



living untethered

Beyond the Human Predicament

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PART I:

Conscious Awareness

Chapter 1.

Awareness of Self

Sitting on a planet spinning through vast outer space for a handful of years—in the broadest sense, this is the human predicament. Earth has been here for 4.5 billion years, yet each of us is limited to roughly an eighty-year ride on the planet, give or take a few years. We were born onto the planet, and we will leave it when we die. That is simply the truth. What is not such a hard and fast truth, however, is what our few years on Earth are like. Undoubtedly, life on the planet can be a very exciting experience. It can bring enthusiasm, passion, and inspiration at every turn. When it unfolds that way, every day can be a beautiful adventure. Unfortunately, life on Earth rarely unfolds exactly as we want it to, and if we resist, our experience can be quite unpleasant. Resistance creates tension and anxiety, and it makes life a burden.

To avoid this burden and be able to fully embrace life, wise ones throughout the ages have taught the importance of accepting reality. Only by accepting reality can we work with the flow of life as it passes by and create a better world. All of science is based on studying reality, learning her laws, and then working with those laws to improve our lives. Scientists can't

deny reality; they must fully accept reality as the starting point of their endeavors. To fly, we must fully embrace the law of gravity, not deny its existence. The same is true in the spiritual realm. Teachings such as surrender, acceptance, and nonresistance form the basis of a deeply spiritual life. But these concepts can be difficult to grasp. In *Living Untethered*, we are embarking on a journey into the sheer reasonableness of acceptance and the great gifts it promises: freedom, peace, and inner enlightenment. Acceptance is best understood as nonresistance to reality. Try as you may, no one can make an event that has already happened not have happened. Your only choice is to accept the event or resist it. During our journey together, we will explore how and why you make this decision. But first you have to understand who is within that has the power to decide.

You are certainly *in there*; you have an intuitive sense of existence inside. What is that? It is awareness of Self, the most important topic we could ever discuss. Since we're going to take a deep dive into the spirituality of acceptance, we must start by understanding who is in there accepting or resisting.

There are many ways to approach the nature of Self. Let's go slowly and start with something very simple. Imagine someone comes up to you and asks, "Hi. Are you in there?" How would you respond? No one would actually say, "No, I'm not in here." That would be the ultimate non sequitur. If you're not in there, who responded? You're definitely in there, but what does that mean?

To isolate what "you in there" means, imagine you're shown three different photographs. The photos are held up one after the other, and then you're asked, "Though the photos changed, was it the same you who saw all three of them?" Your

response would be, “Of course it was the same me.” Very good; that helps us get our bearings. From this simple exercise, it’s clear that you in there are not what you look at; you are the one who’s looking. The pictures changed; you who saw them stayed the same.

It’s not hard to understand with photographs that you are not what you look at, but there are some objects we identify with more than others. For example, our bodies. We identify with our bodies enough to say, “I’m a forty-three-year-old woman who is five foot six.” Is that really who you are in there: a forty-three-year-old, five-foot-six-inch female body? Or is the body something you in there are aware of? To sort this out, let’s start with your hand. If you were asked whether you can see your hand, you would say, “Yes, I see my hand.” Okay, but what if it got cut off? Don’t worry about the pain; just for a moment imagine it’s gone. Would you still be there? Wouldn’t you notice that your hand is gone? It’s like the changing photographs: When the hand was there, you saw it. When it was gone, you saw it was gone. You in there who “sees” did not change; what you were looking at changed. Your body is just another thing you see. The question remains: Who is in there doing the seeing?

Note that we didn’t have to stop with the hand. Surgery has become so advanced that, with the help of a heart-lung machine and other medical devices, surgeons could remove a great deal of your body—and the same sense of Self would still be in there, aware of the changes. How could you be your body if it changed that much, and you in there stayed the same?

Fortunately, to help you realize you are not your body, we don’t really need to go that far. There is a much simpler, intuitive way to approach this. Surely you’ve noticed that your

body didn't look the same when you were three, ten, twenty, or fifty years old. It certainly won't look the same when you're eighty or ninety. But isn't it the same you in there looking at it? When you were ten years old and you looked in the mirror, did you see what you see now? No, but wasn't it you looking—then and now? You've been in there the whole time, haven't you? That's the core, the essence, of everything we're discussing. Who are you? Who is in there looking out through those eyes and seeing what you're seeing? Just like when you were shown the three photographs, you were not any of the photos—you were the one looking at them. Likewise, when you look out at the mirror, you are not what you see—you are the one who sees it.

Little by little, through the use of these examples, we are revealing the nature of Self. Your relationship to what you see is always one of subject-object. You are the subject, and what you are looking at is the object. There are many different objects coming in through your senses, but there's only one subject experiencing them—You.

Chapter 2.

The Conscious Receiver

Once you recognize that you're in there, you're going to notice that objects around you tend to distract your consciousness. A neighborhood dog barks, someone walks in the room, you smell the aroma of coffee, and your awareness is drawn to these objects. On a daily basis, you are so distracted by external objects that you rarely remain centered on *You*, the conscious receiver of these objects. Let's take a moment to examine the real relationship between this conscious receiver and the objects it is distracted by.

