

An abstract graphic on the right side of the page, consisting of a thick, curved arc that resembles a rainbow. The arc is composed of several overlapping, brushstroke-like bands of color: purple, blue, green, and white. The colors transition from purple at the top to blue, then green, and finally white at the bottom. The overall effect is dynamic and artistic.

HEALING JOURNEY PROGRAM

LEVEL 6: SPIRITUALITY

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HJ6 spir 2025-26 HTMS\whole part II 24 June 2025

Healing through Mind and Spirit. Part II: Healing the Self

Topic 5: Finding our place in the transcendent order

- Seth's explains how "our" consciousness is a tiny part of the greater, all-embracing consciousness, or order.
- Our ego-minds, which we think of as ourselves, are nested within an "inner self" or inner ego, which in turn is part of more extensive areas of consciousness.
- Since our ultimate purpose is to find our place in the greater consciousness (i.e., to answer the question: "Who am I?"), we need to practise forging an aware connection to this overarching order.

KEY IDEAS: GENERAL

In the earlier stages of the HJ program, our focus was mainly on relieving the suffering that a crisis like cancer causes; in other words, healing the mind. You will realize by now that suffering is caused by an appraisal of what we perceive, rather than of the events themselves: "I don't like/want what's happening"! However, while it's natural to reject a cancer diagnosis emotionally, we do not need a constant internal monologue on how much we fear and resent it. The practice of watching our thoughts and managing them can help us remain more at peace, with probable benefits to the body as well.

In part I of this "level 6-spiritual" course, we took a further step, with the aid of advice from Seth: by identifying and removing pessimistic beliefs and substituting more helpful healing ones, we may be able to exert a more direct effect on the body via the Inner Self, a level of consciousness "above" that of our everyday ego-mind. Notice that we have so far remained focussed mainly on what we might call the "body-mind", the small, apparently separate complex of physical matter and mental activity that we think of as "myself".

In part II of level 6-spiritual, our focus shifts again. We want to find out if there is more to us than just the body with a mind. This is the underlying spiritual question. Behind it lies the hope that we may be able to connect with some power or agency beyond ourselves that can help us against our disease. Materialists scoff at this, of course, and often hide their prejudice behind a pretence of no-nonsense intellectual honesty. Religions point to a spiritual realm, but tend to discourage individual searching in favour of passive acceptance of revealed teachings (there are exceptions, of course). Mystics within all religions – individuals who have devoted their lives to seeking personal, spiritual experience – and reliable channelled sources, are more useful to us here. They show us ways of acquiring our own knowledge and experience. Ultimately, the quest will lead us beyond our minds, and into what we can only call a kind of "knowing", which will be undeniable. However, the power of reasoning clearly, while sometimes discounted in spiritual circles, is very valuable, perhaps essential, in this work, as we will see. So, let's begin in a structured, step-by-step way.

1. The key spiritual idea is that there is an overarching, non-material dimension, order or “intelligence” (we don’t have appropriate words for it) from which this physical world, including ourselves, emerges. This dimension is consciousness, or the basic awareness of being that underlies, and is independent of sensory experience (sentience). It’s worth thinking about these words for a while, to be sure we are clear on their meaning. Notice that we often confuse awareness with perception or sensation, as in “I’m aware that it’s raining”, or “I’m not feeling so good today”. These are just thoughts, based on observations. “Awareness”, in the spiritual sense is “deeper” than this, and lies behind all our senses, and our thoughts. If that’s not clear yet, we will look at it in more detail in topic 8, but for now, try this basic exercise:

Close your eyes, relax, and ask: “Am I aware?” It will be obvious that you are. Then ask: “where did I go to establish that?” After allowing this second question to percolate for a while, open your eyes and recognise that you didn’t go to a thought, or any authority, to see that you are aware – it’s just a kind of underlying “knowing”, always there, behind all our mental and physical activities. Do this a number of times.

2. How can I know that this is true in a broader sense, i.e., that awareness underlies the world? We will address the question when we look at “non-duality”, in topic 8, and may come to see that there are no limits to the consciousness or awareness that you identified in the preceding exercise. Meanwhile, the conventional ways of acquiring understanding apply here, in just the same way as in many endeavours, for example, learning a new language:

- Study - of texts by experts
- Practice - of techniques like meditation
- Community - discussions with other seekers, and if possible, contact with a teacher.

3. How can I know that physical healing may come from contact with this deeper awareness, the spiritual dimension? There has, of course, been very little scientific investigation here, since the question just doesn’t make sense in a materialistic framework. There is some scientific evidence for prayer easing symptoms of various kinds, but little has been done to see if it helps against cancer. You will by now know of the published experiments done by our team at the Ontario Cancer Institute: of 22 people with “terminal” cancers (attested to by a team of oncologists), attending a year-long series of sessions based on the Healing Journey model, almost all lived longer than predicted, some many years longer, and 2 recovered completely. Further, there was a strong relationship between the “involvement” with the ideas and practices of the program that individuals demonstrated, and how long they survived; that is, getting seriously involved with their self-healing seemed to enable living longer. We can’t definitely conclude cause and effect here, but it is likely – the effects were striking (you can read a lay account in my book “Can the Mind Heal Cancer?”, available on the Wellspring website). There was a spiritual component to the healing work done by these people, but again, we can’t be sure that it was essential to getting a good result – it’s possible that psychological change alone, or even the enthusiasm for life behind “getting involved”, was effective for some.

Thus, the idea that spiritual growth and connection will, of itself, promote healing still relies mainly on the experience of others, such as mystics, channelled sources, spiritual healers, and people relating near-death experiences. This does not mean it is not credible, as some might think – there are many routes to knowledge (for example, our belief in historical events rests, inevitably, on the testimony of others).

4. What other benefits may come from spiritual study and practice?

- It may bring a sense of unequivocal security (knowing we “belong” and are supported).

- It offers guidance (if we seek it).
- Promotes peace and harmony in body and mind.
- Alleviates, and may even remove, all fear of death of the body.
- Offers a much broader view of reality than is conventional.
- Answers the question: “who or what am I?”

On the last point: as we grow up, we try to understand who we are in the world of others, the social domain. This is a search for “meaning”, which always comes from a relationship to a larger order. We are now asking the same kinds of questions at the spiritual level: “How do I fit in? Do I matter? What is my life about?” It is the ultimate search for meaning. If we persevere, we will discover that there is one really quite simple, single, problem underlying all of our suffering: we appear to have separated ourselves from our spiritual origins, and forgotten who and what we are. The healing journey becomes a spiritual journey, and as seekers through the ages have found, will answer this question for us.

5. What sources will we study?

The search for meaning in life, and in particular, for a transcendent or overarching power to which one might appeal for help, has been a preoccupation for human societies over thousands of years. Many views have been proposed, from ancient Greece, China, India, the Hebraic tradition, various indigenous societies, modern philosophy, and others. It is worth reading in all of these areas to get a sense of what people from a variety of backgrounds have concluded. We focus here on some of the most practically useful sources of information. As is the case in most of these matters, Seth provides a much more detailed description of our relationship to higher consciousness than any other source (at least, that I have found). We’ll start with him in this topic, and then move to some more traditional sources in the following topics, to A Course in Miracles, modern “non-duality” teachers, and back for a final look at some of Seth’s more esoteric ideas.

