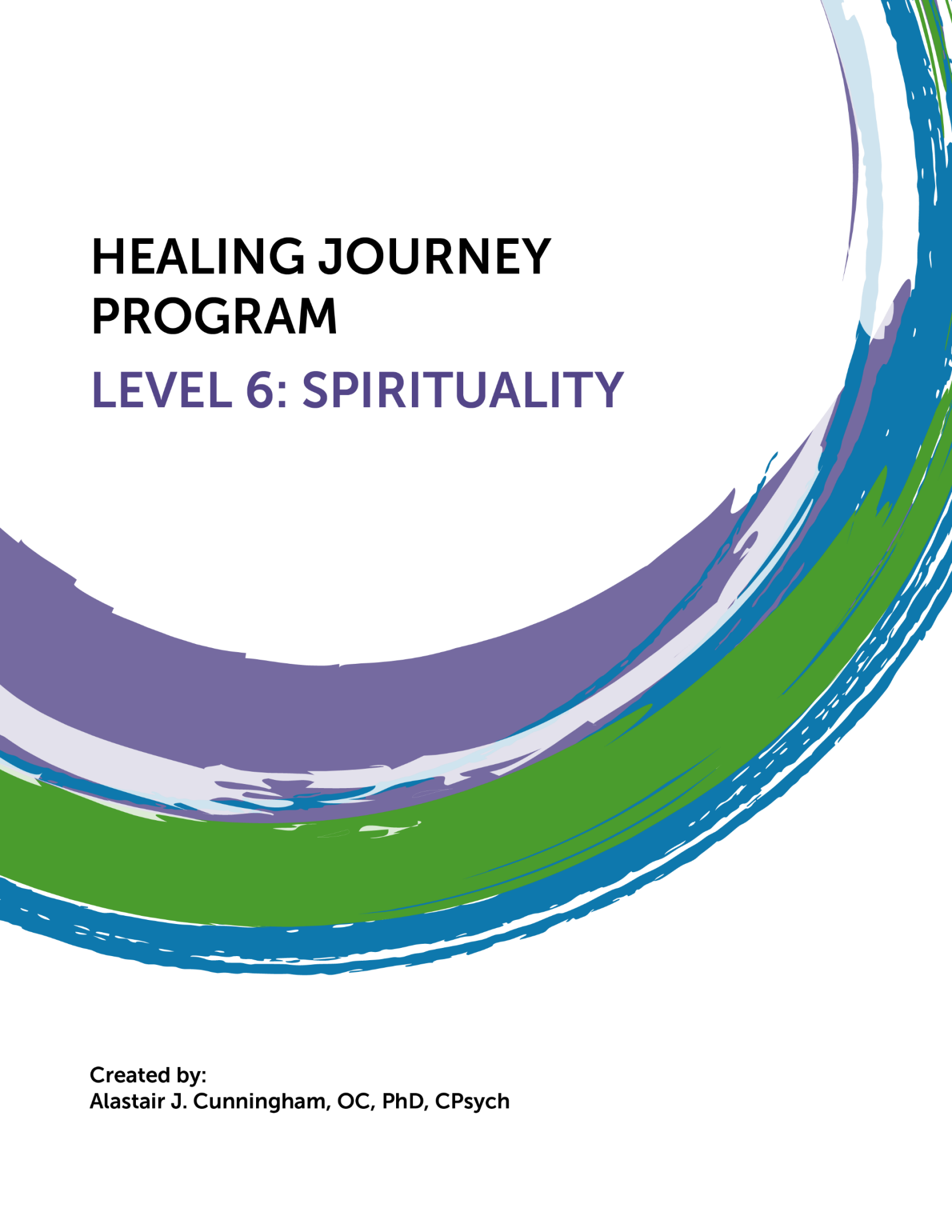


# HEALING JOURNEY PROGRAM

## LEVEL 6: SPIRITUALITY



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Healing Journey Manual, 2022, for level 6 Spiritual

## **“Introduction to your spiritual healing journey”.**

### **General Introduction.**

Healing, in the broadest sense is the relief of suffering. We are accustomed to thinking of suffering as something imposed from outside, and so we focus mainly on attempting to get rid of the threats to our comfort and security. For a cancer diagnosis, this means removing the offending tissue, as quickly as possible. This is our first “line of defense”, and for many in our culture, the only course pursued. However, if we reflect a bit further on the suffering cancer causes, it is usually not the cancer itself that is the immediate problem but what it seems to entail: physical pain, disruption of life, possible premature death. More generally, suffering occurs when we don’t like what we perceive as happening!

This realization suggests another approach to healing: changing the way we view what is happening! It may sound ineffectual at first, compared with, say, the serious business of excising a cancer with modern surgical methods! Nevertheless, diminishing our distress and achieving peace of mind is what ultimately matters to us (you may need to ponder this for a while!). We have seen, in the earlier stages of the Healing Journey program, how this may be accomplished: by examining the stream of thoughts, dropping those that lead us into a state of chronic anxiety and arousal, and gently nudging the internal monologue in a more helpful direction.

The great spiritual traditions of mankind, stretching back through thousands of years, also have ideas that can alleviate suffering and even bring peace in the midst of what may seem like disastrous events. Their message is, in essence, that we are each part of something that, while intangible, is much greater than the physical body we inhabit, and that death of that body is not the end of our “selves”. They also hold out the hope that help might be available from these higher “dimensions”. The result of spiritual exploration might thus be not only peace of mind, but also physical healing.

Can the mind, and the spiritual search, assist the body to heal from this disease? In an earlier book (“Can the Mind Heal Cancer?”), I pointed to some evidence and clinical experience for much better-than-expected medical results when people with cancer become very involved in self help or self healing, usually with an emphasis on spiritual investigation. This is an idea not yet accepted by our medical system; it is also not an outcome that can be guaranteed by methods such as those taught in the Healing Journey program. However, my research, personal experience, and clinical practice over more than 40 years with thousands of people who have tried to help themselves (in addition to standard medical treatment) has shown me that some relief of suffering is always possible, and effects on disease progression do seem to occur in many cases. Occasionally, people heal from advanced cancers that are medically described as incurable.

*Throughout this course I will be asking readers to pause and reflect, or answer questions. Here’s the first example:*

*What (to you – always refer to your own experience) is suffering? What specific thoughts cause your mental distress? Can you find examples of thoughts that oppose one another (e.g., “I want to be well”, and “I don’t believe I can get well”)?*

We’ll first briefly review here the psychological techniques for self-understanding and the relief of suffering that have been the main focus of earlier stages of the Healing Journey. Later in the course we will move on to less conventional ideas on the potential direct healing effects of mind on physical states in the body. This will be dealt with in some detail, since it is often, naturally enough, the main preoccupation of people struggling with disease. However, the threat to life that cancer poses may raise other, and much broader issues in the minds of those willing to reflect on them: “Is there any meaning

in all of this?”, which can lead to: “Is there more to me than just this body-mind?” – in other words, the underlying spiritual questions. Behind them lies the hope that we might be able to connect with some power or agency beyond ourselves that can help us against our disease. Some people have a strong existing religious faith that can help them here; others may feel let down by their faith, or be confused by early experiences with religion. For the reflective person, willing to engage with their experiences rather than trying to dismiss or deny them, the healing journey leads naturally to a spiritual journey. With time and study, the spiritual journey may become an end in itself, providing an understanding and reassurance that, while it helps make physical healing more probable, takes us to a profoundly different understanding of who we are and our relationship to the wider reality. It may also remove our fears about losing our identity when the body dies. We begin to understand that the ultimate healing question is “who am I?”, and that our answers to this question will determine what we do in our attempts to oppose disease.

*What are your current views on these basic questions: “Is there something more, over and above this physical world?” “How could I find out?” “What’s the difference between spirituality and religion?”*

Our approach to all of this, healing through mind and understanding the nature of the self, will be to examine the evidence. This needs to be said, because to many people, evidence comes only from science, and anything to do with spirituality is unprovable. Science is one, and only one, avenue for acquiring knowledge about reality: it aims to be objective, that is, it describes events that are apparently (although not always) unaffected by our observation, and that can be observed and confirmed by others. There are other kinds of evidence, however, notably the more subjective kind that is used, for example, in historical research, where a picture of events may be pieced together from the accounts of different witnesses. We gain confidence in these accounts if they agree; the teachings of spiritual masters are of this kind. The logical reasoning of philosophers is also a kind of evidence: we look for consistency and rationality in their writings, and we will see that clear reasoning can help us in our spiritual exploration. The arts can evoke evidence of a kind, about who we are and what our lives mean. The great myths and legends of mankind embody the distilled wisdom of peoples in metaphorical forms. But perhaps the most convincing kind of evidence is personal – a genuine spiritual experience can leave us with a knowledge of underlying truth that no amount of intellectual criticism can undermine. Our hope in this course is to direct interested people towards ways of finding this kind of truth for themselves.

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## Topic 1. Understanding and managing the mind

This topic is a recapitulation of material that has been studied in earlier levels of the healing journey, so I will ask you to consider a series of review questions (they are simple enough, but nothing will change unless you answer them for yourself – writing helps!)

### **1.. The habitual activity of mind**

*Sit and watch your mind for a time? What do you find? Is it naturally quiet unless you have a specific issue to think about, or is it restless?*

A “no-brainer” isn’t it? For most of us, the mind is constantly throwing up ideas and comments, most of them unhelpful. As Eckhart Tolle puts it: “thinking has become a disease!”

### **2.. What kind of thoughts commonly come up?**

*Be honest here: aren’t most of your thoughts directly or indirectly about yourself? (Thinking about what to make for dinner, for example, is at least indirectly about oneself). How much of this thinking is “negative”, i.e., critical, of oneself, or of others or events?*

*Another useful phrase from Tolle (and other teachers) is: “the Story of Me”! Ask yourself, how much of my thinking is the Story of Me? Even better, substitute your own name for “Me” – it makes it more unavoidably personal. If you find that much of your thinking is “the Story of Mary, or Bill”, ask yourself: is this helpful, or necessary? What does it do to me to be constantly caught up in this story?*

### **3.. To what extent do I believe my mind is what I am?**

*We may casually think of ourselves as a body, with a mind popping out of it. Ask yourself: if I had a choice of wanting to lose (a) one or more limbs, or (b), my mind, which would I choose?*

Another no-brainer. Explore it: find out for yourself how much you are identified with your mind (this will become central in the spiritual work later).

### **4.. What is my mind anyway?**

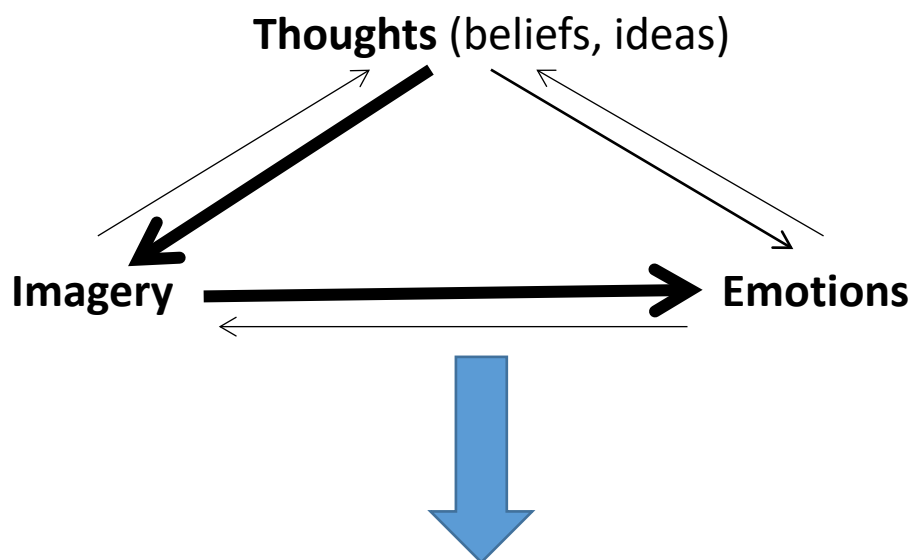
*Is it a “thing”, like a container? If you think so, what does it look like? If you want to claim that it is the result of nerve cells firing, does that make it a thing? (Consider: your voice is a result of physical processes, but is it a thing?). If the mind is not a thing, what is it – a process, a program, an “App” perhaps?*

Our minds seem to be a collection of thoughts, emotions, memories and sensations, rather than a bucket into which events may be put. You may not agree: take into account the extent to which ideas from Freud and others have caused us to think of the mind as a kind of physical thing with compartments (ego, superego, id).

### **5.. How are thoughts, images and emotions related, and do they affect the body?**

*Here you can think back to the “ego triangle”, which displays these 3 major mental events as intimately related. Looking at the diagram below, where do sensations fit in?*

## **The Ego Triangle**



**Whole body involvement: nerves,  
hormones, muscles .....**

### **6a.. Am I at the mercy of my thoughts?**

*Even if you find the mind hard to control (and we all do, despite years of trying), perhaps by now you have seen that we can change our thinking if we are willing to make the effort. What's the first thing we have to do to bring some peace to our minds?*

Yes, that's right; we must identify the unwanted, usually negative thoughts, and try to drop them. Remember: "diagnosis first, then therapy".

### **6b.. How do I replace unwanted thoughts with healthy ones?**

*Recall the IDEA acronym, which is a useful way to remember how to replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations:*

<b>I</b>	<b>Intensely desire the change:</b> this is the "fuel", as it were, that propels changes in the brain and body.
<b>D</b>	<b>Be diligent/dedicated in our practice:</b> affirmations should be repeated regularly and as often and as intensively as possible
<b>E</b>	<b>Expect that a change will happen:</b> while accepting that it may not happen within any specific time frame.
<b>A</b>	<b>Avoid focussing on the negatives,</b> i.e. what we see as unwanted.

**7.. I am constantly critical of myself – never good enough.**

This is a big one for many of us. It can help to realize that it is seldom justified, and in any case, is not “our fault”. Our self esteem tends to become set early in life, and depends largely on how we were treated by the powerful adults around us (and to some extent by peers), at an age when we accepted the apparent verdict of these other people. If we are constantly criticized or put down as children, our mind and “spirit” tend to “contract”, in a sense, and it’s hard to expand out of this posture. So, “forgive” these others, and yourself, and apply the thought replacement methods. You will find that the spiritual work we do later helps a lot with this.

**8.. How long will it take me to master my thoughts?**

Let’s face it, most of us will never gain complete control, but that’s OK. The main thing is to know what’s going on in our minds, preferably at all times; that’s not hard to achieve. We need only adopt the habit of vigilance, much as we learn to be vigilant about our surroundings while driving a car. Then whenever something comes up that stimulates a strong emotional reaction, we can figure out what thoughts led to it (it’s almost always a thought). Regular journaling speeds up the process. After a while you will find that many reactions follow a familiar pattern, and don’t need much extra analysis. A couple of common situations to look at:

- *Something doesn’t turn out the way you want – what are your thoughts?*
- *You hear of critical remarks that someone made about you (or you experience them directly): again, what are your thoughts?*

Understanding our patterns of thought can, and perhaps needs to be, a lifetime pursuit. You will find that your understanding increases in a very satisfying way over the years. As it does, compassion for yourself and others will grow. It has been called “becoming a human being”!

**9.. Would therapy (one on one) with a professional help me?**

If you develop severe anxiety or depression, medication may be helpful (from a psychiatrist). Individual psychotherapy is often useful also; it can help you access areas that are difficult to uncover alone. But most cancer patients are psychologically healthy, apart from anxiety about their medical condition. For such people, I believe that after gaining an initial familiarity with the mind’s activity, it is more useful to move on, to seeking a broader spiritual awareness of themselves.

**10.. What other specific tools are there to achieve peace of mind?**

In addition to regular monitoring and changing our habits of thought, there is a lot we can do:

- Establish a practice of meditation, at a regular time each day
- Consider learning one of the traditional “mind-body” approaches to calming the mind, such as tai chi, yoga or chi gong.
- Read lots of self-help and spiritual books (but be discriminating in your choices).
- Watch and listen to helpful You-tube videos.
- Adopt the habit of periodically stopping and asking yourself: “What was I thinking?” In particular, try to diminish focus on “the story of ..... (me)”
- Simplify your life – drop activities that don’t support your healing.
- Regular journaling.
- Consider Eknath Easwaran’s “8-point program” for healthy living (see later in this course).

**Finding purpose in life.**

This is so important it needs a separate section, i.e., it is far more than a way to “manage the mind”. It has been discussed earlier in the HJ program, but here are some of the main points:

- *Ask yourself: “do I really want to live, or is it just that I’m afraid to die? (You can bring yourself to a point of complete honesty by asking whether, if you could just pass away, without suffering, and with all obligations and personal relationships taken care of, would you still want to live?)*
- *Go back over that question and make sure you have answered it!*
- *If there is any ambivalence about a desire to live, there’s no shame in that; life, especially with cancer, can be hard. But assuming you are willing to see what can be done to enhance your will to live, write down all the good things about life – all the reasons why life could be worth continuing.*
- *If you knew you would recover (return to fair health), would that make a difference, i.e., to your desire to carry on with your life, and to having a sense of purpose or direction?*
- *If “Yes”, doesn’t it make sense to do what you can to heal?*

More fundamental to healing than “wanting to live”, is, I’ve come to believe, needing to live. Do you see a difference here? Wanting is more self-centred, often tainted by doubt, while “needing” suggests one has place or a job in the world to fulfil – it extends beyond mere self-interest.

Can you find a project or interest in your life that could galvanise you into action, one that could make you feel as you probably did at some earlier point in your life, that you just want to jump out of bed in the mornings and get after it!? Seth (whom we’ll meet later) says: “the excitement of living must come from you”, which captures a healing attitude. It would ideally be one single thing, one central focus (people in the middle years often have an unhealthy surplus of distracting foci in their lives!). Some possibilities: writing a book, learning to master an instrument or another creative discipline, becoming proficient in a sport, craft or other physical activity, finding a way to help others. An ideal might be to learn as much as possible about the nature of the self, and to pass on what you have learned, which accomplishes two goals at once!

In our rigorous, published research on people who went on to live for many years with cancers that a panel of oncologists predicted would be fatal within about one year, we found 3 qualities which were seldom evident among the general cancer patient population (and see “Can the Mind Heal Cancer?” for a fuller description):

- Authenticity – knowing what was important in their lives
- Autonomy – feeling they had the right to pursue that
- Acceptance – more compassion for themselves and others, and for the situation they found themselves in.

Of course, these attributes don’t guarantee cure of disease – we are simply aiming to improve the odds in our favour here - but they create, in mind and body, a climate more conducive to healing.

Here’s what Seth has to say about finding purpose in life:

*“Physically speaking, man’s purpose is to help enrich the quality of life in all its dimensions. Spiritually speaking, his purpose is to understand the qualities of love and creativity, to intellectually and psychically understand the sources of his being, and to lovingly create other dimensions of reality of which he is presently unaware.....he is experimenting with a unique and new kind of reality. You were given a body so that you could learn from it.”*

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## Topic 2: Who am I really, and how can I find out?

### A. Spirituality

#### 1. The central idea of spirituality: is it true?

We usually think we are bodies, dropped on to this Earth at birth, and that we have a mind which is purely a by-product of nerve cells working in the brain. This view is called materialism or physicalism – the idea that everything is derived from physical matter. It is an excessively gloomy view, asserting that our existence will be short, and will come to a sharp end when this body dies! There is really no room for “spirit” or “God” in this picture, if we are honest about it, and our lives have no meaning beyond what we can fashion in this brief lifetime.

Materialism has worked well to support a human culture based on technology – the manipulation of physical objects. While we can choose to live with this doctrine as a guide it is very limiting, with nothing to say on the “big” questions about ultimate purpose and meaning in our lives. Many experts think it is also completely wrong, as we will see! (Video link in Appendix).

By contrast, the spiritual view says that there is more to us than physical matter, that there is a power or dimension beyond matter. It is something intangible, without form, which has been given various names: a higher power, spirit, consciousness, soul, God, Source – something more like “mind-stuff” than “body-stuff”. How do we know whether or not this is true? The first thing we need to do is pose a meaningful question. To ask: “does God exist?” is not very helpful unless we can define what we mean by God (see videos in Appendix). We need to view this higher power more broadly. Perhaps we could ask: is there some “energy”, or power, or intelligence that is not physical in nature, but which can interact with and influence our physical world under certain conditions? A power which transcends our physical reality, and is not bound by physical laws such as time, space and causality? Putting it this way, although it is still admittedly rather vague, does allow us to look for actual evidence as to whether or not it might exist. And indeed, there is plenty of evidence; for example:

**(a). First** there are a lot of phenomena that simply can’t be explained by materialism (the “only matter exists” idea): telepathy, precognition (knowing the future), “seeing” very distant events, psychokinesis (moving objects with the mind and no physical connection), out of body and near-death experiences, phenomena in quantum physics, and distant healing through prayer. These have all been documented by researchers, although they tend to be disregarded by many scientists; any one of them, if true, dismantles materialism. There’s no room here to describe them all but let’s look at a video describing research on near death experiences (link in the Appendix), which occur quite frequently when people are clinically “dead” with no detectable brain activity, for short periods of time, then recover.

**(b). Second**, there is the testimony of the great mystics, (reinforced by the experiences of millions of ordinary humans). The mystics are simply people who have devoted their lives to finding out who and what they are, in their essential being – by quietening the mind, and intensely concentrating “within”, to see what can be found. Their conclusions tend to be similar, across cultures and across the centuries: there is indeed something more, in the realm of consciousness, and we are all part of that one overarching Consciousness, sometimes called “God”.

**(c). Third** is the phenomenon of “channelling”, where information (from non-living sources) is passed on through the mind of a passive individual (a “channel”), and recorded, usually by others. The information characteristically includes things that the channel could not have known. This process, when it is authentic (and phony channels exist!) is analogous to the inner “knowing”: of mystics. The Seth books (topic 4) and A Course in Miracles (to be studied in topic 3) are outstanding and well-known examples of



this process. The Koran is another example: it was channelled through a non-literate prophet, Mohammed.

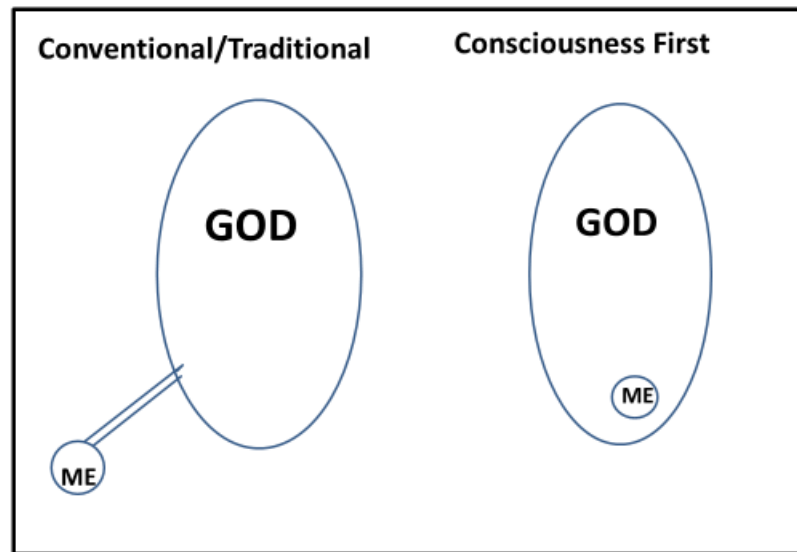
Skeptics are unlikely to be convinced by the evidence outlined here. A few may be more interested in the arguments of some modern philosophers, like Bernardo Kastrup. However, I am going to assume that we are open-minded about spirituality in the following pages: what matters to each of us is our own experience, and our task here is to look for ways to acquire it.

## **2. Two different ways of viewing spirituality:**

We certainly appear to be physical beings, and the world around us seems concrete enough. To a die-hard materialist – believing that only matter exists – there is no room for a “god”. Everything about ourselves is simply the movement of molecules, and in fact many scientists expect ultimately to explain everything in these physical terms. Consciousness (simple definition: our awareness of being) poses a bit of a problem, but the hope is that it can be understood as a by-product of the functions of the brain. Someone with this point of view ought logically to be an atheist, and many are. How, then are we to account for the experience of millions of people that there is something more, something intangible that affects us, in other words, a spiritual dimension? And if that is true, how might the physical world and this spiritual dimension relate to one another?

Most of us, scientists or not, like to think of ourselves as physical bodies, and yet many profess a religious faith or spiritual belief: that there is more, another intangible dimension to us. How can we reconcile these 2 apparently conflicting ideas? The traditional way has been to say that, although we are bodies, there is something inside us, often called “spirit” or “soul”, that is made of this intangible, non-physical “stuff”, and that this soul survives the death of the body. Ideas vary widely as to what happens after death, but within the theistic religions there is the idea of a “return” to the presence of an all-embracing “God”. This divine being has often been thought of as a kind of super-human figure; this is clearly a projection of ideas about authority figures (such as parents) in our earthly lives. Many modern religious people probably hold a more sophisticated view of God as some kind of overarching energy or power. This traditional or conventional kind of spirituality, then, allows us to straddle two worlds: to retain our idea of ourselves as physical beings, but harbouring within a non-material, indeed eternal spirit.

There is a second, and in the opinion of many spiritual writers, both ancient and modern, a more coherent and evolved view of spirituality, which we might call “consciousness first”: that our primary essence is not physical matter, not flesh and blood, but consciousness itself. They go on to say that body, mind, and all physical objects are expressions of consciousness, and that God, or the Divine Source, can be understood as the overarching Consciousness enfolding us all. This is the reverse of what materialists assume - that consciousness arises from brain activity. How could consciousness give rise to matter? We don’t know: but then we don’t have any idea how matter (brain activity) produces consciousness either, as neuro-scientists admit. The diagram below illustrates these 2 points of view.



If the “consciousness first” idea seems hard to accept, note that we do have an example of consciousness producing form that is familiar to all of us, although often disregarded – our dreams! Every night, we all dream (many people don’t realize it), and from our mind/consciousness alone, generate a world that is completely convincing and apparently solid and real. Many spiritual teachers say that our world is in fact a dream that the greater Consciousness is having!

These ideas may take a while to absorb if they are new to you: here’s the essentials:

- We’ve contrasted the materialist view of the world with the spiritual view.
  - The materialist) view: our reality is composed only of matter, and its interactions.
  - The spiritual view: there is more to our reality, and to me, than just physical matter; there is a power or dimension beyond the physical, with which I can interact.
- Then we described 2 versions of the spiritual point of view:
  - The conventional: God, or the Divine Source, is outside of me (of my body), but I do have within me a soul or spirit which is the same kind of non-material “stuff”.
  - The “consciousness first” or consciousness only view: that our essential being is consciousness, and that matter arises from this.