To look at this scientifically, you are not even looking at the outer objects. Right now, you are not actually looking out at what you see. What's happening is that rays of light are bouncing off the molecules that make up the outer objects. These reflected rays are hitting your eyes' photoreceptors and being transmitted back as messages through your nervous system. These messages are then rendered in your mind as an image of the external objects. You are actually seeing the objects inside, not outside.

We are slowly peeling back the onion to see what it's like to be you. Things are certainly not what they appear to be. Even

science backs that up. It's like you are sitting inside looking at a mental flat-screen monitor that is imaging the world in front of you. You are obviously not the object you are looking at; after all, you are not even looking at the actual object. If you work your way back, the question becomes: "Who am I in here looking at a mental image of what is in front of me?"

There was a great saint from India, an enlightened master named Ramana Maharshi. His entire spiritual path was to every moment persistently ask: "Who sees when I see? Who hears when I hear? Who feels when I feel?" *Self-realization*, the term for enlightenment the yoga master Paramahansa Yogananda used, means you have fully realized who you are in there. The entire spiritual journey back to the seat of Self is not about finding yourself—it's about realizing you are the Self. Even in a Judeo-Christian sense, if somebody asks whether they have a soul, the correct answer is, "No, you don't *have* a soul—you in there, the consciousness, *are* the soul." Thus, "Who are you?" becomes the quintessential question. You can't free yourself until you understand who it is that's bound. Likewise, you can't understand acceptance until you understand who is resisting.

Let's continue our exploration of Self. Earlier we discussed that when you were young, you looked out through your eyes and saw a certain reflection in the mirror. Later in your life you saw a very different reflection. From that point of view, how old are you? Not how old is your body. How old are you in there who's looking out through those eyes at your body? If you were in there when you were ten, if you were in there when you were twenty, if you're going to be in there on your deathbed noticing that you're dying, then what age are you in there? Don't answer that question, just let it touch you at a very deep level. Are you willing to let go of traditional concepts about your age?

Let's do another interesting experiment. Imagine you're looking in the mirror right after taking a shower. Do you see the reflection of a male or female body? What if suddenly, via some mysterious power, it changes? Somehow the body parts change. If you were a male, you're now looking at a female. If you were a female, you're now looking at a male. Would it still be the same you in there looking at that body? Would it still be the same consciousness that has always looked out through those eyes now seeing a very different body? You would probably be saying, "What happened? What's going on here?" Nevertheless, it would be the same you having the entire experience. So what gender are you in there? You in there, who has no body parts, can't have a gender. All you can have is awareness that when you look out through your eyes, the body you're looking at has a certain form and shape. That form and shape might be male or female, but you who notices are neither.

The question remains, who are *You*, the awareness that intuitively knows you're in there? Your body has an age and your body has a gender, but those concepts are irrelevant to the one who notices the body. If you look at a tall, one-hundred-year-old vase, does that make you tall and a hundred years old? The same is true of race. Your skin may be a certain color, but the consciousness that notices this has no color at all. You are not your body; you are the one who notices the characteristics of your body. You are the conscious awareness within that is looking at all of this. The question is: *Are you willing to let go of who you thought you were?* Because who you thought you were is not who you are. The same inner being is looking at your body, your house, your car. You are the subject; all the rest are objects of consciousness.

Let's turn to something a little lighter. At night you go to sleep, and you often dream. You wake up in the morning, and you say, "I had a dream." That statement is actually very deep. How do you know you had a dream? Do you merely remember the dream or were you actually in there experiencing it? The answer is very simple: you were in there experiencing it. The same you who looks through your eyes and sees the outer world was experiencing the events occurring in the dream. There's only one conscious being in there, and you are either experiencing the waking world or the dream world. Note that when describing your interactions with both worlds, you intuitively use the word "I," as in "I was flying through the clouds with my arms open wide, then I suddenly woke up and realized I was in my bed."

In *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, which is a very ancient yogic text, Patanjali discusses the topic of deep, dreamless sleep. He says that when you go to sleep and there are no dreams, it's not that you are not conscious, it's that you are conscious of nothing. If you spend time contemplating this, you're going to find that you're always conscious in there. Even people who get knocked unconscious, or go into a coma, often come back and tell us what they were experiencing. People have near-death experiences in which they leave their bodies and come back to tell about it. Whatever the source of these experiences, the same you in there experienced them and were able to describe what you experienced. How can you call that not being conscious? Medically, what we call "conscious" has to do with awareness of our external surroundings. However, the concept of whether you in there are consciously aware of anything—that's another story altogether. You're always conscious. You've been conscious from the beginning. You're aware of whatever

you focus on, internally or externally. Who are you? Who is that consciously aware entity inside?

Chapter 3.

