at the present time, if I can use that term, when we look at the accelerating rate of evolutionary development in Section ‘Exponential growth’ in Chapter 6, ‘An Integral Theory of Evolution’ on page 158. For as we can see on page 170 in that chapter, evolution is currently passing through the most momentous turning point in its fourteen billion-year history. Using the metaphor of a tap, the evolutionary tap is no longer dripping, corresponding to major evolutionary turning points in the past; it is turned full on, streaming out uninhibitedly.

In terms of the four-stage evolutionary model introduced by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in *The Human Phenomenon* and outlined on page 157, we are currently in the transitional period between the mental or noological phase of evolution and the eschatological, spiritual epoch. We can call these two epochs the mental-egoic age (me-epoch) and the age of universal spirituality (us-epoch), to emphasize the change from I to we. For entering the much longed-for Peaceful Society, visualized in Chapter 14, ‘The Age of Light’ on page 491, is not something that can happen in isolation. As Teilhard said,

The way out for the world, the gates of the future, the entry into the superhuman, will not open ahead to some privileged few, or to a single people, elect among all the peoples. They will yield only to the thrust of *all together*, in the direction where all can rejoin and complete one another in a spiritual renewal of the Earth.³⁶

Working harmoniously together with a common purpose

When we look at human society as a whole—sometimes called the ‘body politick’—we can see that all of us, as individuals, are like cells in the human body. During the course of our own lives, our cells grow and die with a shorter lifespan than the body as a whole. Similarly with the body politick. As individuals, while we pass through a similar life and death cycle, the species, as a whole, continues to live. However, *Homo sapiens sapiens* is not immortal; it is destined to die one day, like all other structures in the relativistic world of form, as Figure 4.9, reproduced from Figure P.2 on page xxiv, illustrates.

In terms of lifespans, astronomers estimate that the Sun was formed about 4.57 billion years ago and will turn into a red giant and white dwarf in some 5 to 6 billion years time, illustrated in Figure 13.9 on page 437. So our solar system with its planets is approximately now about halfway through its life and death cycle, although the Earth is likely to become uninhabitable by human beings far earlier than this. The comparatively stable temperatures we have been experiencing during the past 10,000 years are a very rare phenomenon on Earth, as we see in Figure 13.12 on page 440 in Chapter 13, ‘The Prospects for Humanity’. We are most probably living in a tiny window of time, when the Earth is habitable by human beings. Indeed, these 10 millennia are vast compared to the miniscule window of time when the Earth can support today’s highly advanced technological society, with its billions of inhabitants having a rapacious appetite for our planet’s finite resources, as we look at further in the penultimate chapter of this book.

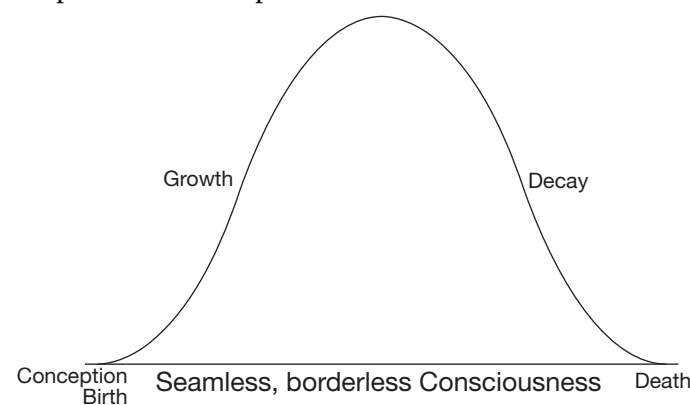


Figure 4.9: Schematic of life and death process

element with a half-life of radioactive decay of 3.6 seconds.

As we saw on page xxv in the Prologue, the Buddha showed with his three marks of being (*trilakshana*) that we shall suffer (*duhkha*) if we do not accept that there is nothing permanent in the Universe (*anitya*). The way to be free of suffering is the realization that there is no separate self (*anatman*), enabling us to live at peace in the Eternal Now, free of the fear of death, a notion made popular by Eckhart Tolle’s best-selling *The Power of Now*.

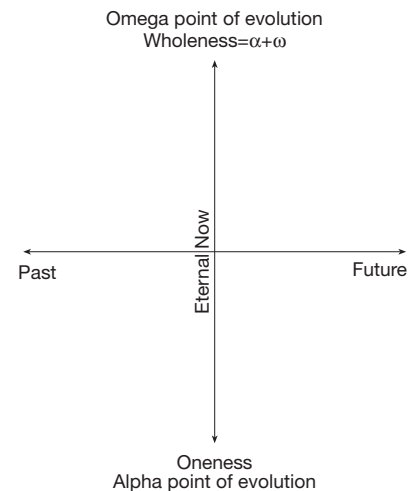


Figure 4.8: Horizontal and vertical dimensions of time

As another example of the wide variety of lifespans, the dinosaurs were a superorder of species, which roamed this planet for about 160 million years from the late Triassic period to the end of the Cretaceous period about 65 million years ago. In human terms, the Egyptian civilization lasted about four millennia, the longest of the twenty-odd major civilizations of the patriarchal epoch, illustrated in Figure 6.5, ‘Timeline of major civilizations’ on page 172. And the normal human lifespan is 70–100 years, compared with dogs (10–13 years) and some trees, which can live for a 1,000 years or more. In contrast, roentgenium is an element

However, there is no such tradition in the West, where we are all taught that we are separate from the Divine, Nature, and each other, leading to seven pillars of unwisdom, which underlie Western civilization: misconceptions about God, Universe, Life, humanity, money, justice, and reason. We look more closely at these seven pillars in Part II, ‘The Unified Relationships Theory’ on page 123 and Chapter 12, ‘The Crisis of the Mind’ on page 399. In the meantime, here is a brief list of these seven pillars of unwisdom, a term introduced by Arthur Koestler in *The Ghost in the Machine*:³⁷

1. God is other; there is a great gulf between humanity and the Divine that can never be bridged.
2. The physical universe is the Universe and so all phenomena can be explained in terms of the quantitative laws of physics, including human behaviour.
3. Life is a property of the DNA molecule, whose mutations are the sole cause of evolution.
4. Human beings are machines and nothing but machines and so artificial intelligence is possible, a situation that would inevitably create mass unemployment if it were true.
5. Even though money is essentially a measuring stick, such as a ruler or scales, it has been reified as a commodity with value, to be bought and sold, like kilograms and metres, especially absurd as most money is no longer a physical object, but merely data in a computer.
6. Because it is believed that human beings are separate from each other, it is believed that they have free will and so can be punished or rewarded for actions regarded as antisocial or praiseworthy by society.
7. Aristotle’s Law of Contradiction.

The remainder of this book therefore explores how we could rebuild our global society on the seven pillars of wisdom, a learning process that I began in 1980, when endeavouring to discover what it truly means to be a human being, in contrast to the other animals and machines, like computers, described in Section ‘An experiment in learning’ in Chapter 1, ‘Starting Afresh at the Very Beginning’ on page 38.