### 3. What are the practical advantages, to me, of a spiritual view?

- If you are in essence consciousness, rather than flesh (and the mind is just consciousness at work), it seems much more likely that some healing of the body may occur through your mind.
- Moreover, as we come to know ourselves as part of a greater Consciousness, we may learn to contact this higher dimension, and receive help from it.
- The death of my body will not be the death of “me”! Something of my self continues.
- We will gain a greatly expanded view of who we are, and how we fit in to a larger scheme (in other words, a sense of the meaning of our lives).

## B. Spirituality and Religion; how are they related?

Religions begin with the quest for meaning and value beyond oneself. They are usually based on the revelations or insights arrived at by a talented and dedicated individual mystic. He or she conveys what has been learned to interested followers. After the death of the founder, these insights typically are organised into a system of ideas that may, over time, become quite rigid and dogmatic, often veering away from the original teachings (think of the absurdity of war in the name of religion!).

Religions can act as a support for an individual's spiritual seeking, although often its members are content to accept ideas and strictures laid down by others, rather than doing the work of their own searching. In earlier times, when few people had much education, the spiritual insights behind a religion were often simplified, to make them more readily understandable (and also, sometimes, to allow the religious professionals to control their members through instilling guilt or fear!). Thus "God" can become a kind of human figure, although with superhuman powers, a projection of ideas with which people are familiar.

Religions have been a vital force in the evolution of human culture, although they have often done harm as well as good. Some of the most influential individuals on the planet have been mystics and spiritual teachers; they include, according to Arnold Toynbee: Confucius and Laotze, the Buddha, the Prophets of Israel and Judah, Zoroaster, Jesus, Mohammed and Socrates.

Being a student of spirituality, or on a "spiritual path" implies that the person is engaged in an active quest, beyond simply accepting what the professionals within the religion have to say, and aimed at acquiring experience for oneself. Most of the major religions have a kind of mystical arm, a set of learning and practices for those (few) adherents who wish to probe more deeply: for example, Sufism in Islam, the Kabbalah in Judaism, Yoga in Hinduism, Christian mysticism within that religion. Books in all the main spiritual traditions are readily available, and are of course an excellent way to get an overview of the task ahead in a relatively short time. A list of (older) books appears in my text "Bringing Spirituality into your Healing Journey" (available free on the Wellspring website; go to "Well on the Web", "resources", then Healing Journey level 3). For a survey of the great religions of mankind I warmly recommend Huston Smith's book "The World's Religions". It is available as a shorter illustrated version, easy to read and with many wonderful and evocative pictures. Smith, a renown authority on his subject, describes these religions, once shorn of their institutional trappings, as mankind's "wisdom traditions", "data banks that house the winnowed wisdom of the human race".

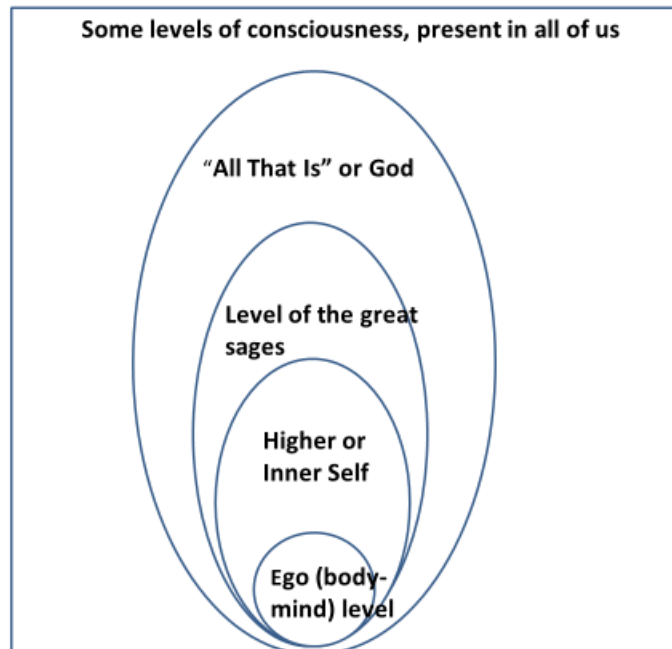
People often don't distinguish religion and the spiritual search, yet they have become rather different in the modern West (although much less so in the "East", and in earlier centuries). Here's a brief comparison of religious and spiritual approaches to ultimate truth (perhaps you can think of other elements):

Religion	The spiritual search
Social: generally pursued in groups	Personal: the investigation is individual
Embedded in a culture, which it influences	Relatively culture-independent
Provides answers for its followers	Raises questions for investigation
Focussed on one set of answers; often disparages other religions (exclusivist)	Eclectic: draws on multiple sources of information
Usually large, hierarchical organisations	Little formal organisation
Scheduled meetings with considerable ritual	Little ritual, no set times for study
Often an authority figure (God) is thought to be "watching" (theistic religions)	No sense of any judgment by higher authority.

## C. What is my place in relation to a greater power or consciousness?

### 1. Consciousness as a series of “shells” or “levels”.

Let's accept the “consciousness first” idea as our working model of reality (it's not essential to do so for this course, however; the practical suggestions still apply without it). How can we visualise “consciousness”? Is it organised in some way? In many traditions, a series of “shells” or “levels” of consciousness is proposed. To anticipate topic 4, look at Seth's (channelled) view of consciousness as a series of levels, nested within one another:



Remember: we are not dealing with material things in space. The dimensions shown on the map are not physical entities, with boundaries, but rather an aid to thought. It might help to consider them as “fields”, by analogy with fields of force, rather than as structures in the physical sense, although they are not composed of energy as the term is understood in our physics.

Somewhat similar maps are described in many spiritual and metaphysical texts. We can see where various religious symbols could be located in it: the usual self is the ego, while the consciousness of the great avatars (e.g., Jesus, the Buddha, Christian and Hindu saints) belong in the higher levels. “God” becomes the overarching consciousness, embracing everything else; Seth refers to this level as “All That Is”.

- *If you have a religious background, how might you reconcile this more secular explanation of the nature of our consciousness with what you have been taught?*
- *What does the word “God” mean to you?*
- *While conventional (theistic) religions often represent a divine being as something outside of ourselves, the map of consciousness sees us as part of and connected with all other beings – there is no separation. If you like: “I am part of God”. Your reactions to this?*

### 2. How does the idea of levels of consciousness affect my spiritual search?

- In many spiritual traditions, there is no talk of levels: there is only our ego (sense of a separate self) and the greater consciousness in which it is embedded.
- A person following a theistic religion (e.g., Christianity) would probably think of herself as able to communicate with a separate higher consciousness, given the name of God.
- People in many religions pray to an avatar, like Jesus, Krishna, or Divine Mother. Such symbolic figures might be considered to fit into the map at a slightly lower level than an ultimate Deity.
- Recall the Inner Healer exercise of level 2 of the Healing Journey program. This is a simple way of visualising or putting a face to levels of consciousness beyond our normal awareness.
- Whatever tradition we follow, to receive “messages” from any higher levels we obviously need to “listen” internally, meaning to stop the chatter of the thinking mind. Meditation practice is an aid to better listening in this way.

### 3. The spiritual journey as expanding the sense of self

“Spirituality” entails a path or journey: it is the search for a dimension beyond the physical and mental aspects of our lives. By locating ourselves within this dimension, we hope to find meaning beyond the basic biological and social levels. The search for this level of meaning is an individual pursuit, which can be explained using a simple metaphor: expansion. Expansion of what? Of our consciousness or awareness (same thing). Consider how our degree of awareness expands as we develop from infancy to maturity, as shown in the table below:

Birth, and first few months of life	Aware only of comfort and immediate surroundings
Early years	Gradual socialisation: we learn to consider others
Immature adult	Learn to restrain impulses but remain focussed on gratifying the self (some “adults” stop at this point!)
Mature adult	After experience, reflection, perhaps travel, we realize and accept that the self is a part of a larger order, biological and social. We may come to realize that we create our own experience.

There’s room for a lot of variation at all of these stages, of course: for example, some adults pursue greater self-understanding through psychological therapies. This may provide a good basis for subsequent spiritual development. However, the process above is largely concerned with the mind, that is, with the individual’s ways of thinking about self and world.

Spirituality starts where this psychological process leaves off. It is concerned with the further expansion of our awareness beyond the physical and the psychological, into dimensions whose existence has been proposed in many traditions (such as the great religions), although we don’t know how to measure them with instruments. The evidence for them comes from “inner” or intuitive experience, not physical measurement. They are sometimes described as shells or levels of energies, or perhaps of information, surrounding and embracing the body-mind, as in the diagram above. For those engaged in a spiritual journey, the expansion of awareness continues:

Early spiritual development	Awareness grows that there is something non-physical that transcends the body-mind, often conceived of as “higher”, or as “God”. The body-mind remains one’s primary identity, but is seen in relationship to this higher order.
Further spiritual development	The individual begins to see herself as, in essence, consciousness, a part of a greater or higher consciousness. If the idea of God is retained, she may see herself as eventually merging with the divine.
Advanced spiritual awareness	The individual sees his body-mind as one of many expressions of the divine or higher consciousness in physical form. There is only the one Consciousness. He may at first identify self as an “observer”, but eventually sees everything as the Self. We come to know “what I am”.

The table above shows the spiritual development process as a continuing expansion beyond an exclusive focus on a physical body-mind, and into increasingly extended non-physical dimensions. The person’s relationship to these higher dimensions is usually “dualistic”, at first, a separate self with a spirit inside that reaches out to the divine. If development continues, the individual may reach a point where she no longer sees herself as at all separate from the overall consciousness. In much the same way as growth from a child to an adult provides a much greater range of options for action, so this spiritual expansion allows us to see illness and healing in a much broader context, and to invoke potentials that may promote healing.

#### 4. Tolle’s “portals”.

A source of great wisdom, untainted by dogma, is the writing of Eckhart Tolle. His second book, “A New Earth” is the easiest place to start. Tolle has, in a sense, boiled down the spiritual quest to one simple operation: remaining alert and aware in the present moment, without internal comment. This is a kind of meditation, and his writings are close in tone to Buddhist practice. Tolle, in his first book, “The Power of Now”, describes 7 “portals into the un-manifested”, which simply means ways of contacting higher levels of the Self. You will find them described in chapter 7 of the book – I highly recommend it.

- Portal 1: The “Now”, i.e., resting in the present moment.
- Portal 2: Cessation of thinking
- Portal 3: “Surrender”, meaning letting go of emotional resistance to what is.
- Portal 4: “Getting in touch with the energy field of the inner body”.
- Portal 5: Silence
- Portal 6: Space/nothingness (i.e., being aware of this).
- Portal 7: the portal that opens at the time of death (involuntary)

#### Ask yourself the following questions:

- *In the earlier stages of the Healing Journey program, we explored a number of ways to change our patterns of thought, in order to experience more peace, less internal suffering. Which of Tolle’s “portals” can you relate to this earlier psychological work?*
  - *How does my ego-self react to the idea that some higher level has much more wisdom to offer, and will guide much of my thinking life if I allow it? What am I afraid I might lose? What might I have to give up? What would be the advantages? Could this guide my healing?*
  - *What is my main aim in trying to contact the spiritual “dimension” or aspect of myself? How will I go about it – what will be my principal methods? If I already belong to a religion or similar organisation, how can I use this as a platform for spiritual growth?*
- .....

## D. Here are some exercises you can try yourself, at home:

*Exercise 1. Conducting a dialogue with your Higher Self.* In a relaxed state, imagine that there is a source of wisdom within you, that you are calling the “Higher Self”. Imagine yourself as alternately being this HS or your ego self. Pose questions from one to the other (switching chairs if you like), making notes of any answers. (This may sound a bit odd, but it is quite surprising what new insights can be gained through this process). For example, if you have cancer, you might ask what it is “seeking to accomplish”, and what you can do about it.

*Exercise 2. Visiting the Inner Healer.* Review the exercise we did back in level 2; it is one way of “visiting” your Inner Healer/Higher Self, and beginning a dialogue with it (this can be downloaded through a link on the Wellspring website (Internet: Well on the web – online resources - Healing Journey). Alternatively, once you have become familiar with the process, you can dispense with the journey through a wood and so on, and simply relax deeply and ask directly that the Inner Healer will appear.

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### Summary:

- We contrasted the usual materialist/physicalist view of reality with the spiritual view.
  - Spirituality is the search for who we are as beings in consciousness.
  - The most mature spiritual view is that our essence is consciousness: the physical world, including our bodies, arises from that underlying consciousness
  - We compared the religious approach (offering answers) to the spiritual (asking questions).
  - We began the discussion of how to acquire our own experience (to be continued).
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## Topic 3: Traditional Spiritual Paths.

### Introduction

In the last topic we introduced the idea of a spiritual journey or search, differing from usual religious practices in that it is an active process of internal study and asking questions, without being bound by any overarching dogma. It starts with the assumption that our being is not exclusively physical, but includes a spiritual dimension. The more usual conservative or traditional way of describing this is to claim that our bodies “contain” (somehow) a soul or spiritual part, which survives death of the body. A second, more coherent spiritual view is that our essence is consciousness, the awareness of being, and that physical form arises from consciousness. We mentioned that there is some scientific evidence supporting spiritual claims, and a great deal of experience from many centuries of exploration by dedicated spiritual seekers.

How might acquiring spiritual knowledge and experience help us to heal mind and body? When we get ill, our world often contracts – we tend to focus on our misery. By contrast, healing involves expansion. Just as expanding our awareness of the workings of our minds provides us with a much wider range of ways of responding emotionally to a crisis like cancer, so if we can expand our awareness further, beyond a focus on thinking, and tap into a higher or broader level of ourselves, we may access a much greater range of options to apply to healing both our mental state and our bodies. It seems foolish to rely entirely on our very limited intellects if there is a much larger reservoir of knowledge available to us, something that Eckhart Tolle calls a “vast intelligence”.

Our aim is to acquire not just knowledge, but experience. It is important to do first some hard thinking about our aims, and to set a rational course of study and practice for ourselves. Benefits won’t come from simply drifting along as usual in a state of pious hope, or, for that matter, by attending religious services in an automatic, non-reflective way. Spiritual growth requires giving up many old habits of thought, and the cultivation of receptivity to insights that appear to come from what we might call a higher source. We need to muster enthusiasm and dedication to the process, and to organise our efforts sensibly, just as we would in setting out on any important enterprise, such as learning a new language, or embarking on a new career. And we need, ideally, to approach our explorations and practices in the spirit of “an acute fever”, rather than as a “dull habit”, in the words of the eminent psychologist, William James, over a century ago.

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### A. Finding a Spiritual Path

#### 1. What kind of path should I follow?

We can condense the great variety of spiritual “paths” into 2 main categories, corresponding to the 2 understandings of spirituality that we have been discussing, the traditional/conventional approach, and the “consciousness first” view:

- The idea that we have a soul or spirit housed within a physical body implies that we are somehow separate from God or the spiritual dimension of ourselves. It is thus “dualistic” in nature. In order to make closer contact with this divinity or spiritual dimension, we need to remove the obstacles that we erect within ourselves, because of a natural focus on separateness, and on gratifying all the supposed needs of this separate self.
- By contrast, the idea that we are already, and primarily consciousness, entails that we need only (!) abandon the idea of ourselves as separate physical beings. We’ll look further at this second approach (often labelled “non-dual”) in topic 5, but for the present, will consider spiritual writings that are based on the first option.

- Seekers who delve deeply into a spiritual path which at first assumes separateness from the Divine, often eventually reach a point of “merging” with that divinity, being at one with it. Thus the 2 broad approaches may reach the same point, in the end.

Following a traditional, dualistic path involves working on one’s mind, aiming to become more receptive to higher consciousness or divine guidance which is always there, but blotted out, so to speak, by our incessant internal chatter, much as the sun blocks out the stars in the daytime sky. Religions also promote this approach, often in a moralistic way, and usually at a more superficial level. If there is a God in the religion, the directive may be that that we must improve or purify ourselves in order to be acceptable to this deity. If there is no god, as in Buddhism, the purification of the mind is required to remove ignorance and suffering, and become open to awareness of higher consciousness (in fact Buddhism is more like a psychological and spiritual path than a religion). In the spiritual search, without necessarily subscribing to any particular system of beliefs, the traditional seeker reads, reflects, meditates, and tries to live according to what she discovers.

*A personal note: As a child, I was sent to Sunday school at a protestant Christian church, which I left in my early teens, in part because the way it was conducted didn’t inspire me, and because the rhetoric of the church didn’t seem to fit with the actions of some of its members (I’m much more respectful of Christianity these days!). There was a brief period of learning Transcendental Meditation in my twenties, then preoccupation with career and family took over! I was fortunate to find my way, in my late 30’s, to a yoga ashram in B.C., led by a truly “great soul”, Swami Sivananda Radha. Over about 15 years, my wife and I went back and forth to attend workshops at this ashram, usually staying for a few weeks at a time, and on one occasion (after my cancer diagnosis), for 3 months. After Swami Radha died, I attended weekly services at a Yogananda centre for about 10 years. I’ve also spent some time with a Sufi group, and have had occasional contact with other organisations.*

*My experiences have left me with a vast respect for yoga, within the Hindu religion, and this is inevitably reflected in the suggestions I make to others in our courses. However, I’ve also spent about 20 years in daily study of A Course in Miracles (Christian in orientation), and much the same amount of time with the Seth material, as well as readings in Buddhism, and more recently, in non-dual spirituality (topic 5).*

## **2. What is required of me, if I decide to follow a spiritual path?**

1. Self awareness: The kind of work we do in the earlier stages of the Healing Journey is a necessary preliminary to an honest spiritual search. We need to know our minds, to watch our thoughts routinely, and be willing to acknowledge and downplay ideas that get in the way – for example: “this doesn’t fit with my current beliefs”.
2. Ask yourself: what are my aims here? We need to clarify them. Is it to heal physically without changing my lifestyle or thought-style (probably won’t work!)? Is it simply peace of mind (OK, but a rather limited ambition!)? Is it to know my place in the larger scheme of consciousness (an excellent starting point!)?
3. Am I prepared to get involved, to put my mind to work? Or do I simply want the comfort of pre-packaged answers (dogma), from texts or preachers? If it’s the latter, you may be better served by conventional religious attendance.
4. What priority do I give this search? I have noticed that the few people (with cancer) who make their spiritual quest a top priority – eager to get at their meditation as they jump out of bed in the morning! – tend to do well (it’s hardly surprising - and see our study of “remarkable survivors” in my book: “Can the Mind Heal Cancer?”, available free on the Wellspring website; “Well on the Web” then “online resources”, then Healing Journey). Many people profess

*interest, but allow other aspects of life to take precedence. So, take an honest look at your priorities; try to keep life as uncomplicated as possible (not a good idea to change houses, or spouses, or to start a business, if you want to have energy for the spiritual work!). A good question for yourself is: “what am I prepared to give up?”*

5. Membership and participation in organisations teaching spiritual growth is a great help. It is hard to do this work alone (at least at first).

### **3. What to study, and what to practise?**

1. Although the ultimate aim is to acquire our own experience, there’s no sense in reinventing the wheel: it is clearly wise to take advice from the experts, the mystics and great spiritual teachers.
2. Which experts? A lot will depend on your own prior contacts with spiritual or religious ideas. If, for example, you have been a Christian church-goer for years, but want something deeper now, you might look for mystical works in the Christian tradition. However, I would recommend reading widely at first, including works from cultural backgrounds unfamiliar to you, until eventually you find what seems most helpful, and then dig deeper into that tradition or author.
3. Reading a sacred text is different from reading a novel; you will probably find that it is necessary to go over and over the same paragraphs, then reflect on them; a page or two may be a day’s ration! Tackle works you find difficult, and stick at it, coming back time and again to obscure passages. Discuss them with friends in a spiritual group. Learning comes from mastering the new, not from skimming through what is already clear to you.
4. What practices to adopt, in addition to the reading? I’d reiterate that we need to adjust our lifestyle, if we are serious about this, as opposed to just adding a brief period of reading or meditation to the day. It helps greatly to have a routine: for example, getting up a bit earlier can allow study in the quiet time before breakfast. The traditional practices of meditation and/or prayer can be practised daily (or more than once a day). The visualisation exercises involving “going within” (like the Inner Healer exercise that we’ve done earlier in the HJ program) can be seen as a kind of prayer, asking for guidance. It is also mind-expanding to watch our dreams and analyse them (see Appendix). As well as books, there are of course many internet resources these days, including teachers on You-tube: seek out the good ones! (Some suggestions are offered throughout this course, and in the Appendixes).

### **4. Where will I get to with this? Is it difficult (i.e., can I do it)?**

1. It is common to find authors emphasising the demands and difficulties of a spiritual path. But we can focus instead on the privilege and joy of expanding our awareness; think how few people, historically, have even known that is possible to do our own investigations of this kind, or have had the resources to do so – time, books, internet, teachers.....!
2. I like this quotation from ACIM: “Nothing is difficult that is wholly desired”!
3. What you will experience is very individual, no doubt. I can only say from my own small experience that you may find greater affection for other people, a love of your natural surroundings, some instances of surprising joy and feelings of being loved and supported by an intangible agency, the constant presence of guidance on what to do, if you care to access it, “help” when you do, perhaps occasional “messages” of unknown origin that help you at difficult times, and the surprising observation that things tend to work out for the best (although not necessarily as we might wish them to at first).
4. Will it heal my body? My own conclusions, from observing many people with cancer, and from our limited research (see the book cited above), is that people do tend to do much better than expected when they are strongly involved with personal growth (although it may not need to be “spiritual”). Of course, there are no guarantees of this. What can be guaranteed is that you will

move in the direction of healing your “self”, meaning that you will develop a greatly expanded view of yourself and your relationship to the world - in other words, the meaning of your life. Coupled with this will come a conviction that all will be well, no matter what happens to the body.

5. The ultimate aim, to say it again, is to learn to know ourselves as part of a larger order or Consciousness. This is true of religion as well, although there it might be expressed as “obeying God” and eventually perhaps, if we penetrate to the mystical levels of the religion, as “merging with God”. (In Indian philosophy, it is said we come to know that “Atman is Brahman” – that our inner spiritual being and God are one and the same). A person devoted to God or an avatar, able to accept uncritically what she is told, and dedicated to prayer, might well achieve this within her religion, even without much of a sense of being on a proactive spiritual journey. Others who see a religious affiliation as a kind of “insurance” are unlikely to have this kind of experience.
6. The spiritual journey that we are outlining in this course is likely to have more appeal to people who want to work things out for themselves. Yet the irony is that ultimately, we need, on the journey, to “surrender” (in spiritual terms), meaning to accept that we are a tiny part of something much greater. In the end, both devotional religion and spiritual practice, aim to take us to that point.

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## **B. Some Suggestions on What to Study.**

### **1. Eknath Easwaran:**

Those who are beginning a spiritual journey and who do not have any particular religious background (or who want to escape from one!) could hardly do better than read some of the books by Eknath Easwaran. He was an Indian professor of English literature who moved to the US, established an ashram in Berkeley, California, and taught there for many years. His 20 or so books are models of lucidity and spiritual sincerity – an excellent starting place. My personal favourite among his many works is *Original Goodness*, but they are all excellent.

Here’s a quote from *Original Goodness*, chapter 1, which has the dual advantages of displaying his clarity, and providing further explanation about the spiritual search. It refers to what became known as the “Perennial Philosophy”, referring to teachings by Meister Eckhart, a medieval German philosopher, and later by Spinoza and Aldous Huxley:

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*“First, there is a “light in the soul that is uncreated and uncreatable”: unconditioned, universal, deathless; in religious language, a divine core of personality which cannot be separated from God. Eckhart is precise: this is not what the English language calls the “soul”, but some essence in the soul that lies at the very centre of consciousness. As Saint Catherine of Genoa put it: “My me is God: nor do I know my selfhood except in God”. In Indian mysticism, this divine core is called simply atman, the Self.*

*Second, this divine essence can be realized. It is not an abstraction, and it need not – Eckhart would say must not – remain hidden under the covering of our everyday personality. It can and should be discovered, so that its presence becomes a reality in daily life.*

*Third, this discovery is life’s real and highest goal. Our supreme purpose in life is not to make a fortune, nor to pursue pleasure, nor to write our name on history, but to discover this spark of the divine that is in our hearts.*

*Last, when we realize this goal, we discover simultaneously that the divinity within ourselves is one and the same in all – all individuals, all creatures, all of life”.*

.....  
Easwaran was a very practical teacher. You can see him on You-tube clips, although most of the videos were taken near the end of his life when he was very old. He emphasised establishing a regular program of personal discipline in our lives which he called the “Eight Point Program”. Here are 2 links to that:

*8-Point program in the second half of life – brief.*

<https://www.bmcm.org/inspiration/easwaran/eight-point-program-second-half-life>

*The 8 point program – longer, with embedded hyperlinks.*

<https://www.bmcm.org/learn/eight-point/>

.....

Several of Easwaran’s books are translations and commentaries on some of the great classics of Indian literature and spirituality. We will send you internet links to his writings on “*The Dhammapada*”, sayings of the Buddha, and to “*The Bhagavad Gita*” an Indian classic. The advantage of reading these is you get both his lengthy and valuable commentary, and at the same time, an introduction to the classic work itself.

## **2. Eckhart Tolle:**

Tolle will be familiar to most in this course. He is a living spiritual master, a German-Canadian man who had an enlightenment experience in his late 20’s, and who has in recent years devoted himself to spreading his understanding of the nature of reality through his writings and talks. He is not affiliated with any religion or spiritual organisation, although many of his ideas echo those of masters through the ages, and are perhaps closest in style to Buddhism. His discussions deal with the problems of modern life, and are couched in simple terms. This does not mean that they are always easy to grasp, since the spiritual view of meaning in life is often directly opposed to the conditioning (materialism) we have all been subjected to since early childhood. Probably the best introduction to his teachings is to read “*A New Earth*” (his second book), and then the earlier one, “*The Power of Now*”, which is a little more difficult in parts. You will find that on repeated re-reading more insights emerge: the works are profound. There are many CDs and DVDs of his talks available, and You-tube excerpts on the internet.

## **3. Other authors:**

In an appendix I have put quotes from a variety of other sources, including ACIM, which we will deal with at more length shortly. Among the authors are:

Swami Sivananda Radha, my own spiritual teacher (now deceased), a German woman who travelled to India in her 40’s, and was taught and initiated into sannyas (a spiritual order within yoga) by her guru, Swami Sivananda. She has written about 10 major works, all very accessible, and is clear and uncompromising in her presentation of what we need to do to evolve. *Radha: diary of a woman’s search* is a fascinating account of her own early years becoming a swami (a teacher in the tradition of yoga). *Kundalini Yoga for the West* is a monumental work for the dedicated student who wishes to undertake personal spiritual growth from a yogic perspective.

Paramahansa Yogananda. As you will see from the excerpt in the Appendix, Yogananda was a dedicated lover of God! (His writings are not all in quite such a poetic vein, however). I warmly recommend his *Autobiography of a Yogi*, which is a widely read classic of popular spiritual literature.