Living Inside

We are back to the most basic truths of your life: you're in there, you know that you're in there, and you've been in there all along. This raises some interesting questions, such as, when the body dies, will you still be aware of being? Isn't that an interesting question? Don't get excited, we're not going to answer that for you. Eventually, however, there will be someone who provides that answer: *You*. You are guaranteed to personally find out someday whether you will be there after the body dies. Why do people have so much trouble with death? It's got to be one of the most exciting aspects of your life. It's truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience! That is what's waiting for you at the time of death. After that final moment, either you are going to be there or you are not. If you're not there, don't worry. It's not like, "Oh my god, I'm not here. I don't like this." No. You're not there, so it's not going to be a problem. The other alternative, however, is much more interesting—what if you are there? Then you're going to find out what it's like to explore a whole other universe where you don't even have a body. Let's not talk about it further because it runs into people's beliefs, concepts, or views about the subject. Let's just let it be

something to look forward to as the ultimate once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The reason some people have so much trouble with death is because they identify with their bodies. As if that's not enough, they also identify with their cars and houses. People project their sense of self onto things that are not their self. When they do that, they feel afraid to lose those things. As you work your way through your inner growth, you won't identify with these outer objects anymore. You'll identify with the deeper sense of self within.

Now that it's clear that you're in there, it becomes reasonable to ask: What do you do in there? Even more relevant, what's it like in there? What an interesting question to ask: What's it like in there? If people answered honestly, most would say that it's not always so much fun in there. In fact, sometimes it's downright tough. What's that all about? This is where we get down to a real honest discussion about inner growth. Most people don't realize that it can always be nice in there. Take the nicest it's ever been: holding your first child, the day of your wedding, your first kiss, winning the lottery. Recall that state, then increase it multifold and have it be that way all the time—except that it keeps getting higher. That is what you are capable of experiencing inside. That's the truth. It is really beautiful in there, but something is messing it up. Imagine walking into a house that has dirt, banana peels, and pizza crusts all over the place. It happens to be a beautiful house, but no one took care of it. It can be beautiful again, but some work needs to be done. This is exactly the situation inside you. In fact, that is why we're on this inner exploration. Everybody wants the same thing: they would like it to be nice in there.

People do all kinds of things trying to make it nice in there. Some run around trying to have exciting experiences, find fulfilling relationships, or even take the edge off with drinking or drugs—all for the same reason. The problem is they're approaching the issue in the wrong way. They're asking *how* to make it nice in there, while the more relevant question is *why* is it not nice? If you find out why it's not nice, and you get rid of that, you're going to find out it can be really nice in there. Life doesn't have to be a game of, "Since it's not nice in here, I need to find things that will compensate for that in order to feel a little bit better." That is what everybody's doing. They are trying to find people, places, and things in the outside world that will unfold in a way that makes it more comfortable inside. People are trying to use the outside to fix the inside—better to find out why it's not nice inside to begin with.

Chapter 4.

The Three-Ring Circus

“I’m in here. I’m conscious, and what I am conscious of is that it’s not always so nice in here.”

That honest statement is a wonderful launching pad for continuing our exploration of Self and the power of acceptance. What is it you experience that sometimes makes it nice inside, and sometimes makes it very difficult? There are only three things you experience in there, so let’s take a look at them. First, you experience the outside world coming in through your senses. There’s a whole world out there, and what’s in front of you comes in through your eyes, ears, nose, and senses of taste and touch. When it comes in, it’s either a pleasant experience, an unpleasant experience, or a just-passing-through experience. Thus, the outside world is one of the things you deal with that has a profound effect on your inner state.

As overwhelming as the outside world can be, it’s not all you experience inside. You also have thoughts in there. You hear the thoughts saying, “I don’t know if I like this. I don’t even understand why she did it.” Or perhaps, “Wow! I’d like to

have a car like that. I would go for long weekend rides in the country.” If you’re asked who is saying all this inside your head, you’ll probably say it’s you. But it is not you. Those are thoughts, and you are the one who is noticing the thoughts. Thoughts are just another thing you notice in there. You notice the world coming in from outside, and you notice the thoughts that are generated inside.

Where do thoughts come from? We’re going to discuss that at length later, but for right now, understand that thoughts and the outside world are two of the three things you experience inside. The third thing you experience is your feelings or emotions. There are feelings that come up suddenly, like fear. Your mind can say, “I feel scared,” but if you didn’t actually *feel* scared, the impact would be much less. It’s the fact that you actually experience the emotion of fear that causes the problem. Some feelings are pleasant: “I felt love. I felt more love than I have ever felt before.” You like that feeling. Other feelings are unpleasant: “I’m feeling fear, embarrassment, and guilt coming up all at the same time.” You don’t like that, do you?

We’ve already come a long way in our exploration of Self. We’ve proven you’re in there, and the strongest proof is you know that you’re in there. This is your *seat of awareness*. Anytime you get lost, just stand in front of the mirror and say, “Hi, are you in there?” Wave at yourself, and realize, “Yep, I see somebody waving. Who am I that sees that?” This is a way to center back to your seat of awareness. While you stand there, notice what else you’re aware of. Notice your surroundings coming in through your senses, your thoughts passing through your mind, and any emotions that arise in your heart creating feelings of comfort or discomfort within. These three inner

experiences are the arena in which your consciousness plays the game of life on planet Earth.

Bottom line, you don't stand a chance in there. The constant barrage of these three experiences is like a three-ring circus going on inside all the time. The effect is so overwhelming it's like a conspiracy against you. The outside world has a major influence on your thoughts, and your thoughts and emotions will generally line up. It's very rare that your mind will be saying, "I don't like this," and your heart will be feeling tremendous love. Let's say Fred passes by and your mind says, "I don't want to see Fred. I'm not comfortable seeing him after the argument we had last time." You will start to feel fear. You were doing fine until an event came in from the outside, took over your thoughts, and generated difficult emotions. You get sucked into that overwhelming experience. Now if you're asked, "What's it like living in there?" you would probably say, "It's pretty intense. I get lost a lot and struggle to be okay." It's not all that much fun, is it?