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Exercise 1: Consider how you think of “God” or a “divine power” or.....

- Have you ever looked deeply into this? Do your current ideas feel clear and satisfactory, or are they just nebulous thoughts and feelings, not really examined up to now?
 - Does it seem worthwhile to have a clearer understanding and perhaps a sense of “connection” to such a power? What do you want or hope for from it?
 - How might you strengthen your belief and understanding and sense of connection or belonging?
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KEY IDEAS: SETH TEACHINGS

Who am I, and how do I “fit in” to higher consciousness?

(The following is an attempt to present, in simple form, Seth’s ideas on the individual, and her relationship to the whole consciousness).

The key idea, as in all spiritual traditions, is that we are, in essence, consciousness. Seth describes the individual as being an integral part of a greater consciousness, with which we can, and indeed constantly do, communicate. Reassuringly, the higher levels have our best interests at heart:

It is as if (higher levels of consciousness) contain an infinite information service that instantly puts you in contact with whatever knowledge you require, that sets up circuits between you and others, that

computes probabilities with blinding speed. Not with the impersonality of a computer, however, but with a loving intent that has your best purposes in mind — yours and also those of each other individual (The Individual and the Nature of Mass Events”, p76).

Note that last sentence: “loving intent”! Reassuring.

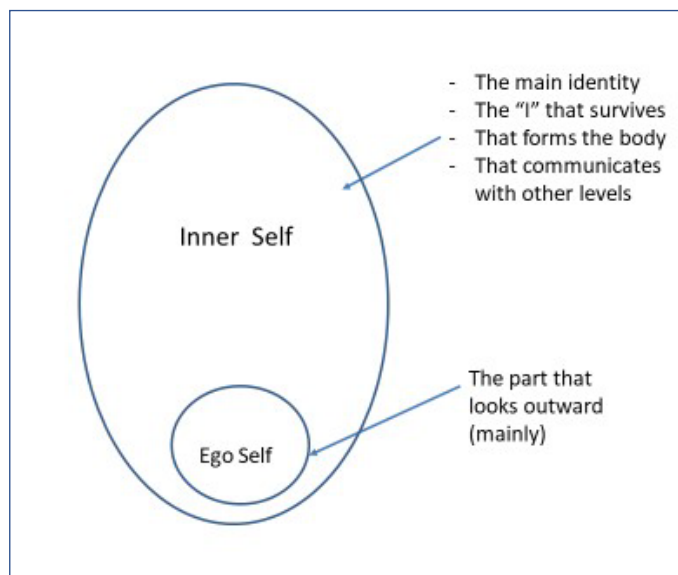
How our familiar body-mind fits in to this picture.

Start with the spiritual principle that everything is ultimately consciousness. From consciousness, physical form arises. The body, and brain are part of this physical world, of course; they are consciousness expressed as form, if you like. The mind, too, although it doesn’t seem physical, is a bundle of thoughts, images and feelings resulting from activity of the brain – so it is really a part of consciousness being expressed in this physical dimension (more on this in topic 8).

Now let’s consider Seth’s map or picture of consciousness, and try to place our worldly, ego-minds in this picture. We customarily identify with this “ego”, which is simply that part of the mind that looks mainly “outward” – at the physical world. “Above” the ego, and more extensive, is what Seth calls the “inner self”, or “inner ego”.

The diagram below shows the outer and inner ego (inner self) as a single unit, which Seth refers to as “the portion of the soul activated in a particular existence”. It is the consciousness underlying the apparently separate self in this lifetime, the “the flower of the moment” as he sometimes calls it! While we are mainly aware of the outer-directed ego, the inner self is more extensive, and more powerful; it is our “prime identity”, the part of our personality that influences our bodily form, and the part that survives the death of that form, according to him. It is also the aspect of our personality that communicates with the higher levels of consciousness. You will recall that it is the part of consciousness which responds to “requests” (expectations) from the ego-mind.

The "outer ego" and the inner ego (Self) operate together, the one to enable you to manipulate in the world that you know, the other to bring you those delicate inner perceptions without which physical existence could not be maintained. (Seth Speaks, p 9).

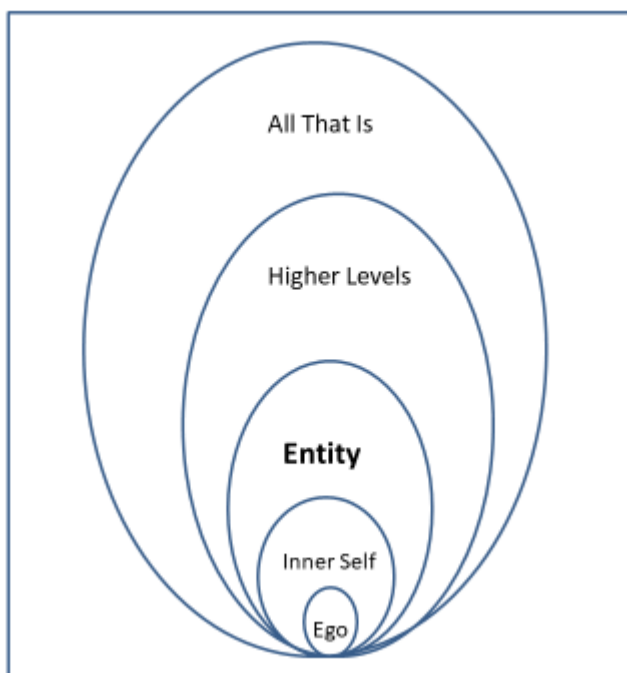


You may wonder if the inner self is the “unconscious mind”. In Seth’s account, there is no such thing, only mental activities that sometimes not accessed by the ego. Further while modern neuroscientists assume (but have not been able to prove) that the mind and its various parts issue from a primary physical source, the brain, Seth, like all mystical writers, says that it’s the other way around, as we have discussed.

The inner self is simply a different dimension or level of consciousness than the ego mind. In fact, it might be better to call it a different cluster of operations, since Seth tells us they are not separate. We might think of our personality, what we believe we are in this lifetime, as a little “pod”, ego plus inner self, floating in an ocean of consciousness. Importantly, we are not separate from the ocean – more like a drop of water within it, although we appear to have our own individuality.

The Entity.

Coming back to the idea of shells or levels of consciousness. There are many levels (remember: this description is simply a convenience: there are no actual boundaries). Between the inner self and higher levels Seth interposes another level, the “entity”.



Seth has this to say about the individual personality and its relationship to the entity:

There is however a portion of you, the deeper identity who forms both the inner ego (or inner self) and the outer ego, who decided that you would be a physical being in this place and in this time. This is the core of your identity, the psychic seed from which you sprang, the multidimensional personality of which you are part.... The entity is the overall identity of which (your) personality is one manifestation - an independent and eternally valid portion. (Seth Speaks, p 9).