### Christian authors.

Christian readers wanting to delve into the mystical underpinnings of their faith may find reading some of the great masters rather heavy going (St Augustine; Meister Eckhart!) Teresa of Avila is perhaps one of the easier ones (for example, *The Way of Perfection*). I have always liked “*The Practice of the Presence of God*”, by Brother Lawrence, which is excerpted among my quotes in the Appendix. Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk, is a popular modern author; try his: “*Contemplative Prayer*”. Richard Rohr has many books which bring some of the Eastern spiritual ideas into the Christian community. Joel Goldsmith (also among my quotes) was a Christian healer – his books are very intense!

### Some further authors to try:

Kornfield, Jack *A Path with Heart* 1993) A well known Buddhist writer, formerly a monk. Very accessible.

Krishnamurti, J. *Krishnamurti’s Notebook* is one of many books by this itinerant teacher, of no specific tradition, who was writing in the second half of the twentieth century. His books are very readable.

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is Every Step*. A Buddhist monk, who writes very simply and eloquently.

Pema Chodron, *The Wisdom of No Escape*. A Buddhist nun, living in Nova Scotia.

Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakrishna and his Disciples*; a well-known English literary figure describes the life of his teacher, Ramakrishna, in 19<sup>th</sup> century Calcutta. This one gives you a sense of the intensity of the spiritual life of a famous Hindu mystic.

David Godman, *Be as you are: the Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi*. Ramana was a towering Indian spiritual figure of the early twentieth century.

*The Tao te Ching*: one of the most widely published books in the world, with many translations (I like the one by Steven Mitchell); it is a profound and sometimes enigmatic portrayal of the Daoist “Way”.

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## **C. A Course in Miracles (ACIM)**

### **1. Introduction**

We will send you a file with a course based on this text which was conducted with small groups of people (total around 300) over 10 years at the Princess Margaret Hospital. It can also be found as “level 5B” in the “Well on the Web” site for the Healing Journey (Click on “resources”, and scroll down to level 5. You will see that “5A” is a course on Tolle’s “A New Earth”). The 5B course includes a lengthy introduction, some diagrams and tables illustrating the content, a brief glossary of terms, and 10 sessions, each focused on a topic with excerpts from the course and the workbook, and questions posed to the reader. The following is an abbreviated version of the Introduction:

A Course in Miracles is a most remarkable book from an unusual source. The author is none other than Jesus Christ himself, arguably the most important spiritual teacher (for western peoples) in 2 millennia! “But didn’t he die 2000 years ago?” ACIM is a text “channeled” from Jesus, through an atheistic psychologist, Helen Schucman, over a period of 7 years, beginning in 1965. She “heard” a voice, identifying itself as Jesus, and dictated daily installments of what has become the text to a colleague, William Thetford, who typed up the material, which was eventually published in 1976.

The content of ACIM is quite exceptional. It is a text on healing at all levels, psychological, physical and spiritual. It is written in modern language, with psychologically understandable reasoning



(although the conclusions go far beyond the conventional). It uses Christian terminology and origin, but is not conventionally Christian: in fact, certain sections offer a correction to many of the misconceptions that have crept into the New Testament of the Bible as a result of centuries of injection of human ideas and values into that text.

Since 1976, several million copies of ACIM have been distributed in many languages. There are also a number of popular books written by mental health professionals who base their texts around ACIM, for example those by Marianne Williamson and Gerald Jampolsky, among others (reading some of these books can be a helpful introduction). The “Foundation for ACIM” has been established under the direction of Dr Ken Wapnick (now deceased), who was perhaps the foremost exponent of the course, and a man who was involved in the early stages of its publication. The website, [www.facim.org](http://www.facim.org), is a resource centre for materials (many books, audio and videotapes, plus advice on workshops), and questions may be put, on the site, to foundation staff.

ACIM can be difficult reading. It seems to be designed to make us think hard, so that we truly master the material, rather than have it “slip down” and be forgotten. The terminology can pose an initial barrier to some readers also, appearing sexist (always “he” and “your brothers”), and Christian in some of its symbology. We simply must allow any old hackles this raises to subside, and get on with the substance of the text, if we are going to benefit from it.

## **2. What does ACIM say?**

We began, and are still all part of One Mind, which may be called by various names – “God”, the Divine, the Source, the One and so on. ACIM uses “God”, sometimes the “Father. At some point, for reasons that are not clear (I like what the Hindus say, that it’s “God’s play”!), we became temporarily separated from God, i.e., some part or aspect of God believed itself to be separate, although this was immediately corrected. This apparently separate part is called the “Son of God” in ACIM. The separation is an illusion, and the separated mind retains that awareness, a kind of connecting link that ACIM calls the “Holy Spirit”. Because of the guilt such a radical separation invoked, there was immediately a fragmentation of this mind into millions of apparently separate beings, each clothed in material substance, the purpose being (to put it simply) so that others could now be blamed for “my” predicament. Each unit however still contained a knowledge of the whole - the separation was, and is an illusion, to say it yet again, a kind of dream or play put on by the separated mind.

We think of ourselves as apparently separated beings, arising from this “Big Bang” of creation. We can “swim back upstream”, return to our original home, simply by a change in perception (a “miracle” is this shift in perception). This is not easy because, as a result of our presumed separateness, we have developed all kinds of fearful ideas about our guilt (ultimately towards the Divine, for leaving it/Him), and vulnerability (to retribution from Him, and to attack by others). We therefore have surrounded ourselves by defenses, including our material bodies as a defense, and we have buried the knowledge of our true nature underneath all of this. Now, we say, we are simply bodies, and we may even get ill and die to prove it! The material world, and particularly other people, are blamed for all our problems.

## **3. How to study ACIM**

Here are a few pointers:

- The “Workbook” part, bound together with the main text, is perhaps easier to read. There are 365 “lessons”, for daily reading; some of them are simple affirmations which may not mean much to the reader at first - “Nothing I see in this room means anything” (!), while others contain detailed and highly sophisticated explanations of sickness and healing (e.g., #135-137). A helpful guide to the lessons is the series of talks and meditations on the ACIM workbooks by Karen Worth (all 365 of them):



<https://awakening-together.org/interact/meditation-audios/acim-meditation-audios/>

- Reading the text, I would recommend avoiding the first 2 chapters initially – they can be confusing. Chapter 4 is good place to start.
- It's not like reading a novel! We need to proceed a paragraph at a time, then stop and reflect. If something seems obscure (this is often the case!), it sometimes is clarified further on in the section. As a guide to how to approach reading ACIM, I have put in the Appendix (to topic 3) the text of the first section of chapter 4, plus my comments at the end of each paragraph.

#### 4. Excerpts on healing from ACIM

A Course in Miracles is about healing in the broadest sense, finding out who or what we are, the meaning of our lives, which is equivalent to saying “how do I fit in to some larger order?” Embedded in this larger aim is a smaller, more specific one: how to heal the body of its “physical” ailments. We learn that illness can be overcome by achieving the primary objective: healing or correcting the sense of self.

A brief summary of the main ideas about healing is shown in the table below, followed by some excerpts on healing from the text. There are many such comments, scattered throughout the text – this is only a small sample. They are often not easy to understand at first; it is helpful to read the surrounding text in the original as well.

Sickness	Healing
<p>Is of the mind</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Caused by a decision on how to view the world, a choice.</li> <li>- A personal identity is claimed for the separate self, as a body (and associated individual or limited mind).</li> <li>- The body is used to separate oneself from others, and to attack them. We project our guilt.</li> <li>- Sickness and death are used to demonstrate our supposed autonomy.</li> <li>- We are afraid to know “God’s Will”, because we think it is not ours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires changing the mind (perception)</li> <li>- Choose again: see that the conventional choice was for an illusion.</li> <li>- Instead, see oneself as “mind-stuff” not body, and as part of the Divine Mind; this is the Atonement. This shift in perception is the “miracle.</li> <li>- Instead, accept the guiltlessness of others. Use the body only for communicating love.</li> <li>- Sickness and death do not really exist. We will see this as we give up the illusion of separateness.</li> <li>- In fact, we need to learn to trust that our will is part of this larger Will, that our true Self is part of the Divine.</li> <li>- We heal others as well as ourselves, by accepting the Atonement, our oneness with the Divine.</li> </ul>

**Some excerpts from the text:** (mostly from chapter 8, “T-8”).

T-2.I.5: 8 Peace is an attribute in you. 9 You cannot find it outside. 10 Illness is some form of external searching. 11 Health is inner peace.

T-8.VII.11. The removal of blocks, then, is the only way to guarantee help and healing. 2 Help and healing are the normal expressions of a mind that is working through the body, but not in it. 3 If the mind believes the body is its goal it will distort its perception of the body, and by blocking its own extension beyond it, will induce illness by fostering separation. 4 Perceiving the body as a separate entity cannot but foster illness, because it is not true. 5 A medium of communication loses its usefulness if it is used for anything else....

T-8.VIII.5.... 5 A sick body does not make any sense. 6 It could not make sense because sickness is not what the body is for. 7 Sickness is meaningful only if the two basic premises on which the ego's interpretation of the body rests are true; that the body is for attack, and that you are a body. 8 Without these premises, sickness is inconceivable.

T-8.VIII.6. Sickness is a way of demonstrating that you can be hurt. 2 It is a witness to your frailty, your vulnerability, and your extreme need to depend on external guidance. 3 The ego uses this as its best argument for your need for its guidance.

T-8.VIII.9.... 9 Health is the result of relinquishing all attempts to use the body lovelessly. 10 Health is the beginning of the proper perspective on life under the guidance of the one Teacher Who knows what life is, being the Voice for Life Itself

T-8.IX.1....5 When the ego tempts you to sickness do not ask the Holy Spirit to heal the body, for this would merely be to accept the ego's belief that the body is the proper aim of healing. 6 Ask, rather, that the Holy Spirit teach you the right perception of the body, for perception alone can be distorted. 7 Only perception can be sick, because only perception can be wrong.

T-8.IX.3. Wholeness heals because it is of the mind. 2 All forms of sickness, even unto death, are physical expressions of the fear of awakening. 3 They are attempts to reinforce sleeping out of fear of waking.

T-8.IX.5. Healing is release from the fear of waking and the substitution of the decision to wake. 2 The decision to wake is the reflection of the will to love, since all healing involves replacing fear with love.

T-8.IX.7.... 5 If you are sick you are withdrawing from me. 6 Yet you cannot withdraw from me alone. 7 You can only withdraw from yourself and me.

T-8.IX.8. ... 6 Yet sickness is not of the body, but of the mind. 7 All forms of sickness are signs that the mind is split, and does not accept a unified purpose.

T-8.IX.9. The unification of purpose, then, is the Holy Spirit's only way of healing. 2 This is because it is the only level at which healing means anything.

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**Summary:**

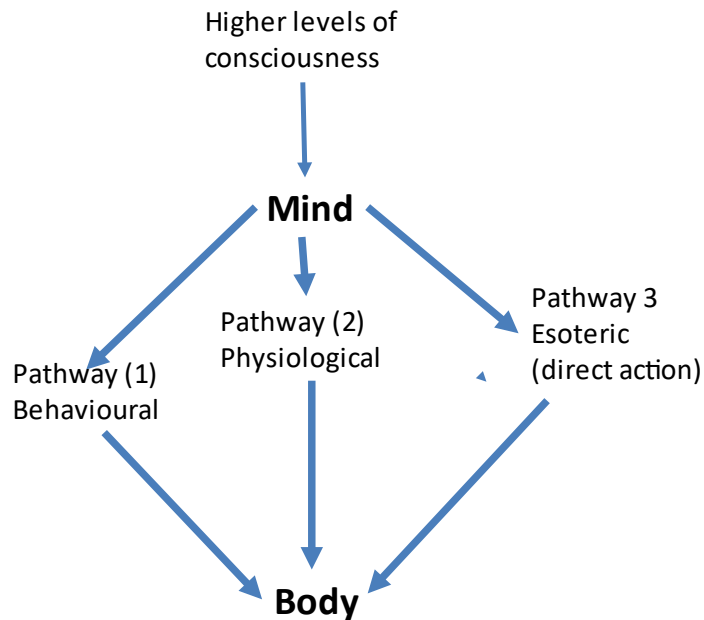
- Traditional spiritual paths assume the student is separate from God/the Divine Source, but seeks closer contact
- The main work involved is diminishing focus on personal desires
- Usual methods include studying texts by spiritual masters and practising mind-quietening methods like prayer and meditation.
- Useful texts for beginners are those by Tolle and Easwaran. Others were also listed.

- ACIM is a modern text channelling (the historical) Jesus. It says our idea of being separate from God is an illusion, leading to all of our guilt and fear. A “miracle” is correcting this perception.
  - Healing, according to ACIM, essentially takes place in the mind.
-

## Topic 4: Using the mind to assist healing of the body

### A. Pathways through which mind may affect the body:

The diagram below shows 3 broad “pathways” through which the mind might cause illness in, or influence healing of, the body. These are applicable to most diseases, although we are concerned here with cancer.



We are all familiar with the “behavioural” pathways – for example, the harm done by unhealthy behaviours like poor nutrition, or exposing oneself to harmful external agents like cigarette smoke or ionizing radiation. The “physiological” path, by contrast, refers to ways in which the mind may have an internal influence on development of cancer, as opposed to acting through some agent from outside. This includes stress (mental conflict) acting through nervous and hormonal systems in the body. There has been relatively little research on this as a possible cancer promoter, or on helpful effects of reducing stress, which is surprising, since we know that chronic stress is responsible for a lot of ill-health. In the earlier levels of the Healing Journey, we learned methods of calming the mind to re-establish more normal function in the body, expecting that this will improve our chances of healing physically. The well-known placebo effect is another example of mind assisting the body to heal, probably through an “internal” pathway.

In this level of HJ we are considering also a third mind-body pathway, which I’ve labelled, in the diagram above, “esoteric” (literally: “understood by the few”!); it is the claim that the mind may affect the body (or other physical objects) directly, without any connecting physical mechanism. This is, of course, directly contrary to our society’s current view, “materialism”, the idea that only matter and

energy can have such effects. Perhaps surprisingly, however, there is already quite a lot of scientific evidence that it is possible, as mentioned in topic 2. Some examples are:

- Distant healing through prayer: in controlled experiments, healers given only the names of people suffering from various diseases have brought about significant changes in their health. This does not always “work”, but the fact that it does so at all is remarkable!
- “Channelling”: the dictation of books to living humans from non-material sources.
- Tumours in mice, otherwise lethal, have been removed by “hands-on” healing and (poorly defined) mental techniques used by their human healers.
- There is quite a body of believable experiments on the effects of “human intention” (that is, focussing on a desired outcome) on microbial growth, germination of seeds, growth in plants and various biochemical reactions. Warts (virus-induced tumours) have been removed by hypnotic suggestion, under controlled conditions.
- Spontaneous remission of advanced cancers has often been described. There may be many reasons for this, of course, but mental factors are one likely contributor; this deserves much more study.
- Perhaps most spectacular is the 20-year series of experiments at Princeton University on the ability of human intention to alter random number production by computers (computers were programmed to produce equal numbers of 0’s or 1’s in a random fashion: the predicted output could be influenced in one direction or another by observers). This has been repeated by other laboratories, and with mechanical devices rather than computers. Effects were always small, but statistically significant when a large number of trials was run.
- There are reputable experiments within the field of Psi or para-psychology, on phenomena like telepathy, precognition and distant viewing (knowing what a distant person is seeing).
- Within quantum physics, it has been known for a century that the act of observation decisively affects what physical particles appear to do.

In general, all of this evidence has not been absorbed by most scientists (except for quantum effects, where physicists acknowledge that they don’t know what’s going on). The main stumbling block is that these phenomena contradict the very basis of our usual ideas on how the world works. In sum, though, the various lines of evidence suggest that the idea of our minds influencing our bodies directly, i.e., by some as yet unknown, non-physical means, as well as through internal/physiological pathways, is not at all ridiculous.

*Question: what do you make of this? Does it inspire you to be more open to possible healing effects of mind on body? There are many books for the lay reader describing some of these fascinating phenomena. A good author to start with is Lynne McTaggart, a journalist, e.g. “The Intention Experiment”. You might also try “Entangled Minds” by Dr. Dean Radin, who has himself carried out many important experiments in parapsychology.*

## **B. Where can we find practical guidance on how to use the mind to heal the body?**

Western medicine is based on the assumption that it takes physical interventions to affect the physical body. Thus, potential healing effects of the mind have been largely dismissed. However, there is another source available, although this can pose a challenge to our open-mindedness: “channelled” information, from entities not currently living who speak to us through passive recipients. Skeptics scoff at this, of course, since it assumes a different view of reality than the materialism we have all been raised with. My own training as a scientist, however, emphasised that one should be guided by

evidence, not prejudice, and I have no doubt, after intensively studying the two sources of channelled information that we use in this course, the Seth material and A Course In Miracles (ACIM), and the “backstory” of their production, that these works are what they claim to be: products of non-physical intelligences, communicating with us in our material world.

Seth describes himself as an “energy personality essence”, whose teachings were channelled through Jane Roberts, between 1963 and 1984. His statements clearly come from an understanding far more evolved than our own: they are internally consistent, and the psychology he elaborates is deeply insightful. Seth’s explanations are in accord with the writings of many other spiritual and channelled sources: he does however, provide much more detail about how things work than any other writer I’ve encountered; I think of him as a “spiritual engineer”! His teachings are ultimately transpersonal or spiritual, in that they aim to help us see ourselves as not isolated physical beings, but part of a much larger organisation of consciousness.

While Seth ranges over many issues of concern to people, he devotes a lot of attention to healing through mind and spirit, and it is this aspect of his writings that we are focussing on here. Moreover, his advice is very down to Earth and practical. Unlike a lot of traditional spiritual teachers (topic 3 of this course) he is not telling us to seek healing primarily through the intervention of some higher power, nor is he saying (topic 5 of this course) that we should cease to be concerned with the body because it is not who we are; instead, he tells us in great detail what to do to influence our physical health through our own minds.

*Seth “dictated” 10 books via Jane Roberts, the channel; these form the main body of his work. There are also 9 published “Early” books, of conversations over a wide range of topics between Seth and Jane’s husband Rob, via Jane. For those wanting to start their own exploration of Seth’s ideas, I’d suggest the following (Jane Roberts is listed as the “author” of all of them):*

- *“The Seth Material”; documents the 510 “Early” sessions, and includes an account of the first contacts between Seth, Jane and Rob. It contains many quotes from Seth, but is mainly Jane’s writing.*
- *“The Nature of Personal Reality”, probably the most popular of the dictated books – the first few chapters are especially relevant to mind-body healing. In later chapters, some more esoteric healing ideas are introduced that we won’t cover here.*
- *“The Way Toward Health”; the last dictated book. It provides a simplified, practical account of healing through the mind, and is easier to read than the others.*

Accepting that we are venturing here into territory that is not yet part of most current medical thinking, we will try to blend the teachings of Seth with some common-sense reasoning and clinical observation to describe a practical approach to healing through the mind for those willing to try it. We need to start with a brief digression into some basic philosophy, before moving on to Seth’s views on our consciousness, and how our ego-minds can interact with “higher” levels of our consciousness to bring about healing changes.

### **C. Reasons for thinking our minds determine what we perceive (and so might be able to “create” health).**

Most of us take for granted that the world is exactly as we see it, full of objects which are exactly as they appear to us, and whose existence does not in any way depend on whether we are observing them or what we think about them. This is simply untrue, as we will see in a moment. There

is a centuries-old debate about whether the world “out there” exists whether we are around or not, a view known as realism, or whether it is “all in our minds”, a contrary view, idealism. As far as I can tell, no consensus has been reached by western philosophers, although realism in various forms seems to be more popular. By contrast, philosophies of the East (notably India) tend much more towards idealism, the view that our minds, or consciousness comes first, and that the physical world somehow springs from that: “We are spiritual beings having a human experience”, they say, rather than the reverse.

We can use our reasoning ability to confirm that things cannot be just like we believe them to be. A little reflection shows that the nature of our senses determines what we can perceive. For example, a colour-blind person sees a different world than a person with normal colour vision. Your dog doesn’t see colour at all. Some birds see ultraviolet radiation. A squirrel, or an ant, or other creatures no doubt perceive physical reality very differently from humans. There is no logical reason to say that they simply fail to have our “correct” view – they see a different reality.

*Have you considered this last idea before – or have you assumed that the world picture of a 21<sup>st</sup> century western human being is the only true one? It’s important to think about this for a while, in order to grasp the central idea that our minds determine all that we think we know about the physical world. This is not “New Age” fancy, but something agreed upon by all professionals who study such things (philosophers and some scientists).*

A simple, everyday example that I like which shows how our senses “create” our physical experience is the common rainbow: if we look in the right direction so that sunlight is shining through raindrops, we will see a rainbow – but if we move a few steps to one side, we see a slightly different one! If we are not looking, the rainbow we were observing is no longer there!

*What is your reaction to this “rainbow” example? Perhaps you wondered if you could prove its independent existence by taking a photo of it? Possibly you have encountered the old conundrum: “If a tree falls in a forest and nobody is listening, does it make a sound?” (And the answer is, of course, No”, since “sound” is a property of our perception). Again, this needs to be thoroughly digested!*

This is a start towards dismantling our usual “street” view of reality, as something “out there”, completely independent of us. Instead, we can perhaps see that we don’t know exactly what the world is like, and we all, as different species, draw different conclusions about it. Here’s what Seth has to say:

*“The physical senses actually can be said to create the physical world, in that they force you to perceive an available field of energy in physical terms, and impose a highly specialized pattern upon this field of reality. Using the physical senses, you can perceive reality in no other way.” (Seth Speaks p 78).*

(If you see possible problems here, like: “Why do we humans all appear to see the same world?” or: “Why do there seem to be fixed physical laws?” I will refer you to a brilliant modern philosopher, Bernardo Kastrup, with a video by him cited in the Appendix; we don’t have space to go into it all here. Two of his books are: “Brief Peeks Beyond”, which I’d recommend as a first read, and “Why Materialism is Baloney”).

It seems that whatever is “out there” depends to a large extent on the nature of our perception (as Tolle says: you don’t see the world, you see your nervous system!). The more radical question - is there anything at all beyond our mind or consciousness? – doesn’t matter much to us here. Whether our consciousness creates matter, or simply (!) shapes whatever is out there into particular forms, according to our perceptions and perhaps our beliefs, we begin to see that the mind/consciousness is much more



central to our physical experience than is usually believed, and therefore it makes a lot of sense that it may be involved in fostering illness and health.

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## **D. Seth's views on how our consciousness affects our bodies. A bit of theory.**

### **1. Consciousness, and how we “fit in”.**

Our consciousness is simply another name for our awareness. We are accustomed to use this verb in conjunction with objects that we are aware *of*, but awareness *of being* occurs even when the mind is still.

*Check this out for yourself. Ask yourself: “Am I aware?” Of course, you will find that you are. Then ask a more fundamental question: “Where did I ‘go’ to come up with that answer?” Think hard about this. (Another similar one: try not to “be” for 10 seconds!).*

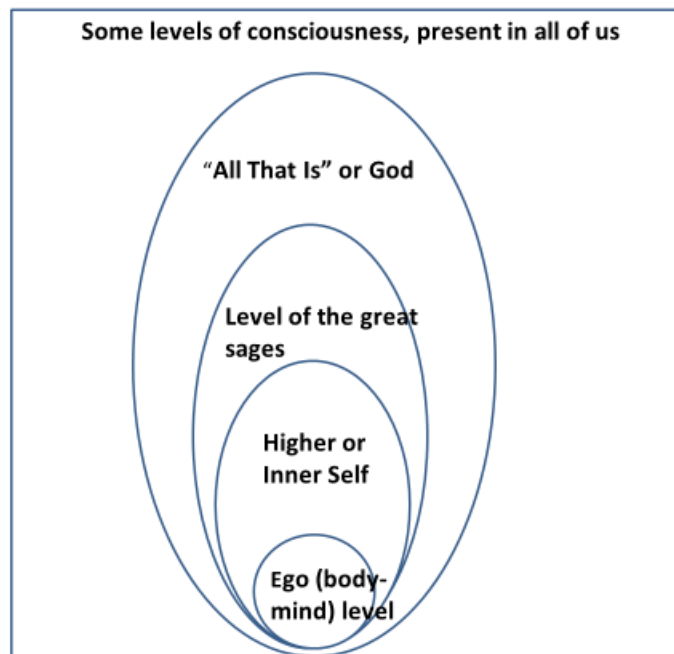
How do the mind and brain fit in to all of this – what is their relationship to one another and to consciousness? Seth's description:

*“A mind is a psychic pattern through which you interpret and form reality” (Nature of the Psyche, p41).*

*“The conscious mind exists before material life and after it. In (earthly) existence it is intertwined with the brain, and during physical life, your earthly perceptions – your precise and steady focus within your particular space and time system – are dependent upon that fine alliance” (ibid p 99).*

The “mind” is not a thing; as a helpful analogy, it's more like a computer software program, with the brain as the hardware (like the physical computer) through which the program runs. Another analogy, put forward by spiritual masters in many traditions: what we think of as our “mind” is simply one tiny part of a vast sea of consciousness. If the whole were an ocean, the ego self might be a wave, small and temporary on the surface.

Consciousness, according to Seth (and various spiritual traditions propose similar models), is arranged in a series or hierarchy of levels, the higher levels encompassing the lower. The map below is only that, a map: there are no actual barriers between the levels of consciousness shown, and messages can flow between them. Each of us is a part of this, with potential access to all of it, although we usually think of ourselves as simply an ego-mind, a tiny part of the whole, specialised for operating in the physical world. Beyond this ego level is what Seth calls the Inner or Higher Self – together with the ego-level, this forms a unit that manages the actions of our bodies in the material environment. Beyond that are levels that include the lower elements: for example, a number of smaller units may form a kind of super individual, which he calls an “entity”. Awareness expands as one moves “up” – a bit like seeing more of the countryside as we climb a mountain. We could think of realized sages as having a kind of high-altitude overview! Then, embracing all, is Seth's term for God: “All That Is”!



*As always, ponder this: what do you think of the definition of "God" as the Consciousness that embraces all other consciousnesses? If you have been deterred by religious ideas about God, are you more comfortable with this one?*

## 2. The central importance of "messages".

We tend to be aware only of what is going on in our ego minds. The ego is a kind of clearing house for both incoming and outgoing messages: an example of "incoming" might be sensations from the body, or words read from a page of text. "Outgoing" messages include directions for actions of the body, communications with others, "replay" of old memories, and ruminations about whatever is of most concern to us at the moment. We are not limited to transmissions between ego mind and body, however. The "deeper" part of the mind (which we have called the Inner or Higher Self) constantly sends and receives messages to and from ego and body, although most of them are out of our awareness. And according to this model, messages are received from and sent to the higher levels of consciousness, as when prayer is used in an attempt to contact these levels, or to be guided by them.