Buddha said all of life is suffering. He wasn't being negative. All of life is suffering. If you're rich, poor, sick, healthy, young, or old—it doesn't matter. There certainly are times when you're not suffering, but the vast majority of what's going on is you're just trying to be okay. That's what it boils down to. You will at some point realize that's all you've done your entire life—try to be okay. That's why you cried when you were little; you weren't okay in there. That's why you wanted a certain toy; you thought it would make you okay. That's why you wanted to marry this special person. That's why you wanted to go to Europe or Hawaii for a vacation. You get to the point where you realize all you're ever doing in there is trying to be

okay. First you think about what will make you okay, then you go out and try to make it happen.

What does it even mean to try to be okay? For one thing, it means trying to make your thoughts and emotions easier to live with. There are nice ones, and there are not-so-nice ones. You like the nice ones. That's what you're struggling with. You want your thoughts to be positive, uplifting, and beautiful. The problem is there's an outside world of reality that can come in and cause your thoughts and emotions to be very difficult. This is why life can be overwhelming.

This interaction with the world, your thoughts, and your emotions raises some very interesting questions. What are these three things, and where do they come from? How much control do you have over them? Why do they sometimes make you feel good and other times make you feel bad? We're going to explore these questions in great detail. When we're through, you'll realize that what really matters is not the thoughts, the emotions, nor the outside world. What really matters is *You* in there, who is experiencing these things. How are *you* doing? What we'll see is that you in there are higher than any experience you've ever had. The one who is seeing all this is the most beautiful thing in the whole universe. If you ever find your way back to the seat of Self, that's what you're going to discover. This is what Christ taught you, what Buddha taught you, what all the great spiritual masters of every tradition have taught: The Kingdom is within you. You in there are a very great being made in the image of God, but to know that, you have to free yourself from all the inner commotion.

Chapter 5.

Exploring the Nature of Things

Your entire life is composed of consciously experiencing the three objects of consciousness (the outer world, the thoughts, and the emotions). Now we are ready to explore the origin and nature of these experiences. By understanding where they come from, they will lose some of the distractive power they have over you. You will then better understand your tendency to accept or reject them. We study these objects of consciousness not solely for the knowledge we gain, but also for the freedom we attain.

Let's discuss the nature of the world passing before you. Every moment that passes before you comes and goes like the frames of a motion picture. The moments never stop; they just keep flowing through time and space. Where did all these moments come from? Why do you experience them the way that you do? What is your true relationship to what passes before you?

Perhaps even more interesting than the outer world, we're going to explore the nature of the mind and the emotions, including how and why they keep changing the way they do. Though all three of these objects of consciousness are constantly

changing, you are the persistent being that is always there experiencing them. What is your nature? What is it like to sit back and be conscious of being conscious? That is what all spirituality is about. When you are no longer distracted by any of the three great distractors, your consciousness will no longer be pulled into those objects. The focus of consciousness will very naturally remain in the source of consciousness. It's like a flashlight shining on various objects. Instead of looking at the objects being illumined, if you look at the light itself, you will realize it is the same light shining on all the different objects. Likewise, it is the same consciousness that is aware of all the objects passing before it, both outside and in. You are that consciousness. When you pull back to that source of awareness, it is the most beautiful thing you will ever experience.

That is the journey before us—to free ourselves from the distractions that keep drawing us away from our greatness and leave us struggling with life. As you come to understand the nature of these objects you are struggling with, you will very naturally be able to release the hold they have on you. This act of letting go is what is meant by “acceptance” and “surrender.” There is a state of great peace within you that cannot be disturbed by the world, your thoughts, or even your emotions. These objects can continue to freely exist, but they will no longer dominate your life. You will be free to fully interact in life, but you will do so out of a sense of love and service, rather than fear or desire.

Now you understand the underlying purpose of this book: for you to learn how to let go of the three great distractors and return to the source of your being. As you will see, this is the only way you can fully enjoy your time here on Earth. This is what it means to be *Living Untethered*. It doesn't take forceful

practices to return to your core. The highest path is learning through your daily life to gradually let go of what is distracting your consciousness. By accepting instead of resisting, you will eventually attain a permanent seat of clarity—it's called becoming established in the seat of Self. You will be living in the most beautiful energy you've ever experienced, and it will never stop. During every moment of your life, there will be a beautiful flow of energy that keeps rising within you.

We are going to approach this process of freeing yourself in a very scientific, analytical manner. By doing so, you will become so comfortable with the three objects of consciousness passing before you that you will no longer have to devote your life to controlling the experience. You will see that these passing objects represent the lower aspect of your being: body, mind, and emotions. In drastic contrast, you can learn to establish yourself in the higher aspect of your being: the seat of conscious awareness. You can live your life in a state of complete freedom and happiness. Are you ready? Let's embark on our journey into the exploration of our outer world, inner world of mind and emotions, and the consciousness that experiences it all. Let's learn more about this path of acceptance of what passes before us.