In answer to our question: “who am I, ultimately?” the entity would seem to be a kind of parent figure, from which siblings like ourselves arise (although it is, in turn, embedded in still larger dimensions of

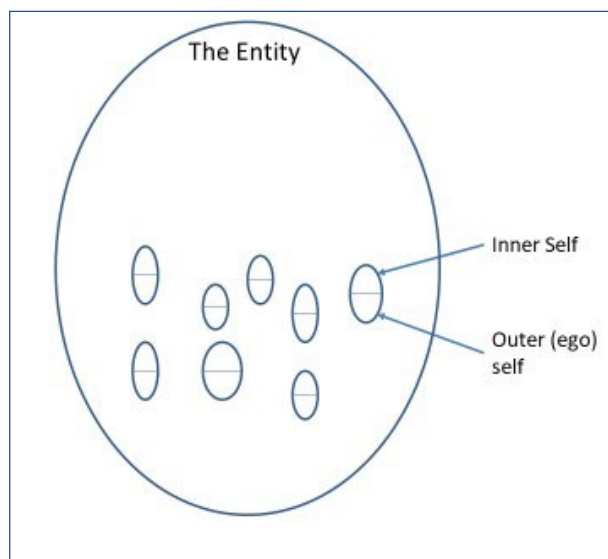
consciousness). Seth reassures us that our prized individual personality (from this life) will never be lost, however:

Your 'life' is simply the only portion of your existence of which you are presently aware. (Nature of the Psyche p27). In one manner of speaking, you are fragments of your entities (Seth Speaks, p306).

Your own personality as you know it, that portion of you that you consider most precious, most uniquely you, will also never be destroyed or lost. It is a portion of the soul (or entity) Your individuality, in whatever way you want to think of it, continues to exist in your terms. It continues to grow and develop, but its growth and development is highly dependent upon its realization that while it is distinct and individual, it is also but one manifestation of the soul. To the extent that it realizes this, it learns to unfold in creativity, and to use those abilities that lie inherent within it (Seth Speaks, p 74).

Below is a diagram of the nature of the entity, which we can think of as the Whole Self, or soul, following Seth. Please note again that the picture is not the reality – just an aid to thinking about it. There are no “lines”, no real divisions between parts of the Self. It is a map of regions of consciousness. I’ve shown a larger Self (Seth’s “entity”) as comprising or hosting many smaller “selves”, each of which has an outer ego and an “Inner Self” component.

One might well ask, again: “where am ‘I’ in all of this?” It seems there is not one simple answer to that question, but while we are in a physical body on this Earth, we may identify ourselves as one of the little “pods” in the diagram, a combined ego and inner self, nested within an entity (although we are usually aware only of the ego part of this).



Why is this model or picture of the self important?

- “Death” looks very different – our body dies, but this life is only one of the roles we play; our essence goes on. If we fully internalise this idea, we are likely to be much less anxious about dying. In particular, premature death, even of a child, may come to seem less tragic.
- It takes some of the “pressure” off, so to speak: if we no longer feel that this is our only incarnation, we can relax, enjoy whatever hand we have been dealt (or have chosen, which Seth says we do), trying to make the most of it, but understanding that our essential being will have other opportunities for experiences that may seem out of reach this time around. Instead of

trying to be “perfect” (if that is our misconception), we simply try to be “fully ourselves”. (This does not imply “reincarnation” in the classical sense, since there is no time – see topic 9).

- If we are concerned to leave children, or some accomplishment in the world, as a “legacy” of our existence, this concern becomes much less acute if we recognise that we will exist in many forms and personalities.
- Seth assures us constantly that there are no real barriers within consciousness; our various dimensions and all bodily expressions are connected at the level of consciousness. This means that we can draw on other “selves”, the inner self and the entity, for help in difficult situations. (As mentioned earlier, this would seem to be analogous to the more conventional religious idea of praying for assistance from a god or “higher being”).

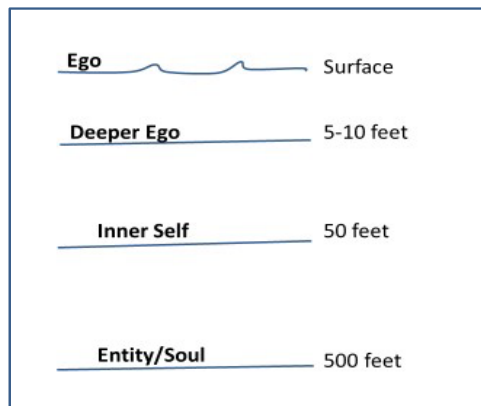
Ex. 2: Your thoughts on this expanded model of “self”

- What is your reaction to this very different view of the nature of self? What do you like about it, and what do you dislike? Why?
- What are the implications for your healing?
- How does it affect your thoughts and feelings about death?
- How does it affect your thoughts about what you might want to explore and learn while in this current body-mind?

Ex. 3: “Diving” to greater depths of the Self. (based on the Seth model)

Imagine that you are floating on the surface of a calm sea, representing your usual ego-centred state, but would like to contact the more expanded dimensions of yourself (it is usually easier to imagine “diving” to accomplish this, rather than floating “higher”, although that imagery can be used if preferred). As you dive down (able to breathe normally), you are still in the ego, but a deeper part of it, and can access what is going on in the inner self more readily (see diagram below). From a few feet down (you determine what feels comfortable – the distances are arbitrary), imagine communicating with the inner self, far below. Ask questions (it’s the Inner Healer exercise in another form!), and especially be open to ideas coming up from the depths. If this is a sufficient depth for you at first, spend time there.

If you want to “go deeper”, you can obviously visualise diving down, to see what your experiences are when you reach, first, the Inner Self, and later, the entity.



KEY IDEAS: CONNECTING WITH THE HIGHER SELF

How can I connect with my Higher Self?

Here are some commonsense recommendations, drawing on both Seth and more traditional spiritual traditions, for connecting with the greater consciousness of which we are a part (*note, this is a slightly changed version of a similar list from topic 2 of part 1 of this course*):

- The first requirement is openness to the idea that we are, in essence, spiritual beings, rather than independent, physical body-minds. With study and reflection, we aim to acquire our own understanding and knowledge. There is no need for uncritical acceptance of “beliefs” imposed by others.
- To gain this knowing in an authentic way, we must dismantle any mental barriers we have erected that prevent this communication between our limited ego-consciousness and the divine, or higher levels of consciousness. Rigorous examination of our own thought processes is needed. Some examples of obstacles: scepticism based on ignorance, undue deference towards “authorities”, fear of how we may be seen by others, lack of confidence in our abilities, and mental laziness.
- Having removed at least some of the obstructive thinking, we need to begin to consider ourselves as something different from what we have been taught. Rather than striving to be completely independent, as our culture encourages us to do, we need, as sincere seekers, to see ourselves as part of the greater consciousness. We become observer-participants, rather than “movers and shakers”. This is a stumbling block for many, because it feels like a diminishment, rather than the massive expansion of the self that it really is.
- We need to be silent internally, at least some of the time, to allow any “messages” or intimations from our higher selves to percolate into the ego mind. Prayer and meditation are classical methods that assist this clearing of the mind.
- Guided visualisations (like the “Inner Healer”) can help us make contact with higher consciousness.
- Ideally, we need to structure our lives to allow opportunities for this regular communication.
- It helps to create a feeling of devotion. In theistic (God-centred) traditions, of which ACIM is an example, this is directed at God, or an avatar (human figure representing the Divine, like Jesus). For students of non-duality (topic 8), it is felt for the greater consciousness, and ultimately for all beings, as it becomes clear that we are an integral part of everything. In Seth’s writings, devotion is not much discussed, but recognising that our apparent individual consciousness is in fact a part of a vast “hierarchy” of consciousness brings a feeling of security, love and acceptance for oneself, and for all other people.
- We need to keep going, with our study and practice; any gains in understanding and experience are liable to erode otherwise (unless we have reached some rare, final state of absolute knowing). Participating in these practices with a community of like-minded people is probably necessary for most of us. Intensity of involvement is key.