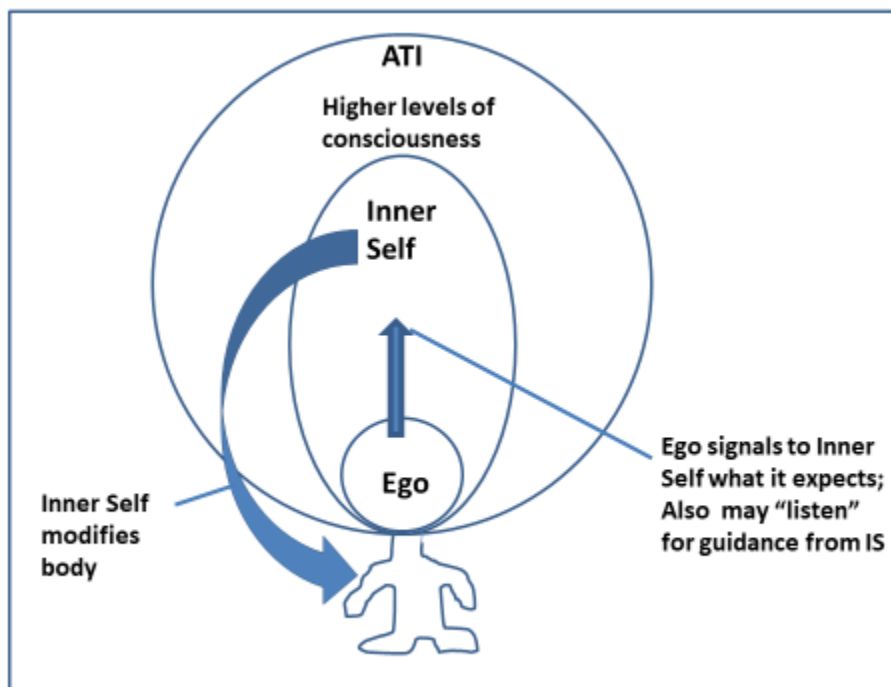
Becoming aware of messages from the higher levels is not simple – the "signal" tends to be weak and obscured by the loud noise of the ego's chatter. Spiritual masters talk of attending to "the still, small voice within". The quality of these inner messages is different: they tend to be more like intuition or knowings – there is really no appropriate word in the English language for them. They may appear to come from spiritual figures or guides. We need inner quiet to receive such information, which can often be profoundly significant to us. Situations causing deep emotion seem to open us up to receiving messages from within; for example, if we are desperately afraid for our lives. In such a case, a religiously minded person might seek guidance from a spiritual figure, but a non-believer can use the same mental potential if she will accept that information is available from higher/deeper levels of her own, extended Mind. Dreams are another source of information from deeper levels; although usually thought of in our culture as coming from what Freud called the "unconscious", they can tap into spiritual realms very effectively at times.

*There is a table in the Appendix of some of the messages constantly passing to and from the ego-mind). It could be very helpful to identify specific messages of your own that pass between your various levels!*

### 3. Can the mind help us heal ourselves? A third pathway.

The mind contacts the body by sending it “messages”: if we want to move our arm, a message passes from the mind via the nervous system to the muscles of the arm. Many more messages are transmitted outside of our awareness, such as those that control automatic processes in the body, like digestion and blood pressure regulation. According to the conventional (materialist) view, these messages all require a physical carrier – usually impulses along the nerves, or hormones. The esoteric, or spiritual view doesn’t in any way deny this, but adds the idea that some messages between mind and body occur without such physical intermediaries (and recall the diagram at the beginning of this topic, and our listing of evidence that the mind can indeed affect matter without physical connections). Seth (and some other spiritual authors describing mind-body phenomena) are pointing to this third pathway: a direct action of mind, in addition to the usual physiological routes.

According to Seth, the ego mind appraises the world around it, and decides what it wants and believes. This information is continually transmitted to a higher level (the Inner Self, on the diagram) which tries to produce the desired effects in the body, or in our lives generally. There are limits to what can be done, obviously – nobody lives forever, or regrows a limb – but there is much more potential for deliberate change than we usually imagine. However, potential healing through this pathway – from ego to Inner Self to body – is often blocked by opposing pessimistic or sceptical beliefs, also sent from the ego mind to the Inner Self. Obviously, if we want to exert some control here, we need first to find out what signals or messages we are sending to our bodies, via the Inner Self.



*If you think about this you will undoubtedly come up with what seems to be an objection: we can seldom simply “wish away” a physical symptom. Assuming Seth is correct, can you think why this may be? (Hints: explore what confidence you have in the results of simply wishing something away. Note what your lifetime habits of thinking have been. And see the following sections!)*

Here’s some further statements from Seth:

*“You constantly give yourself suggestions about your body, your health or ill health. You think about your body often, then. You send a barrage of beliefs and instructions to the inner self that affect your physical image” (“The Nature of Personal Reality”, p83).*

*“If you realize that your beliefs form your experience, then you do indeed have an excellent chance of changing your beliefs, and hence your experience. You can discover what your own reasons are for choosing (an) illness by being very honest with yourself.” (“The Way Toward Health”, p231).*

#### **4. Summary of “theory”:**

- We don’t see what, if anything, is “out there”: we see only what our senses, and mind, interpret for us. To put it another way, our senses and minds determine the apparent nature of our reality.
  - The extensive Seth material describes consciousness as a hierarchy or series of levels, the higher levels encompassing the lower. That part of consciousness expressed as an individual “ego-mind” is low on the hierarchy!
  - The ego-mind is constantly stating what it wants and expects; these “messages” are picked up by a higher level, the “Inner Self”, which tries to actualise them (e.g., by making changes in the body).
- .....

### **E. Practical strategies for healing through the mind: Diagnosis**

#### **1. Diagnosis must precede therapy**

Here’s a quote that summarises Seth’s advice on healing through the mind:

*“All practical healing deals with the insertion of positive suggestions and the removal of negative ones” (Seth, in “The Way Toward Health”, p171).*

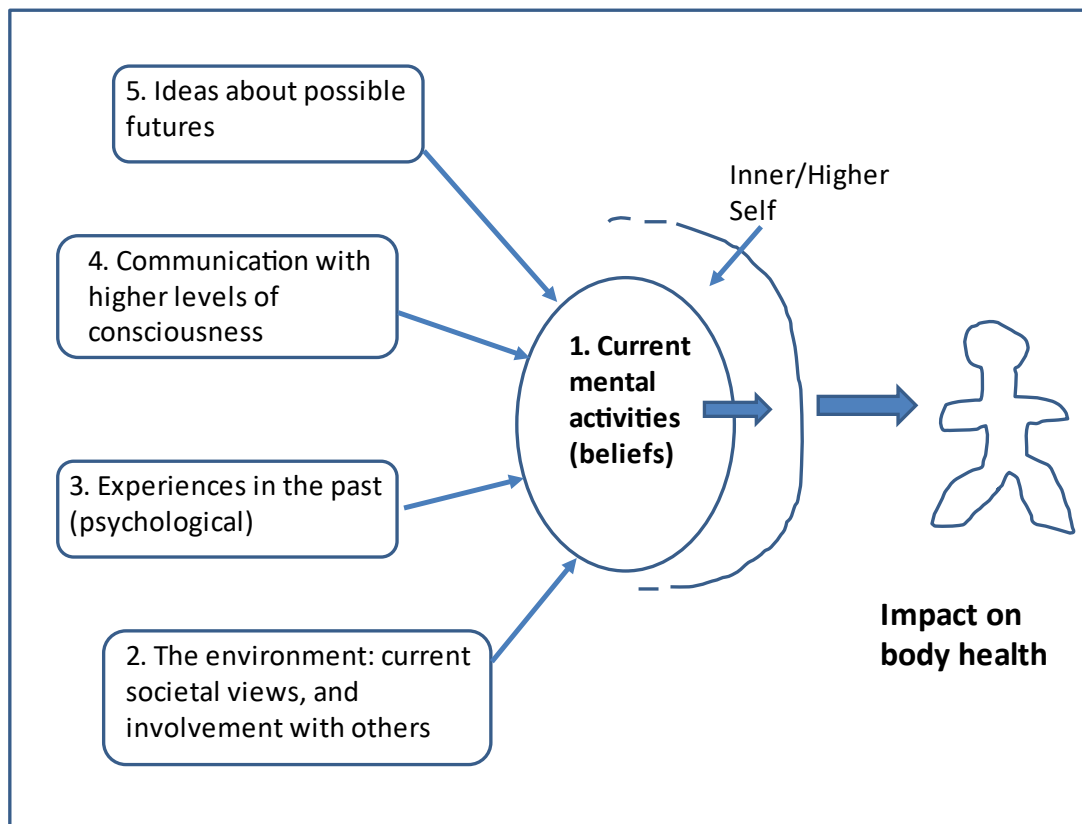
That sounds pretty simple, at least in principle, doesn’t it? Our task becomes to identify our negative, undermining self-talk, and replace it with helpful suggestions. Pessimistic ruminations, going on largely out of our awareness, can act like directions to the “deeper” parts of the mind (what we have been calling the “Inner Self”), which then tries to influence the body in the direction expected. We can see effects of this kind in hypnotised subjects; in a disease like cancer, it’s a chronic process, taking place over months or years. In a sense, we tend to hypnotise ourselves with our negative expectations. As Seth puts it, at many points in his writings:

**“You get what you concentrate on”**

*This is a key idea. Note he does not say “you get what you want”. Why might that be? (Think about how we often concentrate on things we don’t want; and about how “wanting” is often associated with pessimism).*

It is critically important to recognise these 2 stages to trying to heal the body through the mind; diagnosis, then therapy. The logic is the same as for medical interventions (or, for that matter, automobile repair!). The “diagnostic” part of our work is to find these opposing ideas, and remove them. This is very important, and often neglected; it is generally the main task – once the harmful beliefs are clearly seen, the “therapeutic” step, replacing them with healing alternatives, is usually fairly obvious. Notice that it is the same process as is used in changing mental attitudes.

Now, the beliefs we harbour (and repeat so often to ourselves) are themselves the result of a variety of experiences in our lives. Seth’s healing advice is scattered through his numerous books, and not arranged in any strict order. I have collected excerpts (quotes) illustrating the main ideas, and made summaries. The diagram below is a simple visual “model” or scheme, showing how these ideas can be grouped into categories that might help to organise our healing work. You will see that the category “Current mental activities” is given prominence. These thoughts and ideas, as reviewed above, are passed to another level of consciousness, the Inner/Higher Self, which attempts to bring about the changes desired by the egoic self. Of course, as we’ve discussed, there are severe limits to what can be achieved. Our biology imposes its restrictions: we can’t regenerate a missing limb or organ. But we are also limited by our ingrained belief that the mind can’t do much; after a lifetime of thinking along certain lines, we have dug deep “ruts” from which it is difficult to extricate our minds!



To the left of the diagram there are 4 boxes, representing the 4 main categories of mental events that, according to Seth, have a major impact on what is currently going on in our minds, and thence on physical (and of course mental) health. As you can see, “Current mental activities” represents a kind of

final common pathway or “clearing house” through which these more distant events and ideas exert their influence. Let’s briefly examine them:

- By “the environment” (2) we mean, first, the climate of disbelief that surrounds ideas of the use of minds to influence healing of bodies. This is the viewpoint of our culture – basically a kind of naïve realism, as discussed above.
- Under “Experiences in the past”, meaning the individual’s recollection of her past history (3) we mean our “role” as an “ill person”, any benefits that ensue from being unwell, and any learning we see as potentially coming from it. Such attitudes, along with longstanding psychological problems, particularly poor self esteem, may impact our will to heal.
- Box 4 refers to Seth’s model of the place of our ego self within a much larger hierarchy of consciousness from which we may access help, as in the earlier diagram above. Seth emphasises the importance of relating to this greater order of consciousness.
- Box 5 refers to a more esoteric (unconventional) set of ideas from Seth that we won’t deal with here (they can be studied in his book, “The Nature of personal Reality, chs 14 and 15). Briefly, Seth says that every event in our lives is surrounded by a series of “probable” alternatives that are not actualised: our life path becomes one thread along a vast tapestry of potential but unmanifested possibilities. We can choose among these, to some extent, and since time does not really exist, we are able, he says, to change the past from the present! Further, the future may act back on the present, from which follows the idea that a clear sense of purpose and direction may influence our present health status – a positive picture of our intended future may help us through our current difficulties! This is something we have emphasised at many points throughout the Healing Journey program. It is understandable in common-sense terms, but Seth provides a mechanism: by “choosing” a meaningful future we are, in fact, choosing a whole new life path.
- our choice may be guided by what various paths forecast for the “future”. According to him we can influence both the future and the past (which is not fixed) from the present moment. One relatively conventional aspect of this view is the need to clarify our sense of purpose and direction, in the hope that a clear picture of a desired future may influence our present health status.

## 2. Diagnosing my own beliefs.

Let’s look for some specific examples of factors that may be influencing your own ultimate beliefs about the possibility of mentally-induced healing.

(1). Consider how indoctrinated you may have become with materialist ideas (meaning a tendency to think only concrete matter is real) by imagining the following scenario:

- *You have a sudden new pain – what immediately comes to mind, in terms of possible causes and what needs to be done to “fix it”?*

This little mental experiment will likely show you how a fearful event in the body typically prompts us to look for physical causes and solutions. We generally ignore the possibility of a contribution from or help through our minds – i.e., we don’t believe in its power. (*Please note, I am not advocating ignoring symptoms or failing to have them checked out by a physician. Physical medicine is the dominant health care mode in our culture, and we should use all the help it can provide. My purpose here is to encourage you to consider how your mind may also be involved*).

(2). Associations to the word “cancer”.

Sit in a relaxed fashion and ask yourself the following:

- *What is your immediate reaction – mental/emotional – to the word “cancer”?*
- *What other associations do you have to it, e.g., ideas about suffering and death, about possibly leaving loved-ones.*
- *Apart from the inevitable fear, are there other emotions that a diagnosis has brought up – for example, anger, frustration, shame, or bitterness?*
- *What are the thoughts or beliefs behind the various emotions you identify, especially fear. Are they rational? This needs careful investigation, i.e., ask yourself “what exactly am I afraid of”? Complete honesty is needed for this exercise (and all of them) to be useful.*

(3). Psychological conflicts, possibly contributing to the disease.

If we accept the “consciousness first” view of reality proposed here, it becomes not just understandable but inevitable that psychological conflicts will promote ill health (an idea often stated in A Course In Miracles – see topic 3). It then makes sense to seek out any personal conflicts that may have led to, or could be promoting cancer. In the “treatment” phase (below), you would then do whatever you could to resolve these conflicts.

Some possible states of mind that might be harmful are listed below. Note, however, that even if some of these apply to you, it does not necessarily mean that they caused your cancer, but it does tell you what you believe is an important area of work to heal your mental-emotional state, which may well affect the body and make its healing more likely.

- *A sense of low self-worth or shame.*
- *Any thought that you deserved to get the disease (as “punishment” for something?)*
- *Any belief that work or other life habits contributed to the disease.*
- *Any sense that your life may not matter much to others.*
- *Any idea that life is no longer worth living for its own sake.*
- *Any idea that a fatal disease could be a “way out”.*
- *Hidden guilty “secrets” about yourself that others don’t know.*
- *Any premonitions that you were bound to get cancer.*
- *Any thought that because other related people had it, you must get it also.*

**4. Summary of Practical methods; diagnosis**

- When we investigate the activity of our own minds, we almost always find a stream of negative suggestions (to ourselves) about any health problems we may have, and obstacles to changing them.
- These harmful ideas, ultimately expressed as thoughts, arise from many areas of our inner lives, e.g., distorted views of our self-worth, “deeper” psychological problems, and lack of understanding of the spiritual dimension of ourselves.
- The first, and often most important step in healing through the mind is “diagnosis”: to identify these obstacles.

**F. Practical Strategies for Healing Through the Mind: Therapy****1. The “therapeutic” phase: applying new ideas and images.**



Having, to the best of our ability, identified and removed our constant negative suggestions, we begin replacing them with “positive” or optimistic projections. Note that we do not deny the possibility of disease progression and decline in health (and see below); we simply choose to focus on more positive outcomes, while at the same time accepting that factors beyond our control may prevent us achieving what we want. We resolve to “give it our best shot”, in other words.

The qualities of good healing suggestions are mostly common sense:

- (a) We use mainly words (phrases) or visual images (in addition, some people may find they can also invoke a “felt-sense” of healing). Phrases are easiest to use as a constant refrain while we go about our daily tasks; imagery tends to require us to sit for a time and allow the mental pictures to develop.
- (b) Phrases should be brief, clear, direct, unambiguous, and positive. For example: “I am invoking all the power I have to heal”, or “I allow my body to heal this disease”, or “I expect to return to health”..... everyone must devise personal affirmations in which they feel confident.
- (c) The phrases or images should be coupled with a strong emotional charge: the image or words provide a “blueprint”, so to speak, while the intensity of emotion is the “fuel” that drives the desired change.
- (d) We need to expect and believe that changes can happen. This is a complex matter, since we must, at the same time, accept that what we want may not come to pass. One way to resolve this is to affirm that whatever proportion of our healing is under our control will receive our total commitment and effort (and for a more detailed explanation of this, see: “*Reconciling beliefs and outcomes*, in the Appendix to topic 2). In practical terms, the more positive expectancy we can muster, the better.
- (e) We need to believe in the power of our suggestions, and allow time for changes to take place. The disease has a momentum that will take time to interrupt: think in terms of small, incremental changes, of gradual improvement. Think of “nudging” your body to return to health. Recognise that we have spent decades thinking along certain lines, digging “deep ruts” in the mind, and that it will take time to climb out of these!
- (f) The healing we desire needs to be tied to a sense of purpose and direction in our lives. In all of this Healing Journey work we are trying to bring our lives into line with what is our true meaning or purpose – to be authentically ourselves. Ideally, we need to aim for a future life that develops our capacities and creativity, and benefits those around us, while being exciting and stimulating – a life worth living, in other words!
- (g) Note that all of this reflects a willingness to engage with what is happening, as opposed to trying to cope by avoidance or denial. We engage with ourselves, expressing the emotions that come up, such as fear, anger and sadness, even when these seem temporarily unpleasant. We engage with the cancer, acknowledging its presence and threat, trying to figure out what it seems to “mean” or “want”, i.e., how it may be a reflection of some conflict in deeper parts of the mind (an example might be that it allows us to avoid certain unwanted responsibilities). We do our best to engage with, or open up to, the higher, more expanded dimensions of ourselves – the spiritual search.

## 2. “But it doesn’t seem to work!”

Anyone who has tried to use their minds to heal their bodies will probably say this, at least at first. It is immediately obvious that we can’t just say “broken bone, heal yourself!”, or “cancer, disappear!”, and find that it happens quickly. If it did, we would be living in a very different world, one more like the world of dreams, where intentions are often actualised quickly. The process is much more

subtle, and dependent on a range of conditions; it takes time and perseverance, and has its limitations. Some of the main obstacles and caveats:

- It is difficult to rid ourselves completely of scepticism, and more generally, of the stream of thoughts that are in opposition to what we want to achieve (point “d” above). So, while affirming: “my body is healing”, we may be saying, under our breath, so to speak: “this can’t really work”.
- Yet we also must acknowledge there are limits to what is possible; things may not turn out as we hope (“d” again, and please do read the Appendix). Much more is possible than we usually understand, however.
- Results are dependent on “context”: by that I mean that if we want to be well for reasons that are themselves life-affirming (point “f” above), that may shift the whole physiology of the body in the direction of supporting a return to balance, and so to healing (cancer is the result, not only of initial mutations, but also of a lack of adequate regulation of the abnormal growth. We know this because at autopsies of people dying from other causes, small potential cancers are commonly found that never “made it” to a clinically detectable size).
- We need to allow time (point “e”), and to make a sustained effort: in my clinical experience, few people really persevere. Healing (if there is serious disease) needs to become the number one priority of our lives.

*Think about this last point. Then ask yourself, honestly: what is the top priority in my life at present?*

### **3. The power of mental imagery:**

Mental images may be even more powerful than words since a visual image contains much more information than a verbal label about how the mind sees an event. For example, if your cancer looks to your mind like an alien invader, and you draw this, you are calling on a vast store of memories, concepts, movies, perhaps discussions with others – all bundled into this one picture; your mental-emotional conception of the disease. By identifying how you think and feel via imagery you are providing yourself with a lever through which to understand and manipulate the connection between the mind and this part of the body.

You’ll recall we did various exercises using imagery in earlier levels of the Healing Journey. You may wish to review those; some reminders and further suggestions here:

- *Relax deeply and move to whatever inner place allows you to feel at peace and focussed. Thinking should be kept to a minimum. If you have images representing the disease, let them appear. Now you may bring in other images that represent removal of the cancer, or a surveillance for any remaining cancer cells.*
- *Another approach, after proceeding to an inner sanctum, is to adopt an open, receptive frame of mind and ask what needs to change, and how. Your Inner Healer could be invited in, to offer guidance.*
- *You could have a “dialogue” with the cancer itself; you might acknowledge it as a part of yourself (perhaps like a “sub-personality”), but a part that has gone astray, and ask it what it “needs” for the tissues to return to normal.*
- *As with all of this work in the deeper part of the mind, the aim is to allow unanticipated ideas and images to emerge; often they will be unclear, perhaps fleeting. The first thing to “pop into one’s mind” is often the most significant. If you find imagery that seems life-enhancing, then you can use it as a form of affirmation during the exercise and perhaps also by bringing it to mind many times during the day. As always, it is vital to draw and write about these important exercises, in your journal or elsewhere.*

#### 4. Summary of practical methods; therapy

- Our first task is to try to remove the stream of pessimistic self-suggestions.
- We then replace the negative ideas with positive verbal affirmations and/or images.
- Healing suggestions should be clear, direct, simple, unambiguous and believable. We need to intensely desire healing change, and expect that whatever degree of healing is under our potential control will take place.

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In the Appendix is a chart showing what I call “The three pillars of healing through the mind”. It is a harmonisation of Seth’s teaching with the 3 main psychological elements we found in our research on a group of “remarkable survivors”. Our research findings fit very well with what we have learned from studying Seth over many years. I mentioned this in topic 2, but it bears repeating here: the 3 main qualities associated with long term survival from disease that was expected to be quickly fatal were:

**Autonomy:** these people learned to manage their thoughts and emotions

**Authenticity:** they created fulfilling lives for themselves, finding meaning and direction

**Acceptance:** they saw themselves in a larger context, connecting, in one way or another, with a greater consciousness.

These results are perhaps hardly surprising – again, rather a matter of common sense! The “three A’s” make them easy to remember!

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#### Overall Summary:

- The world we see is not as we think, but is a result of our sense perceptions and ideas.
  - Seth, a channelled source, goes further, claiming that consciousness, working through our minds, actually modifies physical reality.
  - He describes multiple “levels” of consciousness.
  - When the ego-mind concentrates intensely on what it expects in the physical realm, higher levels of consciousness attempt to make this actual (there are limits on what is possible, of course).
  - Many psychological and social factors affect our health, partly by influencing our beliefs about it.
  - Much healing of the body is possible through mental suggestion, provided conditions are met: e.g., lack of ambiguity, intensity of focus, expectation of a result, and a context of meaningfulness in life. Counteracting suggestions must first be minimised.
- .....

## Topic 5: The ultimate healing: beyond the idea of a separate self.

### Introduction:

In topic 2, the theme was that there is more to a human being than physical matter; that in fact we have further dimensions which are not physical, but “spiritual”. While there is some objective evidence for this, the main aim of the spiritual journey is to confirm it for oneself, following in the footsteps of the great mystics from many cultures over recorded history. We are concerned in this course with how to understand the relationship of our everyday body-minds to these intangible aspects of our selves.

Relatively familiar in our culture is the idea, found in Christianity and some other religions, that we have a non-physical soul, which survives death of the body and perhaps returns to a god or heaven. However, a more sophisticated notion proposed by many mystics, ancient and modern, is that our essence is consciousness, and that from this consciousness matter or form arises; our western culture, which assumes matter comes first, and consciousness arises from it, has things back to front, so to speak. As an aid to visualizing this, we introduced Seth’s explanation (also found in other traditions) that consciousness has many levels, with our little ego-minds corresponding to a lower level.

At the end of topic 2 we briefly considered Eckhart Tolle’s description of 7 “portals” or routes through which we may contact higher levels of our consciousness: methods such as remaining in the present moment, being internally silent, and not resisting what we perceive – all well recognised in classical spiritual paths. In topic 3 we discussed this traditional process of pursuing a “spiritual path”, what it requires of us and where it may take us, then reviewed a number of authors whose works may be particularly helpful to someone embarking on their own search. We highlighted a modern source, A Course in Miracles, in which the historical Jesus speaks through a medium in a remarkable and widely known book which may appeal to open-minded Christians as well as to people with or without links to other religions.

In this last topic of the course, we will consider further the idea that we are “consciousness, having a human (physical) experience”. It is a view that goes back thousands of years into early Indian philosophy, is echoed within Buddhism, and has been resurrected by a number of modern teachers, using the label “non-duality”. This means that ultimately, there is not “me” and the outside world, but that there is only one consciousness, expressed in many apparently separate forms in this earthly environment. I’ll outline the ideas of modern authors prominent in the field, most of whom are still living, and some of the practices they advocate, and point to their books and internet resources. It is not at first easy to absorb, but repays study, and has great relevance for healing. Most of all, it is truly fascinating!

### A. The limitations of our conventional views of self and the world.

It is worthwhile to contemplate first how misleading our usual picture of reality is, even without moving into spiritual domains.

#### 1. Even as materialists, our views are all wrong.

- We think the world is exactly as we perceive it, independent of our observation, a kind of stage on to which we are dropped at birth. Yet as we discussed briefly earlier, other species see their surroundings very differently, and we could ask ourselves: “why should my concept of the world be the ‘correct’ and only one?” We need to ponder this – our conditioned ideas are firmly entrenched. We will come to the realization that, as one author (O’Keeffe) puts it: “you see the

world not as it is but how you are”, or as Eckhart Tolle puts it “we don’t encounter the world, we encounter our own nervous systems”.

- We think our bodies are separated from our surroundings, but consider the breath going in and out – when does the air become part of “us”, and when is it “outside”? The same applies to food! The skin, too, is not an absolute barrier – molecules are moving across it in both directions all the time. Thus, although we are bodies, we are intimately connected to and part of our world, and could not survive without this connection.
- We think of ourselves as pieces of solid matter, basically separate from the world. In fact, we have learned from physical science that we are mostly space, with occasional atomic particles scattered about! Imagine a single fly, sitting on a football field in an empty stadium, the fly representing that part of ourselves that is the actual matter in an atom, and the stadium space the distance to the next atom – that’s how “dense” our bodies are! More like a gas than a solid!