PART II:

The Outside World

Chapter 6.

The Moment in Front of You

Keeping perspective is essential at every stage on our path toward inner freedom. The solid ground we keep coming back to is that you are in there; you know you're in there; and you've always known you are in there. But you don't focus on the fact that you are in there because you are too absorbed in what is going on both inside and outside you. You get lost in the objects of consciousness, instead of focusing on the source of consciousness. Spiritual awakening is about untangling consciousness from the objects of consciousness. To do this, it will help tremendously to understand the nature of the objects of consciousness you deal with each day.

We begin our exploration with the outside world. What you receive in through your five senses is a significant part of your daily experience. You are inundated each day with an unending stream of sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and touches. If we are going to explore what it is like to be *You*, the conscious being living within, we need to take the time to thoroughly understand the outside world since it makes up such a major part of your life. What is actually out there, where did it come from, and what is your relationship to it?

Let's begin by exploring your relationship to the world around you. We'll start by making a statement that you probably will not agree with: *The moment in front of you right now has absolutely nothing to do with you.* Before you disagree, just look at the moment in front of you. Don't do anything with it. Don't meditate on it or try to be positive about it. Just notice that there is a moment in front of you. Now, look to the left; there's a different moment in front of you. Look to the right; there's yet another moment in front of you. Those moments were there before you looked at them, and they will still be there when you're done looking. How many moments exist in the world right now that you are not looking at? How about in the entire universe? You must admit that those moments have nothing to do with you. They belong to themselves and their relationship to all that surrounds them. You didn't create them, and you don't make them come and go. They are just there. The moment in front of you is just another moment in the universe that exists even when you are not looking at it. It is completely impersonal.

Nonetheless, the moment in front of you doesn't seem impersonal; it seems very personal. That is why it can cause so much trouble. You suffer when the moment in front of you is not the way you want, and you rejoice when it matches your preferences. As we will explore in later chapters, this is because of something you are bringing into the moment—it is not something intrinsic to the moment itself. All moments in the universe are simply moments in the universe; you are the one bringing your personal preferences into these impersonal moments and making them seem personal.

This is our first encounter with seeing how difficult it is to surrender our habitual way of looking at things. We are

perfectly willing to admit that what is going on in Timbuktu right now has nothing to do with us. Likewise, we have no problem admitting that the rings of Saturn, the big storm on Jupiter, and the sands of Mars have nothing to do with us. In other words, more than 99.99999 percent of the universe has nothing to do with us, but somehow the .00001 percent does. Which .00001 percent does? The part that's in front of you. Somehow, because you're looking at it, it's no longer part of the impersonal universe. It has become personal.

The problem is, you have made a really big deal out of the moment in front of you throughout your life by bringing your personal preferences into that moment. Notice that the billions of people who are not looking at the moment in front of you don't have any problem with it. They couldn't care less about it. It's not stirring up their thoughts, and it's not stirring up their emotions. When you're no longer experiencing that moment, it generally won't be bothering you either. Instead, the moment you turn to next will be bothering you. "Why is she sitting there?" "Who's she talking to?" "The lights are way too bright." All of a sudden this new moment starts affecting you because you're looking at it. The truth of the matter is, it existed exactly the same before you looked at it. *One of the most amazing things you will ever realize is that the moment in front of you is not bothering you—you are bothering yourself about the moment in front of you.* It's not personal—you are making it personal. There are countless moments unfolding in the universe at any given time, and your relationship to all of them is exactly the same: you are the subject, they are the object.

Once you realize this truth intellectually, it still won't look that way in your everyday life. To help, let's take a field trip out to Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, overlooking the

beautiful Pacific Ocean. While you're gazing out there, ask yourself whether what you see in front of you has anything to do with you. You see waves, you see spray, you may even see some whales or sea lions. That just happens to be what is unfolding in front of you at that moment. If you had come on a different day, or even a different hour, what you'd see would be quite different. But this would not bother you. It would only bother you if you came to the wharf with some personal preferences: "I want to see a whale." "I want to see the giant waves people told me about." With these preferences, you will have a very different experience than someone who simply came to see what the Pacific Ocean looked like that day. One person can simply enjoy the experience; the other has to struggle to make the experience match their personal preferences.

In the case of the ocean, it is not difficult to see that the moment before you has nothing to do with you, and you have the right to simply enjoy the experience. Because you don't generally identify yourself with the ocean, this is easier to do than with the rest of your life. But let there be no doubt, your relationship to what is in front of you is always the same, whether you are looking at the ocean or at your life. These moments are just what happens to be happening at that particular time and place in the universe where you happen to be standing. None of it is personal. But since you seem to take the moment in front of you so personally, let's continue our exploration of the outside world by looking at where that moment came from and why it is the way it is.

Chapter 7.

The World You Live In

If you want to know where the moment in front of you came from, it makes sense to go to our scientists. They have inquired about this as far back as Aristotle and Plato. From the beginning of our existence, humans have pondered: *Where did all of this come from? What made it? Why is it here?* If we ask scientists today, they will say that what you are looking at when you look at the outside world is actually a blending of much smaller objects. Your eyesight and all your senses are averaging molecular structures. As we've already explored, you are not actually looking out at the world; it is coming into you through your senses.