The “language” of communication with higher consciousness.

We humans have a persistent tendency to project our physical qualities on to the higher consciousness, or any divine being, and to assume that they will “speak English”. Yet simple reason shows us that any one human language is unlikely to be the vehicle through which events are brought about from such non-material realms. Visual images also seem unlikely to be part of the “currency” of higher consciousness, i.e., of levels beyond the ego mind. This is a dilemma: words and images are our primary mode of communication. Perhaps they prompt a “felt sense” in us which is registered by higher consciousness? Christians speak of the “prayer of the heart” which reaches God. Seth addresses this by writing of “feelings of power” and “feeling tones” that we can cultivate, as an addition to our more concrete appeals. Below are two of his exercises to explore; there are others throughout his books, and notably, for healing purposes, in chapters 14-16 of “Nature of Personal Reality”.

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KEY IDEAS: PRACTICAL**Ex. 4: Your approaches to connecting with the spiritual dimension.**

Rather than simply pondering what you might do (some day!), it is important to write down your plans, and have that stimulus handy.

1. List (a) your current reading, and (b) your plans for spiritual study in the near future, including any watching of video teachings on You-tube or other platforms.
 2. What do you find most effective in quietening the mind? Do you have a regular practice of meditation or a related approach to “being” rather than “doing”? What has your experience been so far? Any obstacles, and if so, how will you overcome them? (Recall the quote from ACIM: “Nothing is difficult that is wholly desired”!)
 3. Note your experience with the “going within” method we teach in HJ, and how you may have adapted it, or explored variations.
 4. Do you belong to, or have plans to explore, any communities dedicated to spiritual searching, either on-line or in person? What do you see as the value of such belonging? What stops you from exploring?
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Ex. 5: Feeling the source of power within yourself (Seth Speaks, p77).

Close your eyes.....and try to sense within yourself the source of power from which your own breathing and life forces come. Some of you will do this successfully at your first try. Others may take longer. When you feel within yourself this source, then try to sense this power flow outward through your entire physical being, through the fingertips and toes, through the pores of your body, all directions, with yourself as center. Imagine the rays undiminished, reaching then through the foliage and clouds above, through the center of the earth below, extending even to the farthest reaches of the universe.

Now I do not mean this to be merely a symbolic exercise, for though it may begin with imagination, it is based upon fact, and emanations from your consciousness and the creativity of your soul do indeed reach outward in that manner. The exercise will give you some idea of the true nature,

creativity, and vitality of the soul from which you can draw your own energy and of which you are an individual and unique portion.

Variants of this kind of exercise can be found in many spiritual traditions – the idea that we can “capture” or “direct” some of a pervasive power that surrounds and infuses us. Seth typically does not provide extensive or detailed instructions: it’s more of a guide to get us started in exploring for ourselves.

An apparently related exercise comes from the early pages of “Nature of Personal Reality”, below:

Ex. 6: “Feeling Tones”.

(Background, p11)

Basically, you create your experience through your beliefs about yourself and the nature of reality. Another way to understand this is to realize that you create your experiences through your expectations. Your feeling-tones are your emotional attitudes toward yourself and life in general, and these generally govern the large areas of experience.....

The feeling-tone then is the motion and fiber — the timber (timbre) — the portion of your energy devoted to your physical experience. Now it flows into what you are as a physical being and materializes you in the world of seasons, space, flesh, and time. Its source, however, is quite independent of the world that you know.

(The Exercise, p21)

.....sit quietly. Close your eyes. Try to sense within yourself the deep feeling-tones that I mentioned earlier (pp 11-12, see above). This is not difficult to do.

Your knowledge of their existence will help you recognize their deep rhythms within you. Each individual will sense these tones in his or her own way, so do not worry about how they should feel. Simply tell yourself that they exist, that they are composed of the great energies of your being made flesh. Then let yourself experience.

If you are used to terms like meditation, try to forget the term during this procedure. Do not use any name. Free yourself from concepts, and experience the being of yourself and the motion of your own vitality. Do not question, "Is this right? Am I doing it correctly? Am I feeling what I should feel?" You are not to use other people's criteria. There are no standards but your own feelings.

No particular time limit is recommended. This should be an enjoyable experience. Accept whatever happens as uniquely your own. The exercise will put you in touch with yourself. It will return you to yourself. Whenever you are nervous or upset, take a few moments to sense this feeling-tone within you, and you will find yourself centered in your own being, secure.

When you have tried this exercise several times, then feel these deep rhythms go out from you in all directions, as indeed they do. Electromagnetically they radiate out through your physical being; and in ways that I hope to explain later, they form the environment that you know even as they form your physical image.

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Exercises in this topic:

- Consider how you think of “God”
 - Your thoughts on this expanded model of “self”
 - “Diving” to greater depths of the Self.
 - Your approaches to connecting with the spiritual dimension.
 - Feeling the source of power within yourself.
 - “Feeling Tones”.
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Topic 6: Traditional Spiritual Paths.

- There are many spiritual “paths up the mountain” towards expanding our vision and awareness, and discovering our true nature.
- Most traditional routes are dualistic, that is, they retain the idea of ourselves as a separate self (at least at first) and offer ways of refining our ideas and habits towards, and eventual union with, a deity.
- A huge range of teachings are available to us today. Some are briefly discussed. Progress requires diligent study and practice, and making this work a priority in life.

KEY IDEAS: THEORY

A spiritual journey or search differs 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 primarily 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. There is observational evidence supporting the latter claim (for example, the phenomenon of channelling, and the common occurrence of “out of body” and “near death” experiences). However, our understanding of spirituality relies mainly on the 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 events in our lives, 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. However, it is important at first to acquire some understanding through study and practice. 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 (and spiritual seeker), William James, over a century ago.

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1. Finding a Spiritual Path

Under “Further Study” at the end of this topic, I have put a brief discussion of the inappropriateness of science and of western philosophy as vehicles for gaining spiritual experience. You will also see there a thumbnail sketch of major world religions; many people find adhering to one of these offers a feeling of security, usually without much attempt to uncover the ultimate nature of oneself and the reality behind the physical world. Our aim here is more ambitious: we are working towards first understanding and then experiencing who we are, beyond immediate appearances. We have already encountered Seth’s views in the last topic: the main purpose of the rest of this course is to survey a number of other answers to these fundamental questions.

1.1. 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 discussed in part I of this course, the traditional or 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 protecting and 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 a direct way of acquiring this understanding (often labelled “non-duality”) in topic 8, but for the present topic 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, knowing that they are at one with it. Thus the 2 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: Like many children in the West, I was sent to Sunday school and exposed to protestant Christianity; it didn’t “stick” at that time, and I lost interest in my early teens. 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 her 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. I’ve studied A Course in Miracles (Christian in orientation) over many years, likewise the Seth material, and more recently, “non-dual” spirituality (topic 8).