## **2. The non-dual view: that we are part of one consciousness, and not primarily material beings.**

The spiritual masters, as we have discussed, take a giant further step, claiming that our underlying essence, our common fabric, is consciousness, not matter. Let’s go over this again, because it can seem strange at first. Our usual view of the world is “dualistic”: we think that all the things we perceive are “out there”, separate from us, and existing independently of our observation. We believe we observe it all from some place within our bodies; we are rather sure that we are bodies, peering out, as it were, at this external world. The non-dual view, by contrast, is that everything is consciousness; the world and all the objects in it arise out of this consciousness. A devout Christian might say: “Yes, it’s all in the mind of God”, and this would come close to the non-dual view.

Other words for consciousness are “awareness”, or even “being”: objects apparently “out there” are in fact arising in our awareness. The world is simply a kind of movie or dream, projected by consciousness. This is hard to accept at first: “It all seems so real to me, and what about my suffering?” Well, even movies are “real” in a certain way, and we don’t need to think of our world (and our bodies) as unreal; we can instead consider that they exist at one level of reality – a level of consciousness expressed as the material world, while there are other levels beyond that which are not expressed physically (recall the Seth model). It may help to think about your own dreaming: every night (although we may not remember this on waking), we all construct, with our minds, a world as diverse and complex as the one we exist in when awake. While we are in this dream, it seems “real” to us – and it is: just another kind or level of reality. What dreams show us is that a world can be “created” from a mind. Is it such a stretch to think that we might be dreams of a greater consciousness?

Metaphors can help us get our minds around this new way of looking at reality. A common one is to describe consciousness as the ocean, with our apparent individual selves as waves on its surface. Bernardo Kastrup, a modern philosopher, whose work I’ve referred to earlier, suggests we think of the primary reality, consciousness, as a river, in which there are many little vortexes, each representing a living being. Each of us, as a single vortex, gets so entranced by the swirling waters immediately around us that we lose sight of the bigger picture! Another metaphor, (mine this time): imagine a giant, magical blanket, under which Consciousness (All That Is) sleeps. Every now and then he/she/it wakes and starts to agitate the blanket. The forms of millions of little objects, like people and animals, trees and mountains, pop up, creating an apparent world, but they are all, in fact, just protrusions in the fabric, all part of the one blanket!

This is all very picturesque, until it starts to sink in what the message is: we are not the important, solid, separate self we thought we were! We are, instead, consciousness having an experience, somewhat like a dream, in which we appear to inhabit a fleshy body. This, then, is the “non-dual” view. Some teachers (such as Adyashanti, below, and Buddhist masters generally), put it even

more bluntly: “You don’t exist”, at least, not in the way you thought! Why would we even want to consider this rather frightening idea?

### **3. Advantages of the non-dual point of view.**

- Let’s say we are serious about finding “meaning” in our lives. If you think about it, meaning comes from relationship: the meaning of any object or action depends on how it affects its surroundings. A human being commonly finds at least some meaning in social relationships; attitudes to nature, to one’s job, to an ideology, may also confer a sense of meaningfulness. The spiritual search is an attempt to establish meaning in relationship to a higher power or god. However, according to the non-dual view, meaning is built in, as it were, if we are already a part of something greater, since we are an integral part of the one Consciousness.
  - Related advantages: death is no longer a threat, if we don’t identify with or think of ourselves as a body. It dies, but our essence as consciousness remains.
  - By contrast with the traditional (conventional) path, we don’t need to wait until we die to “get to the kingdom of heaven”, we simply need to “wake up” to its constant presence!
  - We need no longer worry about whether we matter, or belong, whether we are fungible (dispensable – liable to be easily replaced); we are unique beings, but integrated into the Whole, and in a sense, spread out over all of it.
  - In some of us there is a desire to know the Truth about ourselves (capital intentional). Many philosophers have claimed that truth is relative, dependent on conditions. The spiritual masters say, by contrast, that there is an absolute Truth (about reality, and hence ourselves) that we can discover through spiritual study and practice.
  - Furthermore – a bonus, but not the primary goal – this discovery feels blissful!
  - What has all this got to do with healing my body (assuming you want to hang on to it)? Imagine you are healthy and dreaming. In the dream, you learn you have just been diagnosed with incurable cancer. Naturally, you are horrified; then you wake up, and realize: “It was only a dream”. What a relief! This is what spiritual teachers say will happen when we realize that what we have been enduring was simply an earthly dream! Non-duality is a direct path to this understanding.
  - Suffering is abolished: since we are not this separate self at all, we are no longer caught up in the drama of life, and can simply watch the antics of body-minds, whether pleasant or painful, with affectionate interest, perhaps gently steering our apparent individual body as needed.
- .....

### **B. How to acquire this understanding; to realize what we are?**

Modern scientific observations have already shown us that the world is not as we usually think. To reiterate: the three most important groups of observations, in my opinion at least, are (a) the phenomenon of channelling, demonstrating that intelligence can exist without being housed in a living body, (b) the widespread occurrence of out-of-body and near-death experiences, which also appear to demonstrate that our consciousness does not depend on the body, and (c) the field of quantum mechanics, already a century old, which has shown that small particles like electrons, and apparently even atoms and molecules, exist as (probability) waves rather than solid objects; they are only physically expressed when we observe them. This seems to bear out directly what Seth tells us.

However, this is no abstract exercise: we want to acquire experience for ourselves, to know in mind, heart and gut that we are indeed what the sages tell us. There are a number of possible approaches to non-dual realization. We could study intensely one of the branches of Buddhism, particularly Zen. We might gain understanding through plunging into a study of the ancient Vedas or



sacred texts of India (Advaita Vedanta), a tradition going back to more than 1000 years before the Christian era. Here, however, we will focus on a number of modern teachers of what is often called the direct path towards non-dual understanding. This is a movement that is only about 3 decades old in the West, although it draws on the (often obscure!) writings of masters in various cultures over thousands of years. A great advantage of reading and listening to the words of modern teachers is that they write and speak to us from a cultural background that they share with us. Their books are relatively easy to understand (even if the ideas are unfamiliar), and they typically have posted internet videos of their live talks.

Before introducing them, I want to emphasise again the difference between this non-duality work and the traditional spiritual paths described in topic 3 of this course, where the process was gradual refinement or purification of one's mind, so as to become more worthy and capable of eventually "knowing God". The essence of the non-dual approach, by contrast, is that although meditation and self-understanding are very helpful, one is not required to first remove all "impurity" from the mind (*and I confess that, after decades of vain struggle to do so, this was a relief to me!*). Further, we are encouraged to use our reasoning ability (at least at first) to bring into sharp focus the realisation that we have mentally constructed an unreal world, and that dedicated, rational analysis (yes, analysis – familiar to us all) can bring us to an eventual understanding that we are not our minds, but ultimately something far greater.

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## Modern teachers of non-duality

### 1. Eckhart Tolle

I mentioned our first modern teacher, Eckhart Tolle, in topic 3, and return to him here, just briefly, since his books are very familiar to most of us. While we may not have thought of him as "non-dual", closer reading of his work brings this out; he can act as a reassuring bridge figure to some of the authors below. (Tolle has been rated, in one internet survey, as the "fourth most influential spiritual teacher on the planet" – just below the Pope and Oprah Winfrey!).

Eckhart is a most wonderful, gentle, compassionate teacher, who does not shock us with radical pronouncements, but instead has oriented his teaching around a simple, practical and readily-understood process: staying "in the Now". If we can learn to do this (and it is not easy!), we will find that the focus on self disappears. Try it for yourself: if there is no past and future, where is the sense of a "self"? My suggestion is to read "[A New Earth](#)" (his second book) again, then "[The Power of Now](#)", being on the lookout for "non-dual" ideas: you may identify them more readily after studying some of the more radical works we'll describe below. An outline of his teachings can be found in an appendix to my level 6 manual, 2019-20 edition, on the "Well on the Web" site, under "Resources". There are many short You-tube videos showing clips from Tolle's talks.

A few of his wonderful aphorisms and definitions:

- Thinking has become a disease.
  - Full attention is full acceptance is surrender.
  - Surrender is the end of the mind as your master.
  - Any form obscures God
  - God is Being itself, not a being.
  - What is God? The eternal One Life underneath all the forms of life. What is love? To feel the presence of that One Life deep within yourself and within all creatures. To be it. Therefore, all love is the love of God.
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## 2. Greg Goode.

Goode is a professionally-trained philosopher, and a wonderful teacher (his books are better than his videos), who explains both the theory and practice of attaining non-dual realization.

- “Standing as Awareness” is a short introduction to non-duality. It includes transcripts of a number of dialogues with students.
- “The Direct Path” includes a remarkable series of progressive exercises designed to show us that all we know is our awareness/consciousness.
- “After Awareness; the End of the Path” contains more theoretical explanations of the process of “waking up” to a knowledge of who we are; it forms an excellent companion to “The Direct Path”.
- “Emptiness and Joyful Freedom” (written with Tomas Sander)

### 2.1. “Emptiness and Joyful Freedom”

This last book in the list is a good starting point for an investigation of non-duality, although, like all writings on this topic, it requires careful reading and reflection. “Emptiness” is the idea that there are no things “that exist in the solid, self-contained way that we attribute to (them)” (p3). There is, in fact, no “way things really are”, and nothing is completely independent of anything else – quite a reversal from how most of us have been taught! This concept is central in Buddhist philosophy, but although Goode and Sander describe Buddhist ideas, they seek to emancipate non-dual teachings from dependence on ancient Buddhist (and other) texts which are often arcane and full of terms unfamiliar to the modern reader. They show, instead, that there have been Western philosophers who address many of the same ideas.

The book is a superb blend of understandable theory and a large number of practical exercises, designed to help us realize that “things are not as they seem”, including our selves! I can only outline a few of them here. A good place to start is with chapter 9, “Freeing yourself from negative labels”, since the process they describe, invalidating the critical labels we often apply to ourselves, is familiar from conventional psychology. There are many exercises that probe more deeply into the concept of a “self”. For example, we can discover for ourselves that it is an idea that we have constructed from observing how we fit into the society around us, and from the stories we continue to relate to ourselves (recall Tolle’s “story of me”!).

Exercise: The socially constructed self and the narrative self; (pp 164-9): *(note: this is necessarily a very abbreviated form of the Goode and Sander exercises)*

- *Make a list of the varied roles you play during a typical week – at home, work, play, on holidays, visiting others, receiving services like health care, and so on. Write them down. Indicate which are most important, in order. Then one-by-one remove or delete the roles on your list, starting with the least significant. What is left as you do this?*
- *Identify the main elements in the unfolding of your life: where you grew up, and now live, who your parents and siblings were, your education, your relationships as child, young adult, now, any children you may have raised..... and so on. Ask yourself: “what kind of a person am I? Where is my life headed?” Then try to find what Goode calls templates or set pieces in this story that have a prefabricated feel to them, as though they might have been written elsewhere and laid in to your story. Can you find any cultural templates, spiritual templates? Finally contemplate how the narrative self can be seen to be constructed by these stories rather than being the author of them.*

### 2.2. “The Direct Path”.

The title refers to a particular approach to non-dual realization through a progressive set of self-inquiry exercises. These investigations include sensations, perceptions, bodily feeling and motion, emotions, attention, thought, mind and others. What is discovered is that there is nothing “out there”, including what we thought were objects existing independent of our observation, and including our bodies! Instead, all we know directly is a variety of experiences in our own awareness. To get the flavour of this method, let’s try the experiment of hearing a bell (pp26-30) and viewing an orange (31-37) (*again, I can only sketch here an outline of a process that Goode describes in detail*).

Exercise: Hearing a bell.

*Sit quietly, eyes closed; strike a bell or bowl at intervals; pause; inquire into what you have directly experienced:*

- *Do you directly experience a bell making the sound? (No – only sound).*
- *Do you directly experience a sound, or rather just an experience that you call “hearing”? (The latter.)*
- *Do you really know this experience to be “sound” or “sound waves”, or is it just an awareness of something? (The latter only; e.g., it could be an experience produced by an electrode stimulating the auditory part of the brain).*

The point of this exercise, and others like it, is to show that we can’t separate an object or event from our perceiving it, and we can’t separate our perceiving of it (i.e., hearing, seeing etc.) from our awareness of the experience. All thoughts about sound waves, brain functions and so on are concepts, not direct experience. Let’s try another:

Exercise: Seeing an orange.

*Sit quietly. Place an orange in front of you. Notice that what you see is not “an orange” (that’s a label), but a patch of colour, distinguishable from its surroundings. Note also that you can’t tell by simply looking that it has 3 dimensions – all you see is shading at the edges, which you have learned to interpret as indicating roundness.*

- *Do you experience an “orange” apart from the patch of colour?*
- *Is there any evidence for colour existing out there, independent of the act of seeing (recall the rainbow)? (How could you know?).*
- *Do you directly experience “seeing”, or is that just your label for the awareness of something that you have learned to call “colour”, or “an orange”?*

Again, as with the “external” sound, we cannot say, going by direct experience only, that there is really anything out there: all we know is our awareness of an experience. This only seems puzzling, perhaps, because we are so accustomed to the inference that we are observing something external to us.

These brief accounts don’t begin to do justice to the full exercises as described by Goode. He then moves on to the other senses, then to our experience of a body, then mind – thought, emotions, memories, choices ..... you may find your “head hurts” if you go through them all (over a period of weeks, probably). However, I strongly recommend persisting: you will start to find it much easier to accept that the objects around us (including one’s self, one’s mind, any illness!) are not necessarily the solid, independent realities we have assumed them to be; in fact, they may well be mind-created, and if so, perhaps we can alter the creation? At the very least, we can begin to see ourselves as witnesses of events around us, rather than as hapless victims.

If this stuff doesn’t yet make sense to you, try the following very simple exercise:

**Exercise: Resting as awareness:**

*Simply sit in a quiet place, relax, and look around, but without the usual internal commentary. You will find you can register the apparent existence of objects without immediately labelling or otherwise chatting internally about them. It takes some effort, and your busy mind may take over after a few seconds. That doesn't matter. Just wait a while, and do it again – and again, and again.... You can practise this anywhere, while walking, eating, even while talking to someone (difficult). The hope is that with practice, the intervals of being aware without thinking will lengthen.*

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**3. Rupert Spira.**

Spira is an outstanding expounder, in text or on film, of the central idea of non-duality: that we are awareness, or consciousness. Knowing, or being aware, is “the essential, irreducible essence of mind prior to its conditioning”, that is, the silent, peaceful awareness of being, on to which we have imposed a vast clutter of ideas arising from interactions with the apparent world. His books are very clearly written, almost “scriptural” in quality, and require (and deserve) a lot of concentration; here are some of them:

- The Art of Peace and Happiness.
- The Nature of Consciousness.
- The Transparency of Things.
- Being Aware of Being Aware.
- Being Myself
- You are the Happiness You Seek.

The last 3 in the list are relatively recent books, and include most of his most important ideas.

“Happiness” would be a good one to start on. I have put in an Appendix some questions to consider on the first 3 (of 8) short chapters of “Being Aware of Being Aware” (which in our “graduate” classes, we refer to as BABA!).

Spira, an Englishman, has posted many talks on the internet (You-tube), which are beautifully delivered, although you may find some of them difficult at first. I would advocate simply persisting with them, in conjunction with reading, and you will find the ideas become clear, even if they may seem obscure in places (some are listed in the Appendix):

Some examples of Spira's explanations:

- The metaphor of a screen, with pictures projected on it, often comes up: our awareness is like the screen, neutral, always present, although usually overlooked. Instead, we become engrossed by the characters and environments portrayed there. However, the screen (our true Self) never changes, and is never sullied by anything that takes place upon it (a useful idea to ponder!).
- “I” is our name for the experience of being aware.
- “Mind is the activity through which and as which awareness knows objective experience” (“Being Aware of Being Aware”, p 64).
- “Meditation is between awareness and itself. It is simply awareness of being itself, resting in itself, knowing itself alone: “Being aware of being aware” (p 65).
- Our ego minds are like characters in a dream. In the same way that a character in the dream does not (usually) know the dreamer's mind, so our ego minds, or sense of being a separate self, forgets “where it comes from”, and becomes absorbed in the drama of the worldly experience.
- “Our knowledge of our self is God's knowledge of Himself. It is for this reason that in the mystical Christian tradition, the resting of the mind in the heart of awareness is known as the practice of the presence of God or the surrender of the mind to God's infinite being”.

Exercise: *“The separate self is like the clenching of the fist. It is a contraction of infinite awareness into and apparently finite mind” (p 70 of “[Being aware](#)”). Imagine relaxing your clenched fist, and following this feeling through your entire body.*

Exercise: *(a simple, yet profound one): Ask yourself the question: “Am I aware?” Then, having answered it, ask yourself “where did I go” to find that answer?*

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#### **4. Adyashanti**

Like Rupert Spira, Adyashanti (the name means “primordial peace”) is a clear and compelling spiritual teacher; he is currently active in California, and has written a number of books, among them:

- [Emptiness Dancing](#)
- [The End of Your World](#)
- [Falling into Grace](#)
- [The Direct Way](#)

The second last book in this list is designed for beginning students, and so is a good place to start. “The Direct Way” is a wonderful progression of 30 meditations.

Adyashanti’s message is familiar: we are consciousness, spirit, not separate beings. Knowing this removes suffering; we must “wake up from the dream of form” and embrace everything as self. This last sentence gives a sense of how Adyashanti tends to be even more uncompromising than most other non-dual teachers: he tells us directly: “You don’t exist!” (i.e., as a separate being), that our life is a dream, and that we are, in a sense, everything at once (recall my metaphor of the blanket)! As you venture into Spira’s teaching, I suggest watching a number of Adyashanti’s videos (a few are listed in the Appendix):

Here are some of the main points made in “Falling into Grace”: Adyashanti emphasises first that we create our own suffering by believing our thoughts, always wanting to control what’s happening, without realizing that in fact we cannot. The ego is simply a state of consciousness, a fiction, dreaming of separateness. Our struggles are a “contraction” of who we are – recall Spira’s “clenched fist”. We really know nothing of reality, despite our science, which is a manipulation of symbols (translation: relevant only in the apparent world of duality). By contrast, our spirit, part of God, is pure potential, and contains “every possible outcome”.

Although Adyashanti, like many non-dual writers, does not offer a lot of specific techniques, he does emphasise attitudes to be cultivated. So, again in “Falling”, he says that we must learn to embrace everything, including our suffering, the unpleasant as well as the pleasant. To do so is to become “aligned” with what is, and can lead to a state of “grace”. As we surrender (the illusion of) control, we become grounded in Silence; we see the face of the Divine in every moment. We need to become unguarded, completely available, yet (and this is hard to understand) we don’t have to “abdicate our authority” – we still act effectively. Perhaps we are like actors, following a script, but we can choose to do this with full awareness, rather than blindly. Yes, we must “awaken”, drop the idea of being physical creatures (identifying with form), but that ultimately this allows life to “wake up through us”. “True autonomy”, he says, “is not about ‘me’ as an ego; it’s about life itself. It’s spirit embodying form, inhabiting a human life, and standing up in that form”.

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#### **Jackie (Jac) O’Keeffe.**

This author is a favourite of mine because she presents non-duality in such a clear, uncompromising and succinct way, particularly in her first book: “[Born to be Free](#)”, which is, I think, a spiritual masterpiece, although perhaps difficult for the beginner. Her recent text: “[How to be a Spiritual Rebel](#)” is easier reading, although aimed at people who have some meditation experience. It teaches more gradually, without probing as deeply as “Born”. She is currently very active on the workshop “circuit”, and offers regular group internet meetings to those interested

Working through the 40 short chapters (and similar number of experiential exercises) in O'Keeffe's "Rebel" would be valuable for anyone interested in exploring non-duality (we have studied it in some of our Healing Journey groups), although you might find a few of the exercises mildly shocking! There are some exercises that are primarily psychological in nature, i.e., using the "progressive" approach, mixed together with others following the "direct" path. Some of the main themes:

- We must challenge our belief systems and confront our fears; we are much too involved in self-protection.
- We need to drop our need to be "right" (to control).
- We can learn to use 2 different "lenses of perception": the personal, and the non-dual. The latter is more "natural".
- O'Keeffe provides several exercises on "abidance" – just "knowing", without thought.
- There are valuable exercises on emotional intelligence. We need to increase our "band-with", so as to be able to feel emotion while maintaining conscious awareness of the deeper self.
- Learning self acceptance is vital (as in all spiritual paths).
- We are aiming for an "observer" state: more "being" than "doing." Ultimately, we will need to relinquish all identity however!
- There are some excellent exercises on maintaining mindfulness in progressively more distracting situations.
- At the end of the book there are several chapters on what she calls the illusion of free will and control; O'Keeffe advocates seeing the mind as a supporter of a natural flow of events coming from a higher source. Dropping identification with the ego-self is freedom.

.....

Of course, there are many more teachers of non-duality whom you may encounter on the internet or in the bookstore. However, I think you will find that the five I've described are among the best of them. One way to get a sense of how this approach to spirituality is spreading in our western world is to read compilations of interviews with people who have successfully pursued this path. Two of these are:

- "Conversations on non-duality", Cherry Red Books, 2011) edited by Eleonora Gilbert: interviews with 26 individuals who have had non-dual "realisations". You will find Spira and O'Keeffe there; I'd also recommend Francis Lucille (Spira's teacher), Gangaji, Jeff Foster, Tony Parsons, Katie Davis and Sundance Burke.
- An older collection of interviews is: "The Awakening West" (Fair Winds Press, 2003) edited by Lynn Marie Lumiere and John Lumiere Wins. This includes Tolle and Adyashanti among its interviewees.

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**Summary:**

- The non-dual view is that our essential being is consciousness; we are already part of the one Consciousness from which the physical world arises.
  - To realize this, we do not need to "purify" mind (as in the traditional approach); rather we must learn simply (!) to cease being caught up in our spontaneous mental activity.
  - We become an "observer" of the world, rather than a compulsive controller.
  - Coupled with this, we can use focussed reasoning to demonstrate that we have mentally constructed a world that is ultimately unreal.
  - Exemplary modern non-dual teachers are described: Tolle, Goode, Spira, Adyashanti and O'Keeffe.
- .....

**C. Overall Summary; reconciling Traditional, Seth, and Non-dual Approaches.**

The awareness of intangible dimensions, beyond the physical, was probably a part of human experience even before we gained the power to organise our thoughts. It must have been stronger in cultures with a simple life, closer to nature. Unfortunately for us, the materialism of modern western life has smothered this awareness, and deprived millions of the meaning that comes from the sense of belonging to an order far greater than the physical. Even worse, this whole potential is now often derided; evidence to the contrary, and the accumulated wisdom of the great spiritual teachers, is typically ignored. Where the idea of spirit or higher consciousness is allowed (as in churches, mosques, synagogues), the original teachings frequently come encrusted with interpretations by lesser minds, and ossified into dogma.

However, there is hope! We do not have to rely, as in earlier centuries, on whatever single version of spiritual truth is available in our immediate cultural vicinity. Instead, we can take advantage of modern technology – books and the internet – that allow us to access a wide range of expositions from many cultures and eras, including the writings of modern spiritual seekers who have “gone the distance” themselves, and returned to explain to the rest of us how to do likewise. In other words, we now have every opportunity to find and pursue a spiritual path to answer for ourselves, the central, healing question: “who am I?” This course has attempted to point the way.

We have looked at a number of possible sources for study and practice. It has been by no means comprehensive: for example, Buddhism is under-represented here, and deserves to be explored by anyone embarking on a spiritual journey, and wondering what will suit them best. I have assumed that before immersing themselves in the spiritual work, people have some basic familiarity with how their minds work (as presented, for example, in the early stages of the Healing Journey program). We need to be able to identify what we are thinking, and to have some ability (it need not be total!) to sit and keep our minds still for a time. An acquaintance with our dreams and their symbolism is also a help – among other benefits, it shows clearly that we create worlds in our minds when asleep.

After discussing spirituality generally (topic 2), and the need to disentangle our search from dogmatic religion, we looked, in topic 3, at the more conventional traditional approach to spiritual development, following the teachings of authors who have scaled the heights themselves. The aim is to identify and remove all mental obstacles to contact with a higher consciousness or divine source, obstacles commonly erected by a focus on the self, its gratification and protection. I’ve found that the teachers from “Eastern” traditions such as yoga and Buddhism tend to be particularly helpful; they point out that change depends on active effort within ourselves, rather than through adopting any prefabricated system of beliefs. Eckhart Tolle and Eknath Easwaran are ideal teachers for beginners in this way. We devoted some time to “A Course in Miracles”, a channelled Christian work, which is essentially a sophisticated version of the traditional approach; it can be difficult reading, and could well occupy a lifetime’s study.

The channelled Seth books likewise are so rich and full of information that one could adopt them as a complete path to understanding (I’ve been reading Seth for more than 20 years, and have by no means absorbed all he has to say). He lays out a whole metaphysics: the nature of “primary” and “secondary” realities, how physical form appears, how the individual consciousness relates to higher levels of consciousness, dreams, sleep, purpose in life, and many more restricted topics. A large portion of his writing is, however, about illness and healing, and is full of practical advice. It is this aspect of his work that I introduced in topic 4 of this course; if it whets your appetite, I’d suggest going next to “The Nature of Personal Reality”, by Jane Roberts (channelling Seth).

Topic 5 introduced the “non-dual” view of the nature of reality, and hence of ourselves: there is one consciousness, and each of us is a part of it. Easy to say, hard to realize, that is, to know its truth deeply and beyond doubt. It is an understanding that goes back to ancient times, and one which is probably foundational in all the great religions, although often buried under the weight of concern for



improving the assumed separate self. “Non-duality” was barely mentioned as a descriptive term when I began my searching in the late 1970’s, but it has become quite widely known in western spiritual circles in the last 30 years. It appears more logically coherent and straightforward than the traditional approach: instead of assuming that we are physical beings, housing a non-physical “spirit”, it focusses from the start on ridding ourselves of the idea that we are a separate, physical body. The difficulty is, of course, that we don’t want to do this, at least until we see more clearly what it entails, and what the advantages may be. I’ve introduced several authors who can help us get started along this road if we are interested.

### **Healing the body:**

Our main practical concern in the Healing Journey program is healing – which ultimately means relief of suffering. We can get this relief, at times, through medical cures of the body. We can also reduce and even remove suffering by changes in our mental reactions, and ultimately, through learning that we are, in essence, consciousness, rather than matter. The earlier stages of the program have mostly been directed towards managing the mind more skillfully, while the spiritual journey, as we’ve discussed it here, has been mainly concerned with uncovering the hidden spiritual dimensions of ourselves. However, the three approaches (below) to knowing the self that we’ve examined all have great relevance to practical physical and mental healing as well.