To see how this works, let's examine the nature of color. When you look at the world, it certainly appears to have color. But other than light, itself, objects have no color. The only reason you experience color is because the light bouncing off the objects has color. You see this when examining a prism. If you shine light through a prism, you will get different colors. It is called the *electromagnetic spectrum*. Light has different wavelengths, and you perceive each visible wavelength as color. Remember ROY-G-BIV: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo,

violet. They make up the colors of the visible part of the light spectrum. When light waves hit a physical object, the different atoms and molecules of that object absorb some frequencies of the light and reflect others. Objects themselves have no color; it is the light reflecting off them that has the different colors we perceive. This is a perfect example of how truth is not always what it appears to be. We will see this time and again as we examine the true nature of what consciousness experiences.

Scientists used to think the atom was the smallest possible unit, and it could not be subdivided any further. Today we understand that an atom is composed of electrons, neutrons, and protons. It forms the basic unit of everything we look at every day. We could stop right here and have some fun with the very personal way we look at things. For example, what exactly do you mean when you say you like something? What is it you claim to be liking? If you like the color of the wall, that's like saying you like part of the electromagnetic spectrum and not other parts. Likewise with any outside object. Do you really like some atoms and not others? It gets a little weird, doesn't it? This truth is very powerful because all you're ever looking at is a bunch of atoms with light bouncing off them.

After hundreds of years of study, scientists have told us that atoms get pulled together into molecules through the laws of covalent and ionic bonds. This may sound complicated, but they are really just the laws of magnetism determining which atoms will bond together. These laws, in turn, determine what you will see in the outside world. Certainly at this level you can see that it's not personal. It has nothing to do with you. You don't decide which atoms or molecules bond together naturally. It's been going on all over the universe for billions of years.

Our scientists have told us there are currently only 118 different types of atoms in the known universe, with 92 of them occurring naturally on Earth. These are what make up the periodic table of elements. The periodic table represents the building blocks of what you are seeing and interacting with every moment of your life. This is not just on Earth. All the stars, the planets, and everything everywhere that we've encountered are made from these basic elements. Many of you have studied the natural sciences in school, but what if you apply what you've learned to your everyday life? What's in front of you is simply the accumulation of mass amounts of atoms being pulled together by the laws of nature—it's all just science, nothing is personal. Becoming personally offended by the flow of atoms as they pass by you is so illogical. Why would you get upset because of how a bunch of atoms joined together? Don't worry, before we're done we will have fully explored the phenomena of getting personally upset over a bunch of atoms.

From here, it gets really interesting because the question becomes, "Where did the atoms come from?" Now we're inquiring about the origin of matter. Understanding where the atoms come from can give you a sense of your place in the universe. All that's happening in your daily life is your consciousness is looking at electrons, neutrons, and protons that have pulled together to form atoms and molecules. Since this is the world you live in, let's take time to explore where it all came from. Understanding this has the potential to alter your entire view of life.

Chapter 8.

The Origin of Matter

If you study the origin of matter, you'll find that scientists throughout the world pretty much agree on a basic model of creation. They have an understanding that about 13.8 billion years ago there was a giant explosion called the *big bang*. Prior to this explosion, it is thought that all the galaxies and everything within them, all the mass and matter of the universe, fit into a space smaller than an atom. This is modern science speaking, not some crazy theory. With awe and appreciation as our goal, let's explore how the science of creation can serve to liberate us spiritually.

After the big bang, the energy expanding out was so hot that it didn't have any shape or form. It was just unbridled radiation. Within a fraction of a second, subatomic particles began to form from this energy field. No elements as we know them could form because the radiation was too hot, and it was expanding out at the speed of light. Thus the entire universe was without form for about 380 thousand years. After that, the radiation cooled down enough to where the fundamental forces of gravity and electromagnetism could pull the subatomic particles together to form the first atoms. We know these

subatomic particles as electrons, neutrons, and protons. It was all born from the primordial energy field and the subatomic particles emanating from that field. Modern science calls this the *quantum field*, and quantum physics is the science that studies these subatomic particles and how they create matter as we know it.

The first atoms were hydrogen because it is the simplest structure: one negative electron and one positive proton. Because of the force of magnetism, these particles attracted each other to form an atom. As hydrogen atoms began to form, masses and masses of thick hydrogen gas clouds accumulated. As these clouds thinned out, subatomic light particles called photons started to escape, and that was the beginning of light as we know it. Interesting that the Bible says, “In the beginning...the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Gen. 1:2). That is pretty close to how science sees it. In those beginning times, no light could escape from the ultrathick gas clouds. Once the expansion thinned the clouds out enough, suddenly “Let there be light: and there was light” (Gen. 1:3). It’s amazing, the similarity of the beginning of creation as told in Genesis and as presented in modern, scientifically based cosmology.

Now that we see where hydrogen atoms come from, we can explore the source of the other elements that make up our world. As the expansion slowed down even more, another one of the fundamental forces came into play—the force of gravity. Gravity, of course, is the force that has the effect of pulling together objects that have mass. Since hydrogen atoms have mass, as the atoms were pulled closer together, the gravity became so strong that it fused two atoms into one. When two hydrogen nuclei fuse into one, a helium atom is created. This

process of fusing lighter elements into heavier ones is called *nuclear fusion*, and it's been going on throughout the universe for hundreds of millions of years.