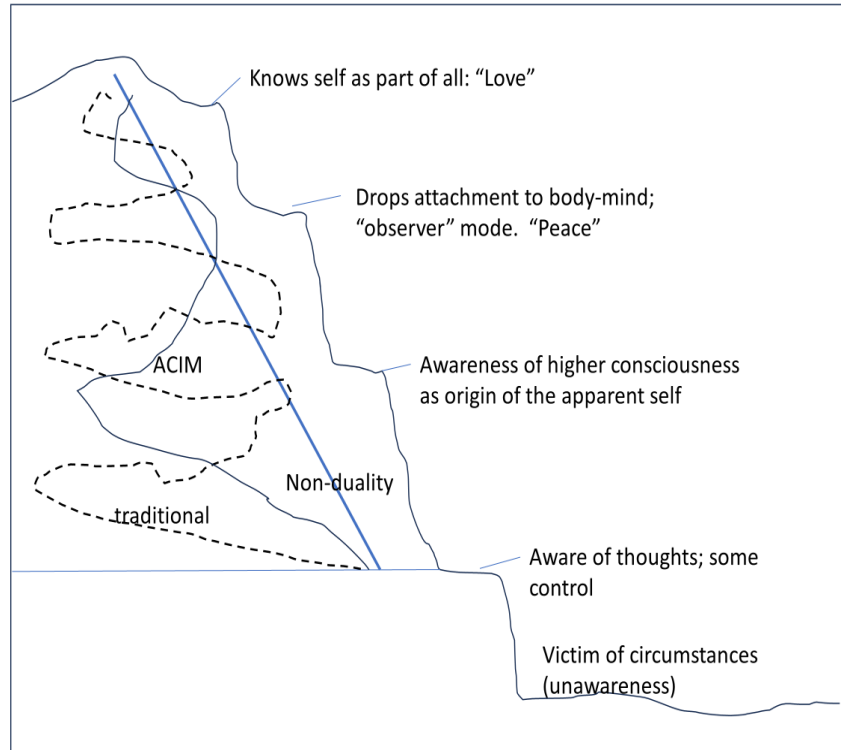
1.2. What is required of me, if I decide to follow a spiritual path?

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: “I need to be in control of what’s happening”.
 - Ask yourself: what are my aims here? Is it to heal physically without changing my lifestyle or thought-style (probably won’t work!)? Is it simply more 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!)?
 - 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.
 - What priority do I give this search? I have noticed that those individuals, with cancer, who make their spiritual-healing 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’s “online resources”. The enthusiasm generated by undertaking an exciting new project can have a considerable impact on mind and the body. 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.
 - A searching question for yourself is: “what am I prepared to give up?”
 - Membership and participation in organisations teaching spirituality is a great help. It is hard to do this work alone (at least at first).

1.3. What to study, and what to practise?

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. Which experts? Which path is best for me? The diagram below shows the “mountain” that we are planning to climb.

There are very many paths up that mountain, varying in methods of climbing, and in the steepness of the chosen ascent, but all reaching a similar point at the summit. Traditional, theistic paths (and religions) generally propose a gradual, winding route, perhaps with no great effort required in the early stages. By contrast, the “direct, non-dual” path, tackling head-on our false assumptions about reality, can result in a sudden ascension to a much broader understanding. ACIM is somewhere in between, and represents, in my view, an “updated” and demystified version of Christianity, that can be very attractive to people currently connected to that religion (as well as to many others). The Seth work is not so much a spiritual path as an explanation of what is happening in the non-material or spiritual domain, behind the physical changes. It might be represented on the diagram as climbing up the steps on the right side of the mountain. It is a valuable complement to any spiritual endeavour. I have focussed mainly, in this course, on Seth, ACIM and non-duality, but in the current topic we will briefly discuss a number of more traditional sources.



Exercise: What approach(es) do I feel drawn to?

- Do you have a background of exposure to any particular religion or spiritual path, that either steers you toward (or away from!) some of those we discuss here? If you do have such an attachment, consider “diving into it” more deeply, perhaps with the aid of professionals in that religion.
- 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.
- What practices appeal, in addition to reading? The traditional practices of meditation and/or prayer? The visualisation exercises involving “going within” (like the Inner Healer exercise that we’ve done earlier in the HJ program)? Watching your dreams and learning to analyse them (see Appendix to part I). Using internet resources, including teachers on You-tube? (seek out the good teachers!). Mind-body exercises like Tai-chi or yoga? Others?

KEY IDEAS: PRACTICAL

2. Some Suggestions on What to Study.

2.1. 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 – a good 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:

.....

"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".

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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/>

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Several of Easwaran's books are translations and commentaries on some of the great classics of Indian literature and spirituality. Downloadable copies can be found on the internet (e.g., in "oceanofpdf.com) of his writings on "*The Dhammapada*", sayings of the Buddha, and of "*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.

2.2. 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 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.

2.3. Other authors:

In the “Further Study” section I have put quotes from a variety of other sources, including ACIM, which we will deal with at more length in topic 7. 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 Further Study section, 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 Additional Materials. 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 19th 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 often enigmatic portrayal of the Daoist “Way”.

FURTHER STUDY

Who has the answers, and what answers do they give?

Science is what we tend to turn to first in this society. It has almost become a religion for many people, assumed to be a source of ultimate answers, although thoughtful scientists understand that they are simply interpreting what they perceive around them according to certain basic assumptions.

Our science is based on the idea of materialism: that the universe is simply a lot of matter that has evolved, over time, into organised systems of galaxies, stars and planets. On our planet there has been an evolution of what we call “life” – self-reproducing organisms with some apparent power of independent action. The formation of the Earth, the universe, and life itself is viewed as an accidental process, with no overarching plan or order behind it. Thus, ultimately, we are lumps of meat, with a looming expiry date: a rather unattractive view, allowing no purpose or meaning beyond this life!

We may fairly ask: is science the relevant authority here? It is very efficient at asking questions about how matter is constructed, and how it works, but it examines everything from the outside, and the question “what am I?” seems to require looking from the “inside”.

Western philosophy has wrestled intellectually with these questions also, for about 2500 years, (while the philosophies of the “East” have always been much more bound together with inner spiritual searching). It too tends to look mainly from the outside, so to speak; it uses logical reason to reach its conclusions, which can be very illuminating (see, for example, the recent books by Bernardo Kastrup).

An ongoing debate, highlighted by philosophy although unresolved by that discipline, has been “realism versus idealism”. Realism is the idea (to which most of us automatically subscribe) that whatever is out there is simply there, independent of our presence or our observations. Idealism, by contrast, implies that what is perceived is essentially dependent on mind – our individual minds and perhaps an overarching Mind (there are various forms of idealism). We will see that this second view comes much closer to what the mystics tell us.

Mystics, old and new. These are individuals who have devoted much of their lives to an intense examination of who we are and how we “fit in”: whether there is a Divine or higher order supporting us. Jesus and the Buddha are familiar examples, but there are many more, lesser known, including quite a number of teachers alive today.