- The traditional/conventional spiritual path: might be visualised as 2 circles: a tiny one - our small self – outside of a vast circle representing the Divine Source (diagram in topic 2). The ultimate aim is to establish contact, to break out of our small circle and merge with the larger one, the Whole. Provided we do our part – basically, diminish the self-centred activities of our minds - it becomes possible to ask for and receive guidance and even direct help from a divine power. There is evidence that prayer can work, and countless millions of people (including myself) would claim to have received such help, particularly at difficult times in our lives. Throughout ACIM, Jesus provides advice on healing the body, based on the theme that all such healing primarily requires a change in our minds; we come to understand that we are not separate and that we need to accept/surrender our will to the greater will of God (the large circle, that ultimately embraces everything).
- The Seth model: In spite of his Olympian view of reality, Seth comes down, as it were, to where most of us are, and compassionately provides practical advice on healing of mind and body. He describes a series of concentric levels or shells of consciousness (see the diagram in topics 2 and 4), and claims that our own ego-minds, from the innermost of these shells, sends directions to the next highest level (the “Inner Self”), which then brings about changes in the body-mind. It’s superficially like the Freudian idea of the unconscious mind acting on what our thinking initiates. Seth puts the responsibility on us to tailor our thinking conscientiously, removing sceptical and unhelpful thoughts, replacing them with unambiguous, positive healing ideas. Many would dismiss the idea that this can assist physical healing as wishful thinking (!), although as a culture, we have not even begun to investigate the potential of this approach to healing. Beyond this practical work, Seth’s writings are full of adventures in consciousness, with many (mostly rather difficult!) exercises we can do to expand our awareness of who we are.
- The non-dual path: seems at first sight to claim that once we realize we’re not a separate body, our concern for it will disappear! While there’s some truth in this, it’s helpful to situate this path within the Seth model of circles or levels of consciousness. Non-dual “realisation” involves locating our awareness or identifying our “selves” at a circle or shell above the innermost body-



mind level. From this more expanded vantage point, we can view the tribulations of our body-mind with detachment, but also with affection – it is, after all, our vehicle for experiencing this beautiful physical world. While it becomes more obvious that what we think and do are primary causes of illness, we are now able to tend our bodies efficiently, free from the distorting effect of emotional reactions to events. There is no more suffering when the ego-mind, with all its easily frustrated desires, is no longer identified as “myself”.

All of these paths share the common aim of helping us give up our old, limited views of who we are, in favour of a new, wider view that includes intangible spiritual dimensions as well as the familiar physical and psychological ones. In the traditional path, this is often called “surrender” of our will to a “higher” one, which is unappealing to most of us! The “expansion” metaphor is perhaps more acceptable: as body-minds we tend to contract or confine our awareness around our perceived problems; as spiritual beings our awareness is vastly expanded. Nothing is lost: we are at liberty to drop back into the contracted mode at any time, for example, to accomplish a specific task, but we can spend most of our time in a peaceful, even joyous, state of much-expanded awareness. More radically, we come to see that there is no reason to allow our minds to be arbiters or determiners of what reality may be: the mind is simply one of many evolutionary developments, aimed at promoting survival of the species. We must look beyond mind, the sages tell us, to find the reality underpinning the expression of consciousness as physicality.

In our present culture, the whole idea of “healing through the mind” is unfamiliar. Thus, proceeding to the idea that we are consciousness in physical form will be a bridge too far for many. My advice to beginners on the spiritual healing path would be to join a community devoted to conventional spiritual study, and try to establish a sense of connection to the Divine. Meanwhile, read widely, and include some study of Seth: the common-sense nature of a lot of his advice on healing by modifying our thinking processes agrees well with cognitive therapy in modern psychology. As the ideas become more familiar, and our meditative and other practices are established, we may then wish to explore the more radical and fascinating approach of “non-duality”.

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Programs 2018-\\HJ6 Spiritual 2022\\Whole appendix 6Spir 2022

## Appendixes to manual HJ6 Spiritual, 2022

### Appendix topic 2

#### Video links for topic 2

[What is Materialism? 1 min](#)

Very clear In3/T5

.....  
[Spirituality vs Religion ~ Eckhart Tolle 2.50 Audio only](#)

Many religious people are stuck at the level of thoughts, beliefs

The new spirituality is arising.... Outside of religious structures.

In4/T5 Excellent brief account

.....  
[Religion Vs Spirituality 3.00 Sean Meshorer](#)

Attractive young speaker; very clear and simple

Good pictures in background

In4/T5

.....  
[Street Survey 1: If you believe God exists, why do you think he created the world?; 3.00](#)

OK – clearer optics than 4.28 (seems to be a glitch near the beginning)

In2/T4

.....  
[Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo – The Importance of Awareness 1.54](#)

Must observe the mind constantly; control monkey mind

Become a master of mind rather than slave

In3/T5 A very useful basic short lesson.

.....  
[What is God? – Sadhguru 5.59](#)

Our idea of God is a projection of ourselves and what we know – an exaggerated version

Jokes about it – good

Can't define it – can only dissolve into it. Can experience it

Ideas about God are all cultural nonsense.

In3/T5 V good light short account.

.....  
[Consciousness Beyond Life: The Science of the Near-Death Experience by Pim van Lommel 8.35](#)

A wonderful short account, Van Lommel very appealing and convincing. 5/5

.....  
[The Difference Between Spirituality and Religion by Ken Wilber 2.59](#)

Good account: relative vs absolute truth. 2 modes of knowing. Rather serious

A bit elitist

In4/T3

.....  
[The Journey Of Awakening 4.09 Tolle](#)

Mysteries of the Universe – explored: but omit one word – consciousness.

That the universe is conscious is the most amazing miracle.

How do I know it is? I am conscious! You are. The Universe is conscious in us. It is experiencing itself for brief moments as a human, a plant, an animal

Scientists miss this by only looking outwards

*In5/T5 Great short statement!*

.....  
Brian Greene asks Richard Dawkins ... Does God Exist? 4.32

The 2 scientists start with the premise that science is the arbiter of knowledge and truth

Begs the question: how to know

Green condescends about religion

Dawkins is very anti (in a gentlemanly Brit fashion)

*In2/T5 Useful to show scientific imperialism at work*

.....  
ZALMAN SCHACHTER SHALOMI • Faith is different than beliefs 4.04

Faith/faithing is a verb – open oneself up to the intelligence of the universe

- Let go of how you want the world to be

- Holy words should not be slogans

*In3/T3 Good but v brief.*

.....  
My stroke of insight 18.33 Jill Bolte Taylor **TED** (one of 25 best) 18.33

*(seems we can't hyperlink it, but can just access thru Google by title)*

Or use: <https://youtu.be/UyyjU8fzEYU>

Left hemisphere thinks linearly (p and f); the part that says “I am (separate)”;

she lost this rational part with her stroke; now silent, energy all around; beautiful (brain chatter turned off). All stress gone, peace

Felt surrender: “I’m no longer the choreographer of my life”.

Felt enormous; nirvana

She went to a world of peaceful beings (?)

Took 8 yrs to recover

We have the power to choose how we want to be in the world

*In4/T5 Powerful; a bridge between science and spirituality*

.....  
Unconditional Love - Wayne Dyer meets Anita Moorjani 8.30

Important thing is not to be “positive” but to be oneself.

*About her OBE/NDE experience- good learning In4/T4*

.....  
consciousness & quantum physics ~ Reality is an illusion 9.59

A romp through some of the ideas: basic quantum field with vast energy and potential underlies all; our observation modifies reality- Stuart Hameroff, Dean Radin, Amit Goswami, others

*In3/T3 Useful as a demo that there are scientific people seriously endorsing the idea that our world is potential*

.....  
The idea of God 11.07 Rupert Spira

Questions about prayer and healing

Healing at a distance is only extraordinary if you think there are separate consciousnesses

All minds are part of the same consciousness

How the idea of God arises (creator of all that stuff out there); it's a reflection of our ideas about ourselves

There is some benefit to praying to that infinite out there – because this expands the self – surrender

6. But this conception of God can only remain if the idea of a separate self remains

Our idea of God has to evolve

But in fact God lies at the origin or source of the separate self, prior to what it knows

The true prayer is turning the mind away from the objective

God is the largest object the mind can perceive

The mind must turn in the other direction – towards its source.

This is “the practice of the presence of God”

The simple non-objective experience of being aware – the name of this in our language is “I”

“I am” is God's first name

The ult prayer is to allow the mind to sink deeper and deeper into its source- gradually divesting itself of its limitations.

I am that I am

It is prior to thought – can't think it, just be that knowing.

*Wonderful, clear good for teaching* In5/T5

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#### The Primacy of Consciousness, Peter Russell 25.16

Good basic explanation that we are awareness, consciousness

Combined with the acknowledgement that modern science paradigm can't explain it

*In3/T5 Very personable and clear;*

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#### How do you explain consciousness? | David Chalmers 18.37

Excellent presenter – a materialist

Describes the “easy” problem of consciousness – correlative studies

Need crazy ideas to explain the hard problem

First crazy idea: that consciousness is fundamental! A fundamental law like electromagnetism (since can't explain consc in terms of existing fundamental laws)

Second crazy idea: that consc is universal – everything has it! = panpsychism

Link consc to info processing (but me: implies matter is necessary for consc)

Can computers be consc? He thinks yes.

*In3/T5 Good account of physicist struggling with problem – no ref to spiritual teachings!*

---

#### David Maginley in The Soul Booth 24.01

Story of his own life and cancer

12.20 mins: #1 concern – “the unfinished love story”

17.10 “All healthy religious traditions say the realm of the divine is within you” not external.

17.40. “Consciousness is the only real estate you share with God”

19. self acceptance

20 V brief story of his NDE for last few mins.

*Wonderful; excellent sympathetic interviewer; inspiring* I5T5

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#### On the Relationship Between Science and Liberation: Michael Singer 15.10

- Science has shown us that everything arises out of the quantum field

- So why aren't we amazed at everything – and how it arises.

- The great sages showed us that all of form arises from consciousness.

- The thing called the psyche, or ego, has developed, and asserts its will to fight with the quantum field!

- The absurdity of the individuality of self! That there's something special about what's happening to you, instead of realizing that it's all the same – that's the true non-duality: energy manifesting itself as form
- We develop the idea "I matter; things should be as I want"
- We miss 99.999999.... % of what is going on; we pick up only what our senses tell us, and miss the rest
- Have to learn that what's going on in my mind is an illusion
- You made up what you want based on minuscule past experiences
- What's in front of you shouldn't be as you want – it's just the way it is
- To bring harmony, enlightenment: study the grace of what's going on – the manifestation of a great energy field.
- Humility; we have no idea what's going on
- Let go of the individuality; and then consciousness touches consciousness
- cf Christ: "My father and I are one".
- So science is a great thing – not against religion – it is a great force that will lead us to God if we are willing to live it.

*In4/T5 Wonderful, appealing merging of science with non-dual thought!*

#### Top 10 Materialist Fallacies Bernardo Kastrup 14.43

*(a modern philosopher counters ideas often used in support of materialism; I've added some comments)*

##### 1. Because we can't change material things at will, they must be outside our consciousness.

- But we know large segments of our consciousness/mind are not under our volition (will).
- Reasonable to suppose that reality could be generated by segments of our consciousness that are not under control of volition.

*(I would add, we know little about the process; probably habits of thought establish fixed patterns, which it is hard to change).*

##### 2. Reality is clearly not inside our head.

- This is an inversion: materialism/realism in fact says the qualities that we seem to perceive in the world are created by brain; for all the realist knows, the external reality is a series of abstract events that our brains put together to look like "the world". *(He's saying that the apparent external nature of the world doesn't prove materialism; it is equally consistent with idealism – i.e. produced by consciousness)*

##### 3. Correlations exist between brain activity and body activities (or better, between brain activity and subjective experiences):

- mistakes image for cause; cf whirlpool stream analogy – there's nothing more to a whirlpool than water. Flames are the image of combustion. *(i.e. confuses correlation with causation)*
- *His explanation is a bit confusing: simpler to say that when, for example, a specific portion of the brain "lights up" as we see something, this could either be because it is producing the image (materialism) or because consciousness is producing the image, and that part of consciousness that looks like our brain is simply registering it.*

##### 4. Psychoactive drugs change consciousness; therefore brain causes consciousness;

- but many processes in consc influence other processes.

##### 5. Many separate beings participating in the same reality – which must therefore be outside consciousness.

- Begs the question: materialism is being assumed in order to defend it. If reality is in consciousness, our bodies are in consciousness – psyches may not be separate. The collective consc. may be generating the material world

##### 6. The dualism consc/unconsc is nonsense.

- K says unconsc is really consc., just obscured. Like sun obscures stars in daytime.

7. Reality has immutable laws – so must be material....

- But all events in consc may indeed unfold acc to laws; why not? A collective unconsc may generate reality.

8. If collective UC gens reality, reality must be outside consc....

- Refutation – brain is inside consc...? (*Complex: it doesn't seem to follow that what a collective UC generates would be "outside" of itself*).

9. Too metaphysical....

- but materialists can't prove externality – they require an incredible metaphysics; saying reality is generated by brain, and outer world is highly abstract and can't be known.

10. Why would consciousness deceive us by simulating a materialist world?

- Old prejudice.

*-In summary, materialism requires more assumptions (than non-dualism) and can be refuted by simple logic. Reality is exactly what it seems to be – a production of consciousness.*

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### Appendix topic 3

#### Spiritual quotations and questions.

**Sri Krishna Prem:** “Doubt: doorway to knowledge” (from an article in Parabola magazine). *Krishna Prem was an English Cambridge graduate who spent most of his adult life in India, embraced Hinduism, and co-founded an ashram there.*

Doubt is the doorway to knowledge, and this is the reason why science, which relies on doubts and experiment, has made such progress, while religion, which relies on the blind acceptance of what was written in books hundreds or thousands of years ago, is gradually losing its hold on men’s hearts. All the knowledge that we have is the result of someone’s having doubted something that most people of the time believed to be true. And this is as true in the field of religion as in that of science.

What is religion nowadays? For the most part it consists in accepting blindly a set of beliefs taught by one’s father or teachers. One hears men say: “My religion says so and so; our community says so and so; our sacred books say so and so”. As if it mattered a pin what one’s religion says, what one’s community believes, or what one’s sacred books teach! The one thing that matters is the Truth; and Truth is only to be attained by caring nothing for what one’s community or one’s books say, and by fearlessly pursuing it with one’s heart and soul, caring for nothing until it is attained.

#### Questions:

- Do you agree with him that religions generally rely mostly on unquestioning adherence to doctrine?
- How do you react to his statement that it doesn’t “matter a pin” what the sacred books teach?
- How do we “attain the Truth”?

.....  
**Swami Sivananda Radha:** “The purpose of images”, in “Time to be holy”. *Swami Radha was a German woman who was initiated into sanyas by Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh, then returned to Canada to establish an ashram in B.C.*

All cultures have an idea of something indescribable that is in some way inherent in the human being. When we want to talk about it, we give it a name, even though it has no particular shape or form. We call it soul, over-soul, Higher Self, the divine Atman, the Absolute, but it is something that we can’t really fasten to an image in our mind.

The images of the Divine that are presented by various religions have an overpowering influence and we accept them without question. From a yogic point of view, that is fine – to start with.....but as my guru would say. “It’s fine to be in kindergarten, but you have to get out of it sooner or later.” You have to deal with this on a very personal level, and really ask, “If I say *God* or *Atman* or *soul*, what do I mean?”

When you begin to think like this you will begin to understand that the Divine is neither male nor female, and has no shape or form. ....I avoid the word God here because God has already been assigned the image of an old man in this culture, and we talk of “He” and “Him”. If you want to break loose from narrow images, you must think only of the Divine, of the divine power, divine forces.....

You (have to give).... the idea of God...time and freedom to emerge. You cannot put restrictions on it to make it what you want it to be.

#### Questions:

- What common themes do you see in the quotes from Krishna Prem and Swami Radha?



- What is Swami Radha advocating that we do about our religious or spiritual ideas? (*She has a great deal of practical advice in her many books, including this one*).

.....  
**Joel S. Goldsmith:** “Living by Grace” ch 5. (*A Christian writer and healer in the first half of last century*)

The goal of the mystical life is for us to become beholders of God in action, where we ascribe nothing to ourselves – not even good motives. We no longer have desires. We no longer have needs.....This is called “living by Grace”.....If I prayed for something, it would mean I have a desire, an end, an object in life that I am seeking. But I have nothing to pray for. I have only this minute to live, this minute in which I must be fulfilled by the Spirit.....That is what the mystical life is – attaining that degree where every day you find yourself not wondering about tomorrow because there is no tomorrow for you, there is only a tomorrow for God.

Questions:

- What is the nature of the relationship between this spiritual seeker and his God?
- Why does he seek to have “no desires”?

.....  
**Paramahansa Yogananda:** “How to perceive the infinite Christ”. (*Yogananda was an Indian swami who moved to California in 1920, established a spiritual centre there and became a teacher to millions of westerners. His book “Autobiography of a Yogi” is extremely well-known*).

O Divine Mother! Come out of the cave of my silence. My darkness melts in the fathomless wisdom of Thy dark eyes. My cry is Thy cry; my joy Thy joy. My soul is lost in Thy Spirit. My heart has lost its throb in Thy throb. My hands are but Thy hands, my brain Thy brain, my thoughts Thy thoughts, my feelings Thy feelings, my soul Thy soul, my love Thy love. Divine Mother, my errors, my virtues are Thine; but my love for Thee is mine. My heart feels only Thy love, my love dreams of Thy love, my love drinks of Thy love with the lips of silence. Mother Divine, Mother Divine, it is Thou who has become Christ, Krishna, and the saints of all religions. Divine Mother, Divine Christ.

Questions:

- Comment on the relationship of this man to his God!

.....  
**Brother Lawrence:** from “The Practice of the presence of God” (*Brother Lawrence was a 17<sup>th</sup> century monk living in Paris*).

Having found in many books different methods of going to God, and divers practices of the spiritual life, I thought this would serve rather to puzzle me than facilitate what I sought after, which was nothing but how to become wholly God’s. This made me resolve to give the all for the all; so after having given myself wholly to God, that He might take away my sins, I renounced, for the love of Him, everything that was not He, and I began to live as if there was none but He and I in the world. Sometimes I considered myself before Him as a poor criminal at the feet of his judge; at other times I beheld Him in my heart as my Father, as my God. I worshipped Him the oftenest that I could, keeping my mind in His holy presence, and recalling it as often as I found it wandered from Him. I found no small pain in this exercise, and yet I continued it, notwithstanding all the difficulties that occurred, without troubling or disquieting myself when my mind wandered involuntarily. I made this my business as much all the day long as at the appointed times of prayer; for at all times, every hour, every minute, even in the height of my business, I drove away from my mind everything that was capable of interrupting my thoughts of God.

Questions:

- Contrast 2 views of our relationship to a divine power (at either end of a range of possible views):
  - It is a power than can be a valuable source of help to me when I need it.
  - It is a power to which I would like to surrender, and know myself a part of all.

Where does Brother Lawrence fall on this spectrum? Where do you fall?

.....

**Seth:** from “Seth Speaks”, by Jane Roberts. (*Seth was an entity channelled by Jane Roberts*).

In a reality that is inconceivably multidimensional, the old concepts of god are relatively meaningless. Even the term, a supreme being, is in itself distortive, for you naturally project the qualities of human nature upon it.

If I told you that God was an idea, you would not understand what I meant, for you do not understand the dimensions in which an idea has its reality, or the energy that it can originate and propel. You do not believe in ideas in the same way that you believe in physical objects, so if I tell you that God is an idea, you will misinterpret this to mean that God is less than real - nebulous, without reality, without purpose, and without motive action.

Now your own physical image is the materialization of your idea of yourself within the properties of matter. Without the idea of yourself, your physical image would not be; yet often it is all you are aware of. The initial power and energy of that idea of yourself keeps your image alive. Ideas, then, are far more important than you realize. If you will try to accept the idea that your own existence is multidimensional, that you dwell within the medium of infinite probabilities, then you may catch a slight glimpse of the reality that is behind the word "god," and you may understand why it is almost impossible to capture a true understanding of that concept in words.

God, therefore, is first of all a creator, not of one physical universe but of an infinite variety of probable existences, far more vast than those aspects of the physical universe with which your scientists are familiar. He did not simply then send a son to live and die on one small planet. He is a part of all probabilities.

There have been parables told, and stories of beginnings. All of these have been attempts to transmit knowledge in as simple terms as possible. Often answers were given to questions that literally have no meaning outside of your own system of reality.

God does not exist apart from or separate from physical reality, but exists within it and as a part of it, as he exists within and as a part of all other systems of existence.....

Your Christ figure represents, symbolically, your idea of God and his relationships.....

Now it is easier perhaps for some of you to understand the simple stories and parables of beginnings of which I have spoken. But the time has come for mankind to take several steps further, to expand the nature of his own consciousness by trying to comprehend a more profound version of reality. You have outgrown the time of children's tales.

#### Questions:

- If you accept that “channelling” is possible, and read Seth with an open mind, you will see that this is a much broader overview of divinity than human authors can achieve. This passage may require several readings – then see if you can summarise the main points.
- .....

**A Course in Miracles:** Workbook, lesson number 326 (*Jesus, speaking through Helen Schucman*)

Father, I was created in Your Mind, a holy Thought that never left its home. I am forever Your Effect, and You forever and forever are my Cause. As You created me I have remained.....And all Your attributes abide in me, because it is Your Will to have a Son so like his Cause that Cause and Its Effect are indistinguishable. Let me know that I am an Effect of God, and so I have the power to create like You.....

Questions:

- I included this brief quote to show how similar are the statements of Seth and Jesus. Again, it's not easy to understand at first: what does he mean that God is a "cause" and you an "effect"?

.....  
**Rupert Spira:** from "The Nature of Consciousness" (*Spira is a brilliant contemporary exponent of the "non-dual" path to spiritual understanding and experience*).

All spiritual and religious paths, in one way or another, are aimed at divesting the mind of or expanding it beyond its limitations. However, when the mind is relieved of its limitations it ceases to be mind, as such, and stands revealed as the eternal, infinite consciousness that is its essential, irreducible reality. That knowing of our own being as it truly is – consciousness's knowing of itself in us – is the experience of peace, happiness or love.

Questions:

- Like many other spiritual teachers, Spira points out that we must do the work – recognize and remove the limitations of our conventional thinking – if we hope to gain a truer experience of our relationship to the Divine. What similarities do you see between these last 3 excerpts?

.....  
**The "wisdom traditions" of mankind.**

For a survey of the great religions of mankind I warmly recommend Huston Smith's book "The World's Religions". Here is a brief outline of 5 of these religions.

**Hinduism.** Probably the oldest living religious tradition, and the predominant one practised in India. Its most striking characteristic (by contrast with Judaeo-Christian teaching) is its ready acceptance of ideas from most other traditions; there are many paths to God. Hinduism embraces both polytheism and monotheism, both personal and transpersonal ideas of God. The most sacred texts are the Veda, or Vedas, an extensive series of songs to various gods and goddesses. Classical Hinduism views the human as an immortal soul encased in a perishable body, and bound by action, or *karma*, to a cycle of endless existences (reincarnation); the ultimate goal is to escape from this cycle. There are many practical paths to enlightenment, to suit the differing temperament of humans. The world is viewed in many ways, for example as an exhalation of God, as *maya*, illusion, and as a place for moral learning, but ultimately the *atman*, or soul, is *Brahman*, or God; the soul is reality.

**Buddhism.** Siddhartha Gautama, born in Northern India around 563 BC, was a prince who left home and family, and after a prolonged quest achieved a profound understanding of the nature of self and reality (enlightenment). He then spent many years travelling and teaching. Buddhism diverged from the prevailing Hinduism of India in preaching the importance of finding truth for oneself, rather than simply accepting authority. The Buddha realized that life is suffering, and that suffering comes from ignorance (attachment to desires). This can be overcome by following a practical path involving rather common-sense psychological change (very much analogous to our Healing Journey!). With the extinguishing of attachment to personal desire, nirvana or the Godhead or Truth may be achieved. Buddhism denies the existence of a single almighty God, although great teachers and practitioners from the past may be worshipped as "gods". The aim is to stop the cycle of birth and death, and achieve *nirvana*, or enlightenment, usually after many lifetimes.

Like most religions, Buddhism later split into a number of schools, including the 2 most well-known in the West: Tibetan Buddhism, exemplified by the Dalai Lama and emphasising compassion, and Zen, a blending of Buddhist teachings with Taoist ideas from China, which then spread to Japan in the 6<sup>th</sup>

century, becoming established there a few centuries later. Zen emphasises prolonged sitting meditation and the study of *koans* or conundrums with no logical solution, the aim being to bring the sacred into the ordinary.

Perhaps the most puzzling aspect of Buddhism to westerners is that, in contrast to the *atman* of Hinduism or the *soul* of Christianity, it claims there is no “self”, no permanent identity, only a collection of impermanent and constantly changing personality characteristics – a “flickering flame”. In fact, everything is “empty” of real identity: there is ultimately no difference between things, e.g., between oneself and the Buddha. We will encounter this idea again later in this course when we study some modern “non-dual” teachings.

### **The 3 great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.**

These 3 all trace their origins to Abraham (around 1700 BCE). They share a common belief in one transcendent God, who is creator, sustainer and ruler of the universe. All believe in prophets, moral accountability, divine judgement and eternal reward or punishment.

“**Judaism**” refers to both a religion and a people. Its historical roots lie in the Hebrew Bible, referred to by Christians as the “Old Testament”. Most sacred are the first 5 books of this bible (the Torah), followed by books of the “prophets” and the “scriptures”. The religion is characterised by a reverence for books, and an immense volume of writing and commentary, accumulated over its long history.

**Christianity** began as a sect of Judaism in the Roman Empire in the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. and came to dominate the cultural life of Europe for much its history, becoming eventually the largest religion (in terms of numbers of adherents) in the world. As is well known, the crucifixion and resurrection from the dead of the historical figure Jesus of Nazareth is the foundation of the Christian faith. The claim is not so much that Jesus was resuscitated, as that he transcended mortality by entering into a share in God’s life and power. While the Jewish Bible was the first scripture for Christian believers, a collection of Greek compositions, comprising the “New Testament”, was written in the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. as a reinterpretation of the Jewish scripture in the light of the experience of the crucified and raised messiah. It also contains 4 narratives, called Gospels, that provide a record of Jesus’s sayings and deeds (other “gospels” are said to have been removed by later revisers of the text). Three great families within Christianity have arisen as a result of conflict over doctrine: the Orthodox, which split from the Catholic in 1054, and the Protestant tradition which began as a reaction to Catholicism in 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

**Islam**, now the world’s second-largest and fastest-growing religion, is a later arrival than its monotheistic cousins. It arose from a series of revelations from God transmitted to and through Muhammad, a businessman in 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia. These revelations continued over a period of 22 years, first in the city of Mecca and later in Medina, to which Muhammad and his followers fled to escape persecution by the religious establishment of his time. They were later collected and compiled into a holy book, the Quran. The Quran confirms the Torah and the New Testament as revelations from God, but superseded or corrected by the later communication to Muhammad. Within Islam there is no God but Allah; Jesus is recognized as a prophet, but not as “God’s son”. The 5 “pillars” of Islam are: a declaration of faith in Allah; that Muhammad is the vehicle for the final and complete revelation, the Quran; the responsibility of adherents to donate a portion of their wealth annually (to the poor); the one-month annual fast of Ramadan; and the pilgrimage to Mecca to be undertaken by capable adults at least once in their lifetime.