It is worth noting that every single time this fusion of two atoms takes place, there is a tremendous release of atomic energy. All of a sudden, nuclear explosions began taking place throughout the universe, releasing powerful radiant energy. This is the birth of what we call the primary stars. A star is born by the fusing together of hydrogen atoms, which releases tremendous amounts of energy and leaves helium atoms as its byproduct. You can think of helium as the ash left behind by this hydrogen fusion process. Wherever the clouds of hydrogen gas were thickest after the big bang, the first primary stars started to burn. That is literally where stars come from. Every star you look at to this day was born through the hydrogen fusion process.

Though this all started 13.8 billion years ago, we have scientific evidence of it today. Stars are being born right now, and we can observe the process. If you have binoculars strong enough to see the Orion Nebula, you will see gases with stars shining inside. Nebulae, like the Orion and Horsehead, are not just beautiful pictures of glowing, colorful gas clouds. They are nurseries for stars. Stars are being born inside those gas clouds via the exact same process that happened 13.8 billion years ago when the first stars were created. Stars are born and, as we shall see, also die in a cosmic cycle of life mirroring what is going on here on Earth.

In our exploration thus far, we have a universe limited to hydrogen and helium gases and brilliant burning stars that light up the cosmos. But the outer world we interact with each day is much more complex. Where did the rest come from? To

understand this, we must first take a closer look at the life cycle of a star. As the hydrogen gases within a star keep fusing, gravity pulls the produced helium into the core of the star because helium is heavier than hydrogen. This increases the gravitational pull of the core enough to offset the outward radiance of the explosions caused by hydrogen fusion. This is how the star stays stable. What happens when the star runs out of hydrogen to fuse? The star will start to die.

In the early stages of the dying process, any hydrogen remaining outside the core will ignite and expand outward to create a “red giant” star that is many times the size of the original star. To put this in perspective, when a star the size of our Sun begins to run out of hydrogen to burn, it will expand into a red giant large enough to swallow the Earth. But don’t worry, scientists estimate that our Sun has enough hydrogen to burn for another five billion years.

Meanwhile, as a star stops fusing hydrogen, the gravitational pull of the helium core will become greater and greater because there are no longer fusion explosions to offset it. The star will start to collapse into its core. Depending upon the original size of the star, its core will either drift off into space, or the increased force of the gravity on the core will become great enough to begin fusing helium into more complex elements, such as carbon. The fusion process of these more complex elements will reignite the star, even hotter than before. Depending upon the size of the star, these “death throes” can go on again and again. Cycle after cycle, more and more complex elements will become the byproduct of fusion of lighter elements, and eventually the star will begin to collapse again as it runs out of fuel. Every time this death cycle takes

place, more and more elements of the periodic table are created.

How many of these cycles of death and rebirth a star will go through is dependent upon the original size of the star. The larger the star, the greater the gravitational force exerted during its collapse, and thus the greater the force available to reignite the fusion process of the more complex elements. In most stars, this process will stop when the byproduct of fusion is iron (element 26 in the periodic table). This is because iron absorbs more heat during fusion than the fusion process creates. Thus, iron will not sustain a fusion reaction. Large stars will progress until they have cores of iron surrounded by shells of the remaining elements from the previous cycles that were not fully burned. This is how the lighter elements on the periodic table (1 to 26) were created, all the elements from hydrogen to iron.

As interesting and educational as all of this is, remember that the purpose of this discussion is to see where “the outside world” comes from. As amazing as it seems, the elements that make up our world were forged in the stars. Take your body, for example. We have already explained where all the elements that make up your body come from—they are the direct byproducts of what makes the stars shine. Almost 99 percent of the mass of the human body is made up of six elements: oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium, and phosphorus. All of these elements are lighter than iron, and thus were produced by the burning of commonplace stars. We know all of this as fact, not theory. Scientists have studied stars at all stages of the stellar life cycle, and we know what they are made of. Regardless, some people ask, “Don’t these scientific facts challenge my belief that God is the creator of the universe?” An

appropriate response would be, “Of course not. They merely show you *how* God created all the structures in the universe.”

The stars are the furnaces that were used to create the universe. Every single atom you interact with was created in the stars, and at this very moment billions and billions of stars are forging more elements. In Pittsburgh we have steel furnaces that are so hot we can forge steel. We use that material to build our giant skyscrapers. Likewise, the stars are the furnaces that have forged the atoms we interact with every day. Hopefully, you will never again look up at the stars in the same way.

Chapter 9.

The Power of Creation

Now that we've seen how ordinary stars create the lighter elements of our world, we can move on to an even more fascinating topic: how the heavier elements on the periodic table are created, like gold, platinum, and silver. The heavier elements are all those with an atomic number greater than iron (26). Iron forms the dividing line because it absorbs more heat than it releases during fusion. As such, iron doesn't emanate enough heat energy to stop a star from collapsing. Unless the original star was exceptionally large to begin with (a "red supergiant"), it will finally die when it gets to an iron core.