Mysticism, or the spiritual search, uses an approach quite different from that of science or (Western) philosophy: looking from the “inside out”, including quieting the mind, and intensely concentrating “within” to see what can be found. Texts written by experienced teachers are commonly studied to direct the investigation. Answers come as intuitions or “knowings” – we don’t really have the

words for the process – and when arrived at, by a person who has learned to avoid rationalisation and wishful thinking, are completely convincing and unarguable. This process is viewed with suspicion by our externally-oriented society; it takes personal experience to understand it. True spiritual teachers or mystics do not impose dogma on us: instead, they insist that we must undertake similar practices to gain our own knowledge. The role of the teacher is not so much to impart knowledge as to point the way to our acquiring it.

Where does religion fit in then? 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 subscribers to a religion were educated, the spiritual insights behind it were often simplified, to make them more readily acceptable (and also, perhaps, 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 metaphor, or projection of ideas with which people are familiar.

Channelled texts. This source of information is quite analogous, when it is authentic, to the inner "knowing" of a mystic, except that in this instance the information is usually passed on through the mind of a passive individual (a "channel"), and recorded by others. The information clearly comes from a source other than the channel, since it often includes material that the latter could not possibly have known. The Seth books, and A Course in Miracles are stellar examples of this process. The Koran was channelled through a non-literate prophet, Mohammed. Parts of the Old Testament of the Christian Bible record information transmitted to prophets from a non-earthly source.

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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". It is also 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". An outline of 5 of these religions follows.

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 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 6th 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 1st 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 1st 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 16th 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 7th 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.

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Spiritual quotations and questions.

(A brief sampling from various authors)

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*).

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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"?

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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 17th 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 (on “God”): from “Seth Speaks”, p203 (*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. 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 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 Dhammapada:

These questions are taken from: “The Dhammapada”, version by Eknath Easwaran. It is a spiritual classic, a collection of practical verses, probably gathered from disciples of the Buddha who wanted to preserve what they had heard directly from him.

Questions: (I have organised these according to the chapter headings in Easwaran’s book.)

Chapter 1:

- What similarities do you see between the statement (verse 1) “Our life is shaped by our mind” and the ideas from Seth and others that we have been discussing throughout the Healing Journey program?
- Briefly, what are verses 3-6 about?
- Verses 7-14 extol the need to “train the mind”. What is this training, and why is it necessary?
- Verses 15-18: What, really is wrong with “selfishness”? Aren’t we all selfish? What are the harmful results of being focussed mainly on oneself and one’s assumed needs?

Chapter 2:

- We think of “vigilance” as self-protectiveness. Is this what he’s talking about in this series of verses (21-32), or if not, what is meant?

Chapter 3:

- This next series (verses 33-43) is poetic advocacy for training the mind. As you ponder it, bring it back to your own situation, your own mind, rather than keeping to generalities. What do you see as the benefits of training your own mind in the way the Buddha describes? What do you need to do to further your objectives?

Chapters 5 and 6:

- Think about ways in which you have acted selfishly (“immaturely”) in the past – not so much isolated incidents, but patterns of behaviour central in your life. Identify the thinking behind those patterns (insecurity? greed? ambition?). Ponder the desirable and undesirable consequences of these patterns in your life.
- Under what circumstances have you habitually acted in an unselfish way? What kind of inner feeling or feeling tone has powered those actions?
- What is the meaning of the metaphor about “running up and down this shore” versus reaching “the other shore”?

Chapters 7 and 8:

- We may feel, on reading these chapters, that we can only admire the kind of person dedicated spiritual practice may produce. Yet we can all take steps along this evolutionary path. Verses 112 and 113 may prompt some reflection on one's own condition: "Better to live in strength and wisdom for one day than to lead a weak and idle life for a hundred years". What comfort do they provide for any of us who suspects s/he may not have much longer to live?

Chapters 9 and 10:

- By contrast with the preceding verses, these sections seem like common-sense, don't they?

Subsequent chapters:

- As time and interest allow, read on through the rest of the book (to verse 423).
-

Some videos for topic 6

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

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

.....

[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!

.....

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

Goes well with rationality

In5/T5 Excellent critique of W spirituality

.....

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

In3/T3 Engaging, illustrated v short acct

.....

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

It teaches ways of transforming our attitudes.

Go more deeply into our true nature

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."

.....

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

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.

Topic 7: A Course in Miracles (ACIM)

- The author of this magisterial and widely popular work describes himself as the historical Jesus, speaking through a channel (Helen Schucman).
- It can be seen as an updating of the New Testament of the Christian Bible.
- Jesus describes how our suffering comes from separating from God/the divine ground.
- Healing requires a “shift in perception” (the “miracle”), away from the false idea of separateness.
- We learn to trust God as we realize we are already a part of that consciousness.

KEY IDEAS

A Course in Miracles is a most remarkable book from an unusual source. The author claims to be 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 atheist psychologist, Helen Schucman, beginning in 1965. She “heard” a voice, identifying itself as Jesus, and for some 7 years, 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. As for the Seth material, much of the teaching is good, basic psychology, although, also like Seth, it probes much more deeply into what the mind does to block our “return” to awareness of the underlying consciousness. It is written in modern language, and although it uses Christian terminology, it 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 (see her: “A Return to Love”), and Gerald Jampolsky, among others; reading some of these books can be a helpful introduction. The “Foundation for ACIM” was 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. There are a number of websites (e.g., acim.org), which offer ways of searching the (very lengthy!) text and other materials and assistance - books, audio and videotapes, plus advice on workshops.

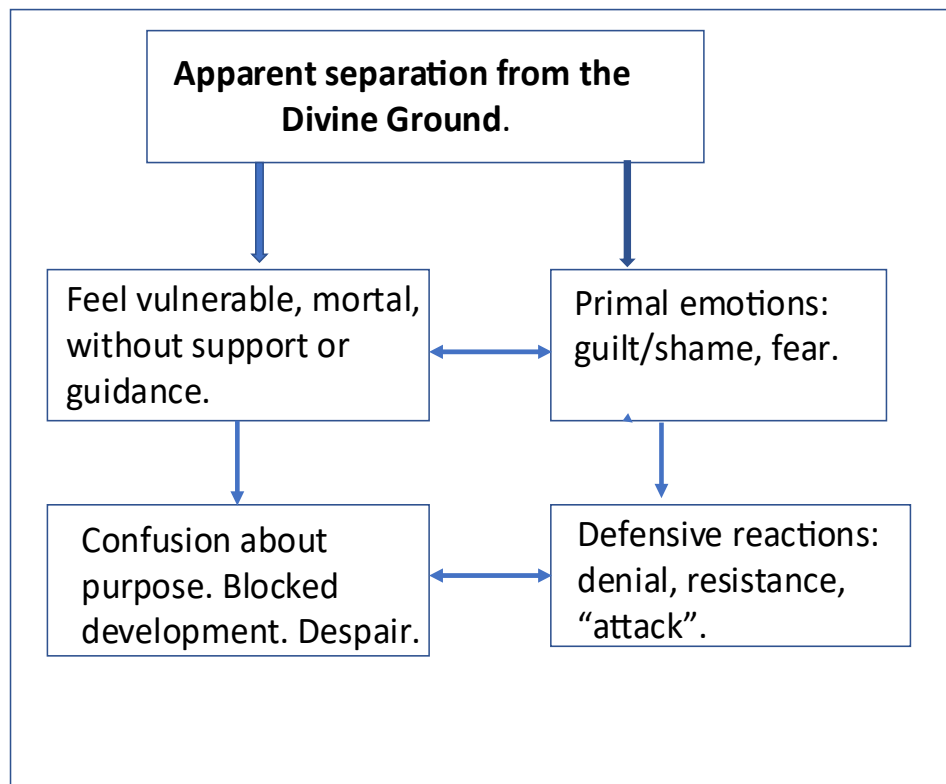
ACIM can be difficult reading. It seems to be designed to make us think hard, so that we truly understand the material, rather than have it “slip down” and be forgotten. The terminology can pose an initial barrier to some readers also, appearing sexist (always “he” and “your brothers”), and Christian in some of its symbology. You will find that you get used to this quite quickly, as the beauty and profundity of the writing sinks in.