.....

Below is one of the 7 sections of chapter 4 of ACIM, with some comments after each paragraph, to illustrate this process of slow reading and reflection.

## **Section I from Chapter 4 of the text of ACIM, with comments (bold, italic font)**

### **I. Right Teaching and Right Learning**

T-4.I.1. A good teacher clarifies his own ideas and strengthens them by teaching them. 2 Teacher and pupil are alike in the learning process. 3 They are in the same order of learning, and unless they share their lessons conviction will be lacking. 4 A good teacher must believe in the ideas he teaches, but he must meet another condition; he must believe in the students to whom he offers the ideas.

***This seems obvious enough.***

T-4.I.2. Many stand guard over their ideas because they want to protect their thought systems as they are, and learning means change. 2 Change is always fearful to the separated, because they cannot conceive of it as a move towards healing the separation. 3 They always perceive it as a move toward further separation, because the separation was their first experience of change. 4 You believe that if you allow no change to enter into your ego you will find peace. 5 This profound confusion is possible only if you maintain that the same thought system can stand on two foundations. 6 Nothing can reach spirit from the ego, and nothing can reach the ego from spirit. 7 Spirit can neither strengthen the ego nor reduce the conflict within it. 8 The ego **is** a contradiction. 9 Your self and God's Self **are** in opposition. 10 They are opposed in source, in direction and in outcome. 11 They are fundamentally irreconcilable, because spirit cannot perceive and the ego cannot know. 12 They are therefore not in communication and can never be in communication. 13 Nevertheless, the ego can learn, even though its maker can be misguided. 14 He cannot, however, make the totally lifeless out of the life-given.

***It might help here to think of Seth's "hierarchy" of consciousness. We have "God" or All That Is embracing all, and the ego, the little sense of being separate from God (and from everything else) at the bottom of the hierarchy – lots of little parts that think they are separate! Now "spirit", meaning God, cannot itself perceive – it needs the little ego selves with their sense organs to do that. But the ego (that's us!) "cannot know", i.e., doesn't any longer know who or what it is. Impasse! Spirit/God is not going to "reach the ego", and any communication only becomes possible if our ego-selves somehow find the will to expand outside of our little boxes – and we are afraid to do this.***

***Personally, I'm not quite sure what the last sentence means (often happens!).***

T-4.I.3. Spirit need not be taught, but the ego must be. 2 Learning is ultimately perceived as frightening because it leads to the relinquishment, not the destruction, of the ego to the light of spirit. 3 This is the change the ego must fear, because it does not share my charity. 4 My lesson was like yours, and because I learned it I can teach it. 5 I will never attack your ego, but I am trying to teach you how its thought system arose. 6 When I remind you of your true creation, your ego cannot but respond with fear.

***J.C. is telling us we need to understand how our ego thought system is keeping us fearful, and like him, learn that we are "the light of spirit".***

T-4.I.4. Teaching and learning are your greatest strengths now, because they enable you to change your mind and help others to change theirs. 2 Refusing to change your mind will not prove that the separation

has not occurred. 3 The dreamer who doubts the reality of his dream while he is still dreaming is not really healing his split mind. 4 You dream of a separated ego and believe in a world that rests upon it. 5 This is very real to you. 6 You cannot undo it by not changing your mind about it. 7 If you are willing to renounce the role of guardian of your thought system and open it to me, I will correct it very gently and lead you back to God.

***Here's what we need to do (sentence 7)!***

T-4.I.5. Every good teacher hopes to give his students so much of his own learning that they will one day no longer need him. 2 This is the one true goal of the teacher. 3 It is impossible to convince the ego of this, because it goes against all of its own laws. 4 But remember that laws are set up to protect the continuity of the system in which the lawmaker believes. 5 It is natural for the ego to try to protect itself once you have made it, but it is not natural for you to want to obey its laws unless **you** believe them. 6 The ego cannot make this choice because of the nature of its origin. 7 You can, because of the nature of yours.

***A distinction is being made (as in para 2 above – go back and take a look) between the “ego” and “you”. “You” must mean a “higher” level in Seth’s hierarchy than ego – perhaps his “Inner Self”?***

T-4.I.6. Egos can clash in any situation, but spirit cannot clash at all. 2 If you perceive a teacher as merely "a larger ego" you will be afraid, because to enlarge an ego would be to increase anxiety about separation. 3 I will teach with you and live with you if you will think with me, but my goal will always be to absolve you finally from the need for a teacher. 4 This is the opposite of the ego-oriented teacher's goal. 5 He is concerned with the effect of his ego on other egos, and therefore interprets their interaction as a means of ego preservation. 6 I would not be able to devote myself to teaching if I believed this, and you will not be a devoted teacher as long as you believe it. 7 I am constantly being perceived as a teacher either to be exalted or rejected, but I do not accept either perception for myself.

***Here's the Christian ideal – to allow J.C. to lead and teach us, dropping the ego's resistance.***

T-4.I.7. Your worth is not established by teaching or learning. 2 Your worth is established by God. 3 As long as you dispute this everything you do will be fearful, particularly any situation that lends itself to the belief in superiority and inferiority. 4 Teachers must be patient and repeat their lessons until they are learned. 5 I am willing to do this, because I have no right to set your learning limits for you. 6 Again, nothing you do or think or wish or make is necessary to establish your worth. 7 This point is not debatable except in delusions. 8 Your ego is never at stake because God did not create it. 9 Your spirit is never at stake because He did. 10 Any confusion on this point is delusional, and no form of devotion is possible as long as this delusion lasts.

***The first 2 sentences here are truly reassuring, aren't they? Also sentence 6. Think hard about them, what they imply for your “self-worth”! Then in the last part of the para we come back to the point that was a bit puzzling in para 2 above: God didn't create the ego, “you” did. But He created our spirit. This now seems to make sense: God/the Divine/All That Is creates our consciousness, and from that we create our own idea of a separate ego-self? (It's getting a bit clearer, although perhaps not entirely so yet. This often happens with ACIM; we give it our best shot, then read on and hope for clarity!).***



T-4.I.8. The ego tries to exploit all situations into forms of praise for itself in order to overcome its doubts. 2 It will remain doubtful as long as you believe in its existence. 3 You who made it cannot trust it, because in your right mind you realize it is not real. 4 The only sane solution is not to try to change reality, which is indeed a fearful attempt, but to accept it as it is. 5 You are part of reality, which stands unchanged beyond the reach of your ego but within easy reach of spirit. 6 When you are afraid, be still and know that God is real, and you are His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. 7 Do not let your ego dispute this, because the ego cannot know what is as far beyond its reach as you are.

***Students of the Bible will find phrases from it echoed here!***

T-4.I.9. God is not the author of fear. 2 You are. 3 You have chosen to create unlike Him, and have therefore made fear for yourself. 4 You are not at peace because you are not fulfilling your function. 5 God gave you a very lofty function that you are not meeting. 6 Your ego has chosen to be afraid instead of meeting it. 7 When you awaken you will not be able to understand this, because it is literally incredible. 8 **Do not believe the incredible now.** 9 Any attempt to increase its believableness is merely to postpone the inevitable. 10 The word "inevitable" is fearful to the ego, but joyous to the spirit. 11 God is inevitable, and you cannot avoid Him any more than He can avoid you.

***Now here is the deepest explanation for fear that I, at least, have ever read: we separated ourselves from our origin (God/spirit), felt guilty as a result (this guilt part is explained elsewhere) and therefore knew, at some level, that we were not “fulfilling our functions”. Second idea: we are told that we have a “very lofty function”. That is potentially an inspiring thought, isn’t it – if only we knew what it might be! Think about it: obviously it has something to do with returning to an awareness of God....***

T-4.I.10. The ego is afraid of the spirit's joy, because once you have experienced it you will withdraw all protection from the ego, and become totally without investment in fear. 2 Your investment is great now because fear is a witness to the separation, and your ego rejoices when you witness to it. 3 Leave it behind! 4 Do not listen to it and do not preserve it. 5 Listen only to God, Who is as incapable of deception as is the spirit He created. 6 Release yourself and release others. 7 Do not present a false and unworthy picture of yourself to others, and do not accept such a picture of them yourself.

***What is this “false and unworthy picture of yourself”, and what would it mean to “release it”?***

T-4.I.11. The ego has built a shabby and unsheltering home for you, because it cannot build otherwise. 2 Do not try to make this impoverished house stand. 3 Its weakness is your strength. 4 Only God could make a home that is worthy of His creations, who have chosen to leave it empty by their own dispossession. 5 Yet His home will stand forever, and is ready for you when you choose to enter it. 6 Of this you can be wholly certain. 7 God is as incapable of creating the perishable as the ego is of making the eternal.

T-4.I.12. Of your ego you can do nothing to save yourself or others, but of your spirit you can do everything for the salvation of both. 2 Humility is a lesson for the ego, not for the spirit. 3 Spirit is beyond humility, because it recognizes its radiance and gladly sheds its light everywhere. 4 The meek shall inherit the earth because their egos are humble, and this gives them truer perception. 5 The Kingdom of Heaven is the spirit's right, whose beauty and dignity are far beyond doubt, beyond perception, and stand forever as the mark of the Love of God for His creations, who are wholly worthy of Him and only of Him. 6 Nothing else is sufficiently worthy to be a gift for a creation of God Himself.



***These last 2 paras are contrasting the “home” we have built for ourselves, around an ego, with what is available to us if we return to an awareness of our spiritual essence. The “Kingdom of Heaven” is not a place or something that can only be experienced after death, but a state of consciousness or being, available at all times to us.***

T-4.I.13. I will substitute for your ego if you wish, but never for your spirit. 2 A father can safely leave a child with an elder brother who has shown himself responsible, but this involves no confusion about the child's origin. 3 The brother can protect the child's body and his ego, but he does not confuse himself with the father because he does this. 4 I can be entrusted with your body and your ego only because this enables you not to be concerned with them, and lets me teach you their unimportance. 5 I could not understand their importance to you if I had not once been tempted to believe in them myself. 6 Let us undertake to learn this lesson together so we can be free of them together. 7 I need devoted teachers who share my aim of healing the mind. 8 Spirit is far beyond the need of your protection or mine. 9 Remember this: 10 In this world you need not have tribulation because I have overcome the world. 11 That is why you should be of good cheer.

***J.C is asking us to surrender our preoccupation with ego-self and let him lead – the Christian message. Further, he wants us to become teachers of this.***

***Whew: we’ve finished this section. Consider what a lot of important ideas have been conveyed by this very rich text. On to the next! It’s hard work, but look how much we can learn from it!***

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### Videos for topic 3

[Being in Nature with Eckhart Tolle](#) 3.35

Simple guide to non-thinking: beautiful natural surroundings and music.

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\* [The Journey Of Awakening](#) 4.09 Tolle

Mysteries of the Universe – explored: but omit one word – consciousness.

That the universe is conscious is the most amazing miracle.

How do I know it is? I am conscious! You are. The Universe is conscious in us. It is experiencing itself for brief moments as a human, a plant, an animal

Scientists miss this by only looking outwards

*In5/T5 Great short statement!*

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[Oneness 2: The Western Model of Spirituality](#) 2.49 Thomas Keating

Goes well with rationality

*In5/T5 Excellent critique of W spirituality*

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[Buddhism’s Four Noble Truths](#) 1.41

*In3/T3 Engaging, illustrated v short acct*

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[Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo – Why Study Buddhism?](#) 1.20

It teaches ways of transforming our attitudes.

Go more deeply into our true nature

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*In3/T5 Good reasons to study Buddhism*

.....  
[Instrument of Peace \(02b\)](#) Easwaran 36.16

Easwaran presents the Prayer of Saint Francis as a road map, with directions for a life of peace for us as individuals, as families, as communities, and as nations. He concentrates on the first stanza of the prayer, which he presents as a guide to “a total way of life” and “an entire course in how to love.” *(just glanced at it): He looks and sounds good in this one.*

.....  
Easwaran: Here are 2 links to his “Eight-point program”:

*8-Point program in the second half of life – brief.*

<https://www.bmcm.org/inspiration/easwaran/eight-point-program-second-half-life>

*The 8 point program – longer, with embedded hyperlinks.*

<https://www.bmcm.org/learn/eight-point/>

.....  
[I need do nothing – themes from ACIM](#) (5.34)

Ken Wapnick – *brief, rapid-fire but good overview of main themes*

.....  
[Marianne Williamson Speaks about A Course in Miracles](#) 5.13

About labels, mental filters re ACIM

**2.54.** You feel an alien – mindset of separation – fear

Spirit is at home in love, not fear

Taking the journey without distance – head to heart.

On the “quantum space” you don’t feel separate.

*In3/T3 beginning not great, last half moderately useful*

.....  
[Marianne Williamson A Course In Miracles](#) 2.43

God is love and only love is real

*In4T4 useful brief intro to her and to ACIM*

.....  
[The five major world religions - John Bellaimey](#) 11.09

*In4/T5 very decorous and clear account of the big 5; illustrated with beautiful paintings*

.....  
[10min Powerful Yogananda OM Meditation Spiritual Energy Uplift Chant](#) 9.43

Old film of Yogananda – shows his face very well

*Chanting – a bit “strange” but can serve as a meditation.*

.....  
[Huston Smith on Hinduism fr. "The Wisdom of Faith" with Bill Moyers](#) 5.02

About the central ideas – practical

*IN3/T4 Quite good, v short, he speaks slowly*

.....  
[An Introduction to Judaism](#) 3.40

*In3/T3 Simple, clear cartoon-illustrated.*

.....  
[The yoga of Radha](#) 6.52

*She is very old in this one*

(1.00). Basic advice on seeking the divine

Search within yourself – mind has many layers  
 Bad acts – put self and other into Light – be sincere  
 Your cooperation with your evolution = purpose of your life  
 All the energy of the union of Radha and Krishna  
 Radha is caught in the net of Krishna – the divine power (*explain*)  
 This little world is caused that way  
 Do not need to give up this human existence.  
 When you approach the divine you incorporate your small self  
 Your body is Krishna's flute  
*Wonderful brief account In5/T5*

#### Adyashanti- spirituality beyond belief 7.24

- Spir is something you engage in, not just believe
- Goes beyond all the experiences
- Needs to be based in something practical
- See beyond goal-orientation. Not just revelatory experiences.
- Not unlike life: must have mooring, anchorage, orientation
- Important to contemplate these questions, in spir as in life
- Spir begins when we call our life into question – this is the point of departure
- What do I orient it around; what's important; who am I...? All go together
- Need to reflect and see what our life is reflecting; what is it in service to?
- Some people may be oriented to the good life, but not derived from their core.
- Important part of spir: cast off from the comfortable shore of what you know about your life
- Not as simple voyage to find yourself in a deep way.
- We want someone to show us our essence

*In5/T4 Good account of needing to know what life is about (much on this) and hence on why you are engaging in the spir search.*

#### Nonduality: Sticky Stages in Early Awakening with Nondual Teacher Fred Davis, Advaita/Jnana Yoga 15.03 \*\* Fred Davis

- Thought I was in a direct path: Buddha to Eckhart Tolle to me! (I didn't realize how many awake people there were)
- If you say I am enlightened, you are not. Nobody is enlightened!
- What wakes up is the animating consciousness
- This unit is always willing to take the credit ("Enlightened ego")
- If you think "I am enlightened"; need to ask yourself who is enlightened.
- (Yin/Yang symbol – oscillates from thinking self en to non-en)
- Then became re-en; getting it and losing it
- Sought a teacher to help him get permanently clear
- Awakening is the beginning of a new spiritual journey – the authentic one. It is the end of a lot of things, such as seeking.

*In3/T2 Good for people on the cusp; amusing also*

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF WORDS IN HEALING? Teachings from A Course in Miracles. 5.42. Jim Stewart  
 Words are just symbols (of symbols)! God doesn't hear them, but hears the prayer of the heart.

We need to ask for experiences that we desire – we will be heard

The teacher of God needs to allow the HS to speak through him

*In4/T4 A bit obscure, but very practically relevant. Many pictures, voice behind.*

.....  
Talks and meditations on the ACIM workbook lessons by Karen Worth (all 365 of them)

<https://awakening-together.org/interact/meditation-audios/acim-meditation-audios/>  
.....

## Appendix topic 4

### **Reconciling beliefs with outcomes: how can I continue to believe in or expect complete healing if it doesn't seem to be happening?**

In “healing through the mind” we aim to influence healing of the body by changing our state of mind – notably, by cultivating our beliefs and expectations, using imagery and affirmations. We may find it very difficult, however, to believe that this can work! Then if healing doesn't seem to be happening, at least not to the extent we want, our scepticism grows, and we may feel we have “failed”. How can we maintain our confidence in the process, if symptoms and disease persist? Here's a way to think about this:

(1). The conventional medical view is that state of mind makes little difference to the outcome of a serious disease like cancer. Some physicians would agree that a strong will to live may help; most would endorse healthy behaviours (including adhering to medical treatment!) as helpful; and we do now have good evidence that exercise can cut the incidence of recurrence of some cancers by 50% (which may well be an effect of a changed state of mind – this needs to be investigated).

(2). While it is true that purely physical events (i.e. at the level of our biology) determine what happens in animals and small children with cancer, and perhaps for most adults at present, the new paradigm would claim that it is possible for the mind, in aware adults, to over-ride, modify or bypass the usual biological pathways, at least to some extent. Put another way, some part or fraction of what happens depends on factors we can't control, while another part depends on our state of mind. This is difficult to believe at first, because we have not explored to any degree in this culture the potential influence of mind on healing. It is hard to put a number on it, but for the sake of concreteness let's say that if we are open-minded and determined, the progression and outcome of our cancer may depend 50% on our state of mind, and 50% on factors beyond our power to control.

(3). Our task becomes to activate, to use fully, this 50%. We do so by clearly and without any reservations laying out in our minds what we want and expect may happen. We construct a “template” or plan of what we want, using imagery, monitoring and changing beliefs, and clear motivation that we want to live, and why (and see topic 10). There is no need to be tentative about it: this 50% (which may grow to be more, as our understanding increases), is completely under our control.

(4). Having adopted this strategy, we now can accept, with more equanimity, whatever happens, since we know (a) that we have “given it our best shot”, and (b) that some part of what happens is outside of our control, so there is no question of “failure”.

(5). We are all aware how a clear and focussed determination to pursue a course of action makes success more probable in many areas of life. My research, clinical and personal observation is that this kind of determined “involvement” in personal healing often prolongs life in people with advanced cancer (it may well make recovery more likely in people with less serious disease: we don't have research data on that, and it is technically more difficult to investigate). Yet the individuals involved, while agreeing that longer good-quality life is immensely worthwhile, may feel they have “failed” because the disease did not disappear. Complete remissions do occur at times, but often they do not – that may be a result of the “other 50%” of factors exerting their effect. We may reach a stage in human

development when we can exert, through our minds, more complete control over our health, but we are not yet at that level of understanding.

### Video links for topic 4

[How do you know you exist? - James Zucker](#) 3.02

Cartoon treatment on how we can't believe the senses, or differentiate our apparent reality from a dream; then Descartes assumed "I think therefore I am"

*In2/T4 Amusing; to show unreliability of the senses. But ultimately agrees with Descartes - unclear*

[How Do We Know What Reality Is? - by Deepak Chopra](#) 2.33

Describes how many layers of abstraction between what we think is out there and our ultimate experience

*In4/T3 Very brief statement*

[QI | If A Tree Falls In A Forest And No One Hears It, Does It Make A Sound?](#) 4.00

Amusing variety show question to panel. Light, but thought provoking.

*In3/T4 poss for class as light relief*

[The end of suffering](#) 5.14 Tolle

- Surrender means accept this moment as it is – only happens when you are completely fed up with suffering, and realize most of your suffering is created by your interpretation of what is.

- Suffering is most people's only spiritual teaching.

- It's your thoughts that make you suffer; when you see that, see there's another way to live- no longer mentally arguing with what is.

Then I don't inflict suffering on others either.

*Basic good for teaching In3/T4*

[Seeing](#) 6.51 Spira.

*Sim in kind to "Everything is made out of yourself 3.56, but better*

Waking from a dream where images have appeared

Thoughts and labels begin to arise

(Same images that appeared in the dream – but now seem to be outside – yet are exactly the same, no more or less real!)

Eyes open or close – thoughts tell me it's taking place inside or outside, but from my point of view, all the same place

Repeats, several times

All images in me, made only of seeing, and seeing made only of the knowing of it, only of myself.

To the scene I am the seer; in the seeing, I am the scene (or should it be "seen"?)

As the seeing, I am myself

*In5/T5 Powerful, dramatic – good for teaching. Images arise and fade repeatedly.*

[True Nature of Reality](#) 3.07 Bantawaan Lagundong

Seems a website devoted to ideas about finding evidence, science (Can't get more precise info).

However, this one describes "reality" as being not what religions say, but God within us – that we are all part of God

*In5/T4 Good basic account of this*

.....  
Guidance on Healing - Physical and Spiritual 10.38 (Tolle)

- Refers to Joel Goldsmith (emphasis on physical healing)
- Healing comes naturally with presence; the likeliness of illness diminishes.
- Spontaneous healing often when people surrender (to the present moment)
- Relates his period as a “spiritual healer”
- He simply sat with them; some experienced healing;

*In3/T3 Pleasant but rambling – message is find presence and healing becomes more likely*

.....

The Art of Self-Healing 27.44 Meredith Young-Sowers.

Meredith Young-Sowers (interview – awful interviewer)

(formerly Meredith Lady Young; now a Dr of Divinity)

0.45 starts with “when we meet God”. But what matters is loving people

2.30 went to a workshop; began to meditate

4.00 Had an experience of knowing god is love

**Start here: 5.00** “What’s missing from western med? Heart”. P want doc to “hear us”. (Good place to start).

7.30: seeking deep knowing – hands over the heart; what do I feel?

10.00 “We love to think” – but this doesn’t move us forward

11.30 cancer example.

12.30 “Believability factor” give the left brain something to trust

13.00 Body heals when we believe

14.00 Ways to nourish ourselves (as women); e.g. social – have to know you fit somewhere

15.30 Connection with spirit is main thing in healing (from inside out).

16.00 Plug for her book “Spirit heals”; changing attitudes – like a shift in orbit for astronaut.

“I can accept or reject that thought”: be your own editor. Other examples (good).

Affirm what we want.

19.30 2 parts to mind: ego and wisdom self. (come to a place of “we”)

20.30 Putting spirit in the centre of our healing; spirituality

22.00 Our identity crisis: we don’t know who we are; we are the energy of love.

23.00 Role that love plays; can love others without approving of (what they do)

24.30 About God’s love

26.00 We just need one person to really believe in us

Message to leave: self healing is simply believing in who you truly are.

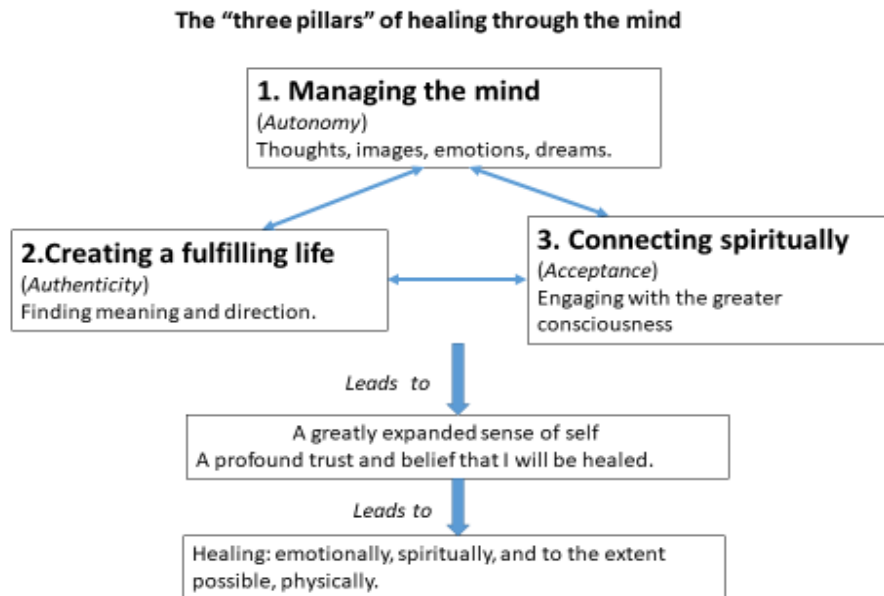
*In1/T3 basic, useful.*

.....



# Messages to and from the ego level of mind to other levels, and to the external world.

Incoming	Sensations from the body (via sense organs)	From the environment: <i>for example, through eyes, ears and pressure receptors in the skin.</i>
		From the workings of the body itself: <i>most of us recognise only relatively gross changes, such as pain, digestive dysfunctions, difficulty breathing, and muscular tension. More subtle awareness can be cultivated through disciplines like yoga and chi gong.</i>
	Input from other people	<i>Reading, workshops, discussions, religious services. Social interactions.</i>
	Messages from “higher” or deeper levels	From <u>dreams</u> , and other “altered states of consciousness” (e.g. drug-induced): <i>with practice, dreams can reveal much about our desires and ideas that we were not aware of in the waking state.</i>
		From many levels of the <u>greater Self</u> : <i>including near-death and out-of-body experiences. Non-verbal “knowings”, for example reassurance that we are loved and supported, or advice on decisions, may come when the mind is quiet, as in contemplative prayer or meditation.</i>
Outgoing	“Surface” or ego	<i>Beliefs: these are the habitual patterns of thought that are readily accessible to our awareness. We constantly broadcast messages that affect our bodies, for example. We have discussed uncovering and changing these throughout the Healing Journey, and will do so in more depth in the next topic.</i>
	“Deeper” ego	<i>More concealed conflicts, i.e., psychological problems, often about self-concept and out of awareness, which affect our conscious behaviour and our bodies. Resolving them may require professional help, although much can be done by a determined self-healer.</i>
	“Existential”	<i>Deep, often non-verbal ideas and feelings about one’s place in the world, the purpose and meaning of one’s life, and whether there is a clear path to achieving whatever we see as fulfilling for ourselves. These affect everything we think and do with minds and bodies.</i>
		<i>Messages (devotional) to higher levels of Self/avatars/Divine Being</i>



#### 1. Managing the mind:

- Becoming familiar with thoughts, emotions and imagery, and exerting some control over them
- Confronting and minimising inner (psychological) conflicts
- Developing an unequivocal belief in the possibility of healing through the mind.