What happens during the death of a red supergiant star is one of the most amazing events in the known universe, and it provides the energy source needed to create the heavier elements. If the star is large enough before its collapse, the intensity of the collapse can actually crush the atoms in the core. Instead of fusing the iron atoms together, this tremendous force pushes their electrons into the nucleus itself. Since electrons are negatively charged and the protons in the nucleus are positively charged, they attract each other and form neutrons, which have no charge. Once this happens, all that is

left of the iron core is a mass of tightly packed neutrons. There are no atoms left—no electrons and no protons. The intensity of the collapse of this large star down to just neutrons has destroyed the structure of matter as we know it.

What is left is a neutron star, and it is tiny in size but enormous in mass. Neutron stars are physically about the size of a city but have a mass that is more than three-hundred-thousand times heavier than the planet Earth. The density of a neutron star is so great that if you brought a teaspoon of it down to Earth, it would weigh twelve trillion pounds.

The amount of energy released by the collapsing of the star's core down to just neutrons is so powerful that it creates a colossal explosion called a *supernova*. This explosion is so enormous that a single supernova emits more light than the combined light of all the billions of stars in its galaxy put together. It is the brightest, most powerful explosion we have discovered in our universe.

As it turns out, the enormous energy force generated during a supernova explosion is precisely what is needed to create the rest of the elements we interact with each day. What the force of gravity was unable to do during the creation of the lighter elements, the massive explosion of a supernova is able to do—fuse the heavier elements. The next time you look at your gold wedding ring, or open a tin can, reflect on the fact that these elements required the combined power of billions of stars to come into existence.

You are surrounded by the myriad objects you interact with each day. There are giant skyscrapers and tiny paper clips that effortlessly come in through your senses. At their root, every single one of these objects is made of atoms. You have just taken the time to understand where all these atoms come from

and how you did not create them—they were created in the stars. This should serve to humble you and leave you in awe of the power of creation manifesting before you. Hopefully, this deep sense of humility and awe will assist you on your spiritual journey toward freedom and liberation.

Chapter 10.

It's Not Personal

We just explored where the world around you comes from. It began with the big bang, and then all the different types of elements were created through the process of atomic fusion. When stars explode at death, all the matter that built up in their outer shells gets blown out into interstellar space. Carbon, oxygen, silicon, gold, and silver were all floating around as clouds of elements in space, then gravity pulled them together to form the planets. This is how the planet Earth formed with its ninety-two natural elements, all of which were forged in the stars. This process has gone on for over thirteen billion years, and everything you interact with each day is composed of this “star dust,” including your body. This is the truth, and we should remember and contemplate it regularly.

Let's come back to where we started this discussion. We began with the fact that there is always a moment in front of you. Just open your eyes, and there it is. Where did it come from? Now we know. The moment in front of you came from the stars. The atoms were baked together in the solar furnaces, then pulled together into this mass we call Earth. You studied what happened next in science class. The elements joined

years with everything happening exactly like it did to manifest as it is.

To fully understand what this means, it helps to look at a simple example from your family history. If your great-great-great-grandmother didn't meet your great-great-great-grandfather, you're not here. That's simply the truth. Let's take a moment to tell a story of how they met so you can see how dependent everything is on everything else. The story begins all the way back with the dinosaurs. After a fierce storm in what is now South Central Florida, there was a big dinosaur lumbering around. When this dinosaur put its big footprint down into the wet soil, it caused a gigantic imprint in the mud. Over time, rainwater accumulated in this deep imprint, and the earth began to erode around it. Eventually, the water area grew so large it became what we now call Lake Okeechobee.

Millions of years later, the Mayaimi tribe settled by that lake because of the fresh water, fish, and other animals. Centuries passed, and Spanish settlers built a small town on the edge of the lake. Your great-great-great-grandmother was a descendent of the Mayaimi, and your great-great-great-grandfather was visiting the small Spanish settlement. One day while it was pouring rain around the lake, your great-great-great-grandfather was drinking in the local saloon. He was so drunk when he stepped out of the saloon, he never noticed your great-great-great-grandmother walking by sopping wet. Just as he stumbled down the stairs falling drunk to the ground, your great-great-great-grandmother slipped in the mud and fell right on top of him. Well, they looked at each other, started laughing, and it was love at first sight. The rest is history.

In other words, if the dinosaur hadn't walked there millions of years ago, and if the Mayaimi tribe hadn't settled

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Chapter 11.

Empty Mind

As a conscious being, you are aware of the world coming in through your senses. But your awareness is not limited to that outside world. You also have inner experiences. Sometimes when the world comes in, it makes you feel good. Other times, it makes you feel bad. Since the outside world is really just structures of atoms, why does it have that inner effect on you? How could a bunch of atoms get you all jumbled up inside? What's going on?

You are capable of experiencing three distinct things: the outside world, the mind, and the emotions. Now that we have deeply examined the nature of the outside world, let's start our journey into understanding the second object of consciousness: the mind. What is mind? We all know what mind is. We're in here, and we experience it every day of our lives. In the simplest sense, mind is a place in which thoughts exist. We have thoughts all the time: "Why is he driving so slow? I'm going to be late. Now what am I going to do?" Undoubtedly these are thoughts, but where do they exist? They certainly don't exist in the outside world. Scientists are not able to read your thoughts, as hard as they have tried. But you can. There's not a machine