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”. The author even

refers to us as ideas in the Mind of God! 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 our Source, i.e., some part or aspect of God believed itself to be separate. This apparently separate part is called the "Son of God" in ACIM. The separated mind retains awareness of its origins through a kind of connecting link that ACIM calls the "Holy Spirit".

The apparent separation is the ultimate cause of all our suffering and illness (and you will find the same message in the "non-duality" philosophy of our next topic, as well as throughout the Seth books, although less emphasised there). The diagram below outlines the ACIM account. Similar ideas have appeared in various spiritual and religious traditions over many centuries.



A Course in Miracles (ACIM) points out that when we isolate ourselves like this, the consequences are severe: while on the surface we may not realize it, "underneath" we feel fearful, and guilty – it's a bit like a child who has run away from home! Perhaps the most damaging effect of the separation, and the fear and guilt that follow, is that we perceive ourselves as unworthy, and somehow guilty (see the right-hand side of the diagram). This can cripple people emotionally throughout their lives. Instead, we are asked to accept our "perfection", to know that we are loved, and a part of God. Another source of our fear is the mistaken idea that, since we have abandoned God, he is likely to retaliate! ACIM differs from some conventional religious instruction in telling us clearly that we have not "sinned", only been in error, mistaken about who we really are. In fact, we are part of God, always have been, and always will be. The problem is that we have forgotten this. Our task is to recover this awareness.

The lower box on the right side of the diagram represents how we cope with our fears, our sense of now being isolated and vulnerable, by adopting “defensive” mechanisms, like trying to control everything, resisting, judging, denying, avoiding, and projecting our guilt on to others and on to the environment. This inner conflict uses energy, and blocks the loving connection to our world, to others, and to our own bodies. We suffer because, when in a separated mode like this, nothing is quite as we want it to be. Our desires are constantly being frustrated, and we often become anxious and feel overwhelmed. Physical illness may follow.

A further result of our separating from our Source is shown in the boxes on the left side: when we lose a sense of our true being, as an integral part of the Divine Ground, we inevitably feel vulnerable, liable to harm – another reason to fear. This leads to efforts to protect and justify ourselves, perhaps through withdrawing from close contact, perhaps by becoming overly dependent on others. There is confusion about who we are (lower box); we may feel that life is ultimately meaningless, and dread the death of the body, since we identify so strongly with it.

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How to study ACIM

Here are a few pointers:

- Reading the text, I would recommend avoiding the first 2 or 3 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.
- The “Workbook” part, bound together with the main text in the published volume, is mostly easier to read than the “Text”. There are 365 “lessons”, for daily reading; many of these are affirmations, followed by explanations: e.g., #23: “I can escape the world I see by giving up attack thoughts”. 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): Click the link below, then scroll down to get to the Workbook Lessons meditation.
- <https://awakening-together.org/inspiration/practices/meditation-audios/acim-meditation-audios/>
- While the 2 main sections of the book are the text and the workbook, these are followed by a short “Manual for Teachers”, which is relatively easy reading. There is also a very brief “Clarification of Terms”. In the more recent 3rd edition, two other short accounts, “Song of Prayer” and “Psychotherapy” have been appended. It is useful to buy the volume if you are interested in serious study of ACIM, although the website – acim.org is excellent.
- How can I believe the author is who he says he is? It’s fair enough to doubt at first; You can read the “backstory”, accounts of the process of transcribing the book, by Ken Wapnick and others. However, once you have studied the book for a while, you will have no doubt that it is not written by a living human! It may inspire confidence to know that millions around the world are studying it.
- For those interested in pursuing a “course” (series of excerpts, comments and questions), I can suggest the manual used to introduce ACIM to patients at the Ontario Cancer Institute. Around 300 people took this course, in multiple small groups, over 10 years. It is included (as “level 5B”)

in the online courses for the Healing Journey on the Wellspring website; go to: wellspring\online programs, then to “self-paced resources” and to “Healing Journey level 5”.

The Essential Teachings of ACIM (in simple form)

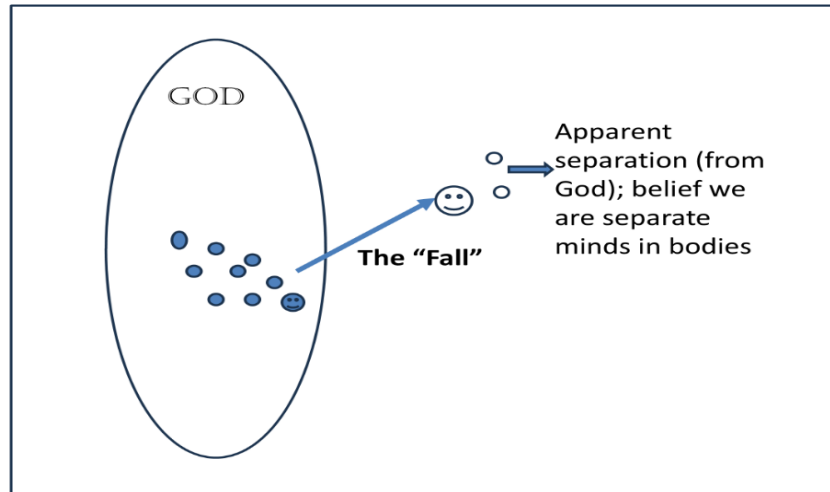
The central ideas of ACIM are few and not really complicated, but they can appear so because they are very different from what our culture has taught us to believe. The following “bare bones” summary is something to “hang on to” if you are reading the text for the first time.