#### 2. Creating a fulfilling life:

- Defining why I want to live, and making the necessary changes
- “The excitement of living must come from you” – Seth.
- Sensible diet, exercise, rest and relaxing activities.

#### 3. Connecting spiritually:

- Seeking guidance and help from the higher levels of consciousness.
- Learning that I am part of this greater consciousness, and can trust in its support.

.....

- This table is about healing through making changes in activities of the mind, in 3 broad areas. It shows overall strategies; a range of specific methods can be used to accomplish each. The “3 A’s” in the boxes came from a rigorous study of the qualities shown by remarkable survivors (See my “Can the mind heal cancer?”).

- Communication with higher consciousness (3) is an overarching process, potentially affecting all elements at all times.

- Box 1 is about mind management, and is the necessary first step. Box 2 is about tailoring one’s life towards meaning and purpose. Much can be achieved with these 2 alone, although a spiritual dimension (box 3) greatly expands the scope of possible change.

#### **Main resistances to be overcome**

1. To considering the possibility of self-healing through mind (ignorance, prejudice, cultural influences)
  2. To acting at all (laziness)
  3. To self-exploration and change (unwillingness to endure emotional discomfort)
  4. The belief that one’s life is not worth the effort.
- .....

**Using “positive affirmations” for healing: different attitudes imply different degrees of doubt.**

<b>Strength of expectation</b>	<b>Extent of doubts</b>
Desires	++++
Hopes	+++
Beliefs	++
Expectations	+
“Knowings”	-

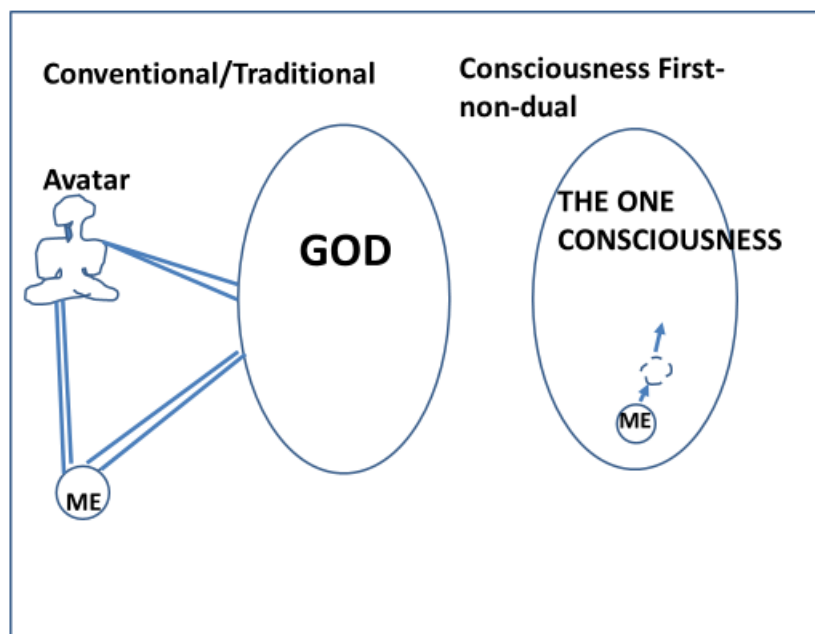
## Appendix topic 5

### Comparison of non-dual and traditional spiritual paths

Religious observance usually entails accepting relatively uncritically and passively what religious professionals and ancient texts tell us. By contrast, following a spiritual path is a more active mental process: we think about the issues for ourselves, study, reflect and test, wherever possible, the ideas we encounter. It is a process of developing understanding and experience, rather than adopting a faith. We use reason, but eventually drop the logical thinking, and try to look more “deeply” into consciousness.

Spiritual paths seem to fall into two main categories:

- **“traditional” or conventional:** it is assumed that we are a mind in a physical body, but with some “spiritual” element inside us. While the body dies, the hope is that this spirit will then return to or merge with the Divine Source or God (see diagram below). The journey involves “purifying” the mind of its grosser self-centred ideas, and ideally, as these obstacles are removed, to come to know and love the presence of God while still in the body. Often an avatar, or a spiritually-aware being in human form, like Jesus or Divine Mother, becomes a kind of intermediary between oneself and God; many find it easier to express devotion to a symbolic figure than to an abstract “God”. This kind of path is “dualistic”, that is, it assumes that we are individuals, separate from one another, from all the other objects on the Earth, and from God. Such traditional approaches are overwhelmingly the more common, because they don’t challenge our usual idea of being a physical body, although at the cost of accepting a difficult proposition – that this body contains something called “spirit” which is quite different in kind from physical matter.



- **“Non-dual” paths.** (“consciousness first”). Here the process is more direct (see the right hand side of the diagram): it is claimed, from the start, that we are not, in essence, physical beings at

all. Rather, we are consciousness or awareness itself, having an experience, rather like a dream, of living in a physical body in a material world. Thus, to know our origins, the One Consciousness or God, we need only (!) recognize this. Moreover, simple logic allied with careful, unbiased observation can take us a long way on this path; for example, it can readily show us that all we know or can ever know is “our” awareness, or consciousness, and that our ideas about the nature of the world (and indeed of our bodies) are pure supposition, a theory only. Modern science and philosophy agree with this. Spiritual “realization” is waking to, and profoundly internalising this awareness, in a manner analogous to waking in a lucid dream, (one in which we know we are dreaming). This world, and our body-minds, are not an illusion or “unreal” – suffering is real enough – but they are not what we think they are, and our physical form is not ultimately who we are. Thus, through study and practice we gradually (occasionally suddenly) loosen our identification with the body-mind.

Both kinds of path come to the same end point – awareness of one’s true being as part of a divine ground or God – but they come to it by routes that are very different, at least in the early stages. The non-dual student is invited to question everything she has believed about her reality, not to accept blindly, but to validate the new ideas for herself, by a process of “self-inquiry”. She must then go beyond mind, to intuitive knowing, and ultimately to the Silence that underlies our being. This understanding of reality goes back thousands of years in Indian philosophy, and is implicit in Buddhism (as opposed to the theistic religions), but it has usually seemed to be the province of a few dedicated mystical masters safely sequestered on Himalayan mountainsides! However, in the last few decades, a number of Western teachers have emerged, interpreting the non-dual teachings to the ordinary person – in much the same way as yoga was popularised in the West in the early twentieth century. These new teachings circumvent the often obscure and confusing descriptions of non-duality found in ancient texts, and instead tell us, in plain modern language, what we are aiming at and how to get there!

Much of this Western renaissance seems to go back to the Indian sage, Sri Ramana Maharshi, who died around 1950. Other pioneers are Sri Atmananda Krishna Menon, and later Jean Klein and Francis Lucille. Modern teachers I have found especially helpful are Krishnamurti, Rupert Spira, Greg Goode, Adyashanti (a Zen master), Jackie O’Keeffe, Nisargadatta and Fred Davis. Eckhart Tolle, familiar to us all, points to non-duality as the ultimate, although he compassionately advises us what we can do to avoid suffering while retaining our idea of being physical body-minds. The two main channelled sources that we study in the Healing Journey, ACIM and Seth, serve, like Tolle, as bridges between the dualistic and the non-dual. Both explain what we can do with our minds to ease the pain of physical existence, but Seth, in particular, takes us far beyond this into an explanation of how our apparently limited slice of consciousness fits into a grand scheme of ever-expanding levels, while Jesus, in ACIM, sticks to a more traditional teaching of removing the blocks the ego sets up to our returning to a knowledge of the Divine.

Non-dual realization has been called the “ultimate healing”. Why? Imagine you are having a dream in which you are given a prognosis of terminal cancer. Then imagine waking up and realizing: “it was just a dream!” That is the promise of non-dual realization.

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### **Questions and exercises, *from: Rupert Spira: “Being Aware of Being Aware”***

P 1. Note the title: what does it mean?

#### Introduction:

5. Explain how the parable of the prodigal son shows where and how we can find happiness. Compare this with what a Christian, Muslim or Jewish teacher might say about where we can find true “happiness” or peace or fulfillment.

8. Why does he say that happiness is not the opposite of unhappiness?

Chapter 1: Knowing, being aware or awareness itself.

15. What is the difference between awareness and a mental experience?

20 – 22. **(Exercise 1):** Sit quietly with eyes closed. Let any thoughts drift away. Now ask yourself: “Am I aware?” “Where” did you go to access an answer to that question?

22 – 24. How does Spira define “I” (how does the idea of “I” arise)? If you were completely unaware of being, would you still be you?

Chapter 2: The nature of awareness.

25-30. Think hard about Spira’s metaphor of the screen and the images playing on it. What part of you does he say is the screen, and what part the images?

26. What did the late Jiddu Krishnamurti (who has written many good books) mean by saying “I don’t mind what happens”. Explain why that is such a central concept.

27-28. This may be hard to understand at first, you could “put it on the back burner”, as a former student used to say!

30. Do you feel you are essentially the same person you were as a child? As an adolescent, a 30-something....? Why is this?

32-33. Consider what Spira says about knowing one’s true nature as pure awareness being the “ultimate healing”. Then he goes on to say that knowing this, you are “always in perfect health”. What do you make of this?

Chapter 3: The overlooking of our essential nature.

36-37. Spira claims that we are so caught up in the things we are thinking about that we overlook the awareness that know these things. Is this true for you?

**(Exercise 2):** How might you shift into a mode where you focus on the awareness rather than the content of your mind? If you try this for a time, what do you notice? CAUTION: This is a potentially life-changing exercise!

38. What are some of the consequences of discovering that “awareness (does not) share the destiny of the body”?

38. What does Spira imply is the relationship between “being aware” and “knowing God”?

41. Consider the consequences of translating “sin” as bad behaviour. Do you see advantages for yourself in thinking about your “sins” as “the veiling of awareness”?

43. **(Exercise 3):** Think of yourself as having been, for most of your life, a rubber ball that has been relentlessly squeezed (by what or whom?)! Now imagine that the squeezing stops; take some time with this and watch your body carefully. How does it feel? How can you “un-squeeze” yourself in future?

### Video links for topic 5

[Every Time I Open My Eyes](#) 2. 07

Every time I open my eyes, I invite the world to take shape, and every time the world takes shape I am invited to see the world holding out its hand, raw and naked, and taking me into itself....

*Excellent brief statement of our creation of the world.* In5/T5

[Oneness 22: Non-Duality from a Christian Perspective](#) Thomas Keating, 2.01

-Good intro to the idea that non-duality exists across religions

- It's the idea that when you are looking at a tree, it's a tree, and not you looking at a tree!

*In3/T3 Just an introduction*

[Where do Christianity and Nonduality meet? - Father Richard Rohr](#) 2.41

Good explanation that Christianity has not recognised non-duality, except for the mystics

*In4/T4*

[Jim Carrey On "Awakening"](#) 2.30 *light relief.*

Brief description of an awakening experience- wants to help others

Very personable (of course)

*In2/T5*

[The Journey Of Awakening](#) 4.09 Tolle

[Discussing Destiny](#) 6.50 Jac O'Keeffe

Discusses how “purpose” is unnecessary.

The ego uses purpose as an excuse to keep itself alive

The idea that some part of the self needs the ego is not true

Step out of your own way; don't need the personal I (ego)

The ego is only going to be a burden

Let there be no glory in anything – it's just life!

*In5/T5 Wonderful, short clear emphatic*

[Seeing](#) 6.51 Spira.

Waking from a dream where images have appeared

Thoughts and labels begin to arise

(Same images that appeared in the dream – but now seem to be outside – yet are exactly the same, no more or less real!)

Eyes open or close – thoughts tell me it's taking place inside or outside, but from my point of view, all the same place

Repeats, several times

All images in me, made only of seeing, and seeing made only of the knowing of it, only of myself.

To the scene I am the seer; in the seeing, I am the scene (or should it be “seen”?)



As the seeing, I am myself

*In5/T5 Powerful, dramatic – good for teaching. Images arise and fade repeatedly.*

.....  
[Adyashanti - The Experience of No Self](#) 5.20

Always keep the self in the centre

Spir awakening: there isn't actually a self

We are full of reality, the divine, empty of self

The self resists!

Almost impossible to think of oneself as other than a self.

*In4/T5 Good basic explanation of how we think of ourselves as a self*

.....  
[God in Relation to the Non Dual Understanding](#) Spira 5.07

Thought abstracts a limited "inside" world (separate self), and projects an outside world as an inevitable corollary.

Then separate self wonders where it comes from: manufactures an idea of God – in its own likeness (as a counterpart to itself) – just as the outside world is an inevitable counterpart to the sep self.

What is really meant by God or spirit is divine, eternal awareness

But thought has overlooked awareness, and manufactures a God distant from ourselves

Just the pure "I am" – before Abraham was, I am; thought has added limits to it.

Christ said I am the way the truth and the life: he meant "I am" is the way, not I personally (complete misunderstanding). The truth of the experience is the "place" from which the answer comes.

*In4/T4 Nature of "God" is eternal awareness – not the figure we have created.*

.....  
[Adyashanti - Surrender Or Suffer](#) 5.34. How the "prescription for happiness" (I want) is actually one for suffering

It's based on separation so can't make you happy

Analogy of driver – in seat – instead passenger seat; realize you are everything around you.

All it requires is dropping for a second the notion of oneself.

*In4/T5 As always, simple and brilliant.*

.....  
[\(Nonduality\) Three Keys to Nondual Awakening with Nondual/Advaita/Jnana Yoga Teacher Fred Davis](#)

4.16\*

1. Don't need to know anything more
2. Nor to do anything more – books, retreats, meditation ....
3. Nor to be anything different than you are!

This thing is discovered by stopping and noticing what's already here. Recognise your true nature.

*In4/T4 great short (early) video!*

.....  
[I don't like what I see in the Mirror](#) 7.11 Rupert Spira

- Suggests writing something inspiring (Rumi) on the mirror, so you see yourself through that filter

- Story of a small child looking in mirror and wiping it to clean "her face"; i.e. youngster doesn't differentiate self from experience

- Teaches us all we see is only an experience; don't conceptualise your exp unnecessarily.

- It's only a thought that our face, or self, is separate from the world.

- The innocence of looking in a mirror is colonised by our critical thinking.

- The only real blasphemy in life is letting thought appropriate (spoil) our experience.

*In5/T5 Interesting, amusing start, profound*

### The True Nature of the Mind 9.23 Spira

(slow start) Looking in to find true nature - consciousness

First step: I am awareness

Second: recognition of the infinite nature of it

Third (tantric): realignment of all my experience – that it takes place in and ult as consciousness

Layers and layers in mind – constantly being exposed – fresh understanding comes

*Excellent: In4/T5*

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### **Nondual Awareness: How Did You Do It?** Natalie Gray 9.43

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDREx6LARN0>

Brief account of how she found herself realizing the separate self does not exist, or have control – all is done by “the Absolute”

*In3\T4 Useful intro to the concept*

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### The Implication of the Non-Dual Understanding Spira 11.28

*Responds to questions*

Implications – peace, happiness; a peace prior to mind; not seeking fulfillment in objects

Krishnamurti: I don’t mind what happens (awareness speaking)

No thoughts or feelings are essential to us – they leave us during sleep.

What is essential? Only awareness.

This discovery brings suffering to an end.

When your life is no longer dominated by this chronic search for peace in circumstances, for happiness in objects, for love in relationships, the neurotic demands of the separate self: then your life will be a sharing, a celebration....you will be so busy!...

*In3/T5 Lovely short account of the state we aim for*

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### Adyashanti - What Is Enlightenment? 9.56

- It is not seeing anything (in the world) through ego-consciousness (!)

- “Natural state”; perception without a lens, a distortion

- Not an unending experience

- Enlightenment has very little to do with (sartori-type) experience;

- It is happiness, peace, the end of your search

- Not that you find anything – you just see everything as it is, all as one

- The nature of anything is nothingness – i.e. all is insubstantial

- Altered states of consc.: we all are in them; en. Is about the natural state.

- En is the unaltered state of consc.

- The significance of an ASC is how much of your ego is going to fall away!

- The ego state of C takes a lot of effort to maintain – constantly fuelled; the useful spir disciplines are ways of not putting more energy into ego consc.

*In5/T5 Delightful, light clear*

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### **Thomas Keating: a life surrendered to love**

<https://youtu.be/tJSGlqM3pxQ> 18.58

-the message of centering prayer (what it is -going inside and listening to the Spirit - it is coming home

-we share the Divine Nature

-we participate in Divine Life

-there is a unity that is oneness

-expansion of spaciousness

- everything is impermanent
- let it happen
- it is effortless (could this be a bit like Parsons)
- detachment and becoming nothing
- letting go of the self
- emptying
- being in the presence of the presence

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#### On the Relationship Between Science and Liberation: Michael Singer 15.10

- Science has shown us that everything arises out of the quantum field
- So why aren't we amazed at everything – and how it arises.
- The great sages showed us that all of form arises from consciousness.
- The thing called the psyche, or ego, has developed, and asserts its will to fight with the quantum field!
- The absurdity of the individuality of self! That there's something special about what's happening to you, instead of realizing that it's all the same – that's the true non-duality: energy manifesting itself as form
- We develop the idea "I matter; things should be as I want"
- We miss 99.999999.... % of what is going on; we pick up only what our senses tell us, and miss the rest
- Have to learn that what's going on in my mind is an illusion
- You made up what you want based on minuscule past experiences
- What's in front of you shouldn't be as you want – it's just the way it is
- To bring harmony, enlightenment: study the grace of what's going on – the manifestation of a great energy field.
- Humility; we have no idea what's going on
- Let go of the individuality; and then consciousness touches consciousness
- cf Christ: "My father and I are one".
- So science is a great thing – not against religion – it is a great force that will lead us to God if we are willing to live it.

*In4/T5 Wonderful, appealing merging of science with non-dual thought!*

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#### \*\*Nonduality: Who You Really Are 24.45 FredDavis

Sitting meditation; go back in steps through what you identify with:

1. **(3 mins):** The "Fred" (ego) being. Now going back:
  2. The witness: a removed, detached witness, witnessing Fred; but still in "my movie". We still seem to be the centre of all.
  3. **(5.50):** "I am": just knowing, and what I could not not be; I am, and have always been
  4. **(7.30):** A sense of being; not being anyone or anything. Just there is being; no sense that it's "mine". This feels more true than 3 (less "I"). I am not anyone or anything or anywhere. There is no boundary to it; doesn't stop at the body. Not a "higher level", just more clarity. No inside or outside. It's not a constant. Doesn't say "I am" or am not.
    - No levels to awareness – just gradations of clarity. None is "higher".
    - As we go back, 1-4, more sense of "truth, but still an experience
    - All levels can be sensed (i.e. at any time); 1-3 are not true!
    - #4 feels like and experience of truth, but may not be; may be just a sense of it (like virtual reality is just a sense of an environment which is not true).
- However, can't find (in it) that "thing" that has a sense of being.  
(Likewise, prior to our birth, there was no sense of being)
5. Feels like prior to 4, there is a kind of membrane to brush against; the potential for being

- Fred advocates practising the jump from 1-4, either thru the stages or directly.  
*In5/T4 V good and relevant teaching on how to experience/accept/know your deeper levels.*  
.....

## **Dreams; a gateway to the deeper mind.**

Dreams are important in our work on expanding the sense of self, in particular because they show us undeniably how we create a reality with our minds. A dream may be full of convincing action – during which we do not leave our beds! Furthermore, while few of us are aware of having “out-of-body” experiences, perhaps the most dramatic evidence that consciousness does not depend on a physical body, we all dream, and are capable of remembering dreams if we wish to do so.

Dreams are an avenue into another reality, or level of consciousness; our dreaming mind has simply turned in another direction, so to speak, a process somewhat analogous to changing the channel on a TV set. The dream reality is more fundamental than the waking one, however: esoteric teachers tell us that it harbours great creativity: that our physical world emerges from it (something certain “primitive” cultures understood!). It is a state in which communication can occur more easily between levels of consciousness, that is, between all parts of the greater Self.

As you will find when you study your dreams, different laws seem to operate there. Time and space are much less in evidence: we can sometimes fly, or move instantly from one place to another! Ideas are expressed immediately, e.g. as visual symbols, without the time delay experienced in waking reality. Some people learn to become aware that they are dreaming and direct their actions (such as flying) deliberately. Healing is said to be possible in dreams, and spiritual experiences often occur within them. Insights may be acquired, for example by posing a question to ourselves before going to sleep, and finding a symbolic answer in a dream. Clearly, it is a dimension of ourselves well worth cultivating.

We can divide our dream study into 2 phases: first the “capturing” and recording of dreams, and second, analysing them. At the end of the notes for this topic there is a summary of the main points about both strategies. The most important prerequisite for remembering dreams is the desire to do so: if you are not recalling any, examine your thinking for any ambivalence – does it seem like too much trouble, or are you afraid of what you might find? Then in the analytic phase, the main point is to be intuitive rather than rational/intellectual; you are asking the deeper levels of mind to show you something new, which they will do, but in their own “language” – and the symbols used in that language tend to be visual and other imagery, rather than words. We need to find out what those symbols are able to convey to us. Various methods may be used for this purpose, the most common being to generate lists of ideas associated with each symbol. One or more of these ideas often “resonates” – i.e., there can be an “Ah-ha” feeling: “so that’s what it means!” We each have to do our own work on this – lists of standard meanings for symbols have little value.

There are very many books on dream analysis, which you can find in any New Age bookstore. “The meaning of your dreams” by D.F. Melbourne and K. Hearne seems to be a good one by 2 dream scientists. “Realities of the Dreaming Mind: the Practice of Dream Yoga” by Swami Sivananda Radha is an outstanding and accessible account, particularly for those interested in ultimately understanding the spiritual meanings of their dreams.  
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### Exercise 1. How our senses create our world.

- Make sure you understand the difference between these 2 operations of the body: (1) “sensory perception”, meaning the taking in, and acknowledging, of “raw, sense data”, i.e. visual data,

hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling touch. (2) “Conception”, or thinking about things, forming concepts in the mind. Often this immediately follows a sensory experience – we see something, then we label it and think about it. Please do explore this by looking around and noticing how quickly thought follows perception, and how difficult it is to look at things and not think about them! Perhaps you have already tried walking along the street just noticing (i.e. perceiving) everything without any thought (labelling, judging, remembering, fantasising....).

- Sit with eyes closed and focus on individual sounds around you. Notice other sensations in the body: aches and pains, smells, taste (in the mouth), touch (e.g. of clothing, the chair). Feel where the muscles of your body are tense. Try to capture feelings within the body organs, e.g. in your gastro-intestinal tract.
- Now open your eyes and note how rich and diverse the visual stimuli are. Try to bring the inner world and the outer world together, i.e. continue to note how the (apparent) outer world registers on your senses. Think of it as an extension of your senses. Feel yourself as part of this process of creating and experiencing the world about you.
- Repeat the eyes closed/open cycle a few times.

As always, write about your findings. Try the whole practice a number of times.

#### Exercise 2. Associations to a recent event.

Pick any recent event and “relive” it in your imagination. Let your associations flow. Other events or memories will spring to mind. Try to recall the emotions connected with them. Write it all down. You could then construct a “map” or flow chart showing how the different streams of memories led from one to another.

#### Exercise 3. Constructing a waking (day) dream.

Create a dream for yourself, starting with whatever event or image you like. Let it simply unfold, naturally, playfully; let the images flow (it will help to be in a relaxed state). You can imagine that you are the Higher Self, watching it all unfold. Let it end in whatever way it does without trying to force a pattern or conclusion on it.

Now write this daydream down, and analyse it as you would a sleeping dream (see below), i.e. underline the symbols (words) that seem important, and generate a number of associations to each.

Exercise 4. Recording and analysing your dreams: see the directions below. Ideally, watching and analysing your dreams can become a regular part of daily life.

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### **Recording and analysing dreams**

#### **“Capturing” and recording**

- The key requirement is **intention**; we need honestly and intensely to desire to remember and record our dreams. Affirm this to yourself before going to bed.
- Have a pen and paper ready by the bed. Explain to any sleeping partner what you are up to.
- When you wake in the night (and this can be made more probable by consuming lots of liquids before retiring!) keep still, and see if you have been dreaming (we all have many dreams each night). If you remember something, move as little as possible as you write down what you can recall – you’ll need a small light, obviously. Don’t get up and walk around first – dreams seem to dissolve with major body activity.

- Be honest, even if you don't like what you recall.
- If you feel you know what it's about, note that down too.
- Return to sleep: you may wish to try and continue with the same dream (works sometimes).

#### Analysing.

- Next day, read through what you wrote (or scribbled!)
- Record also what you were doing in the day before the dream; in particular, any activities or thoughts that were emotionally charged.
- Now go through the text (if you are very conscientious you may wish to type it out, but that's not essential), and underline or highlight every word or phrase that seems to have possible significance – err on the side of underlining more, not less.
- Make a list of these words/phrases. Each one is a symbol, i.e. it stands for something which may be quite different from what it appears to be. Each one is also (obviously) part of yourself – you have created this inner world.
- Now painstakingly go through the list, one by one, making associations to each. For example, you see a dog, and you might write: companion/pet, diversion, loving acceptance, my old dog Fido (childhood), warm fuzzies.....; or you might write: danger, noise, too much energy, responsibilities, vet bills, mess..... and so on: it is different for everyone. You can't rely on lists of the "meaning" of dream symbols.

When you have finished this, you may well find that reading through all your associations points to a meaning for the dream that was quite unexpected. Reinsert the symbolic meanings into the text of the dream, and see how it reads now. The hope is to learn something about yourself that you did not already "know" at the consciously-aware level.

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See next page for "**Evidence against materialism**"!

## Evidence against materialism, and for the idea that our essence is consciousness.

- A. Regular science shows us the world (and my “self”) are not as we think:
  - a. What we imagine is “out there” depends on our senses.
  - b. We are not separate from the world (breathing, digestion....)
  - c. Modern physics: (we are mostly space; Einstein; quantum phenomena – e.g., observation determines what happens)
  - d. Experiments on healing at a distance; hands on healing (e.g., tumours in mice)
  
- B. Unconventional science: consciousness can act independently of matter
  - a. Near death and out-of-body experiences
  - b. Mind affecting matter directly: psychokinesis
  - c. Other para-psychology (psi) experiments:, telepathy, precognition, healing by intention.....)
  
- C. “Inner” investigations:
  - a. Testimony of mystics through the ages
  - b. Show us we know only our awareness, not what’s “out there”
  - c. Our dreams show us we can “create a reality”
  
- D. Channelled information: Seth, ACIM, Edgar Cayce and others support and extend all this.