The route to suffering



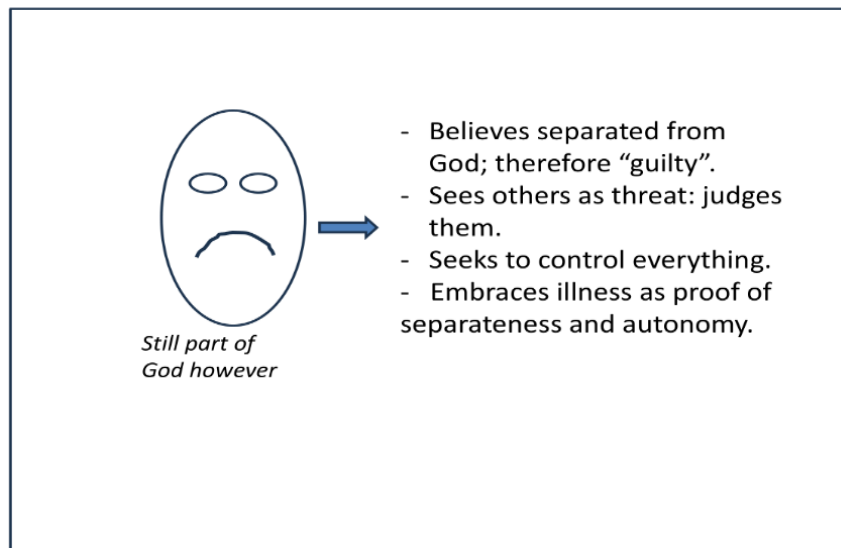
The essential problem:

We are part of God, always. How can this be? It is the case (as virtually all spiritual teachings tell us) because our essence is not material. Instead, it is “mind-stuff”, consciousness. However, we think we are primarily bodies, quite separate from any Divine Ground (although with, perhaps, a little of that “inside” us somewhere!).



The consequences of our apparent separation from God:

This apparent separation (which deep down we know has not really happened) leaves us feeling vaguely guilty or ashamed of what we have become. It also means we think of ourselves as in competition with other people, and indeed with the "outside" world, which often seems to frustrate us. We attempt to over-control our surroundings.

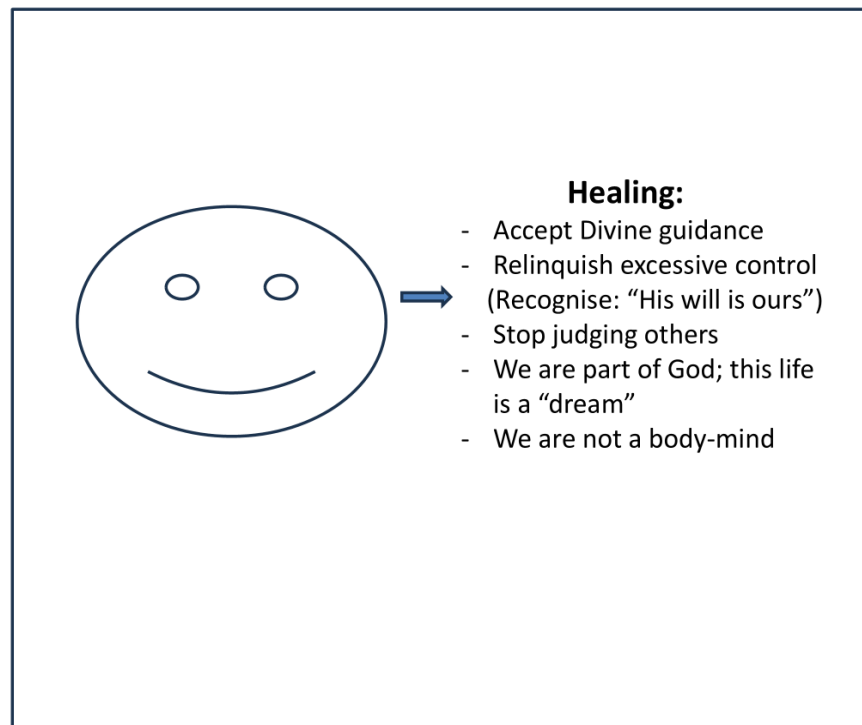


Illness may follow:

We constantly judge, and even "attack" others, and our surroundings: they are not how we want them to be! One consequence of this constant conflict – trying and failing to control everything – is a tendency for the body to fall ill. We are afraid to lose the apparent sense of control, and instead to allow the Divine to guide our actions. We don't realize that, because we are still part of God, "*His will is ours*". Illness may even appear to have advantages for us - one of the most startling ideas in ACIM - because it seems to demonstrate our independence from God, our ultimate separateness ("*Sickness is a defense against the Truth*").

Healing:

Healing simply requires giving up our insistence on autonomy and allowing God to guide us – “Let go and let God”, as is said in Christian circles. We come to realize that our bodies are not our “selves”, but something like an old car which we can let go when its time comes to expire! Our “brothers” (and sisters!) are not separated from us, as we think, but are all part of the same God-consciousness. We need to stop “attacking” (i.e., judging, criticizing) them and instead practise “forgiveness” of all others, and indeed of ourselves. Healing from any illness can occur, according to Jesus, through thoroughly renouncing our view of ourselves as separate, physical beings, and embracing our true identity (it is not always clear whether he means actual healing of the physical body, or simply that we will come to see that the body does not matter, since it is not who we are).



Here are some quotes illustrating the main ideas. (*References to the text, T, are followed by chapter number, then section within the chapter, paragraph number within that section, and sometimes, sentence number in the paragraph – a brief examination will familiarise you with the system. “W” indicates the workbook, followed by the lesson number*).

Our apparent separation from God:

⁶The ego does not regard itself as part of you. ⁷Herein lies its primary error, the foundation of its whole thought system.....². When God created you He made you part of Him ³You made the ego without love, and so it does not love you. ([ACIM, T-6.IV.1:6–2:3](#))

The separation is the notion of rejection. ⁵As long as you teach this you will believe it. ⁶This is not as God thinks, and you must think as He thinks if you are to know Him again. ([ACIM, T-6.I.18:4-6](#))

More than just forgetting, we seem to be in a kind of active opposition to God/consciousness.

⁹Your self and God's Self are in opposition. ¹⁰They are opposed in source, in direction and in outcome. ¹¹They are fundamentally irreconcilable, because spirit cannot perceive and the ego cannot know. ¹²They are therefore not in communication and can never be in communication. ¹³Nevertheless, the ego can learn, even though its maker can be misguided. ([ACIM, T-4.I.2:9-13](#))

And to heal ourselves from this mistaken idea:

A sense of separation from God is the only lack you really need correct. ([ACIM, T-1.VI.2:1](#)).

.....

It is our identification with our bodies (and minds) that seems to separate us from our true self, in God.

The body is outside you, and but seems to surround you, shutting you off from others and keeping you apart from them, and them from you. 2 It is not there. 3 There is no barrier between God and His Son. (T-18.VI.9.)

The body cannot know. 2 And while you limit your awareness to its tiny senses, you will not see the grandeur that surrounds you. 3 God cannot come into a body, nor can you join Him there. 4 Limits on love will always seem to shut Him out, and keep you apart from Him. 5 The body is a tiny fence around a little part of a glorious and complete idea. 6 It draws a circle, infinitely small, around a very little segment of Heaven, splintered from the whole, proclaiming that within it is your kingdom, where God can enter not. (T-18.VIII.2).

.....

As a result of this assumed separation of ourselves from the Divine Ground, we feel guilty and vulnerable, even expecting "punishment" from God.

The ego believes it is completely on its own, which is merely another way of describing how it thinks it originated. ²This is such a fearful state that it can only turn to other egos and try to unite with them in a feeble attempt at identification, or attack them in an equally feeble show of strength. ([ACIM, T-4.II.8:1-2](#))

No one is punished for sins, and the Sons of God are not sinners. ⁵Any concept of punishment involves the projection of blame, and reinforces the idea that blame is justified. ([ACIM, T-6.I.16:4-5](#))

.....

To "defend" ourselves against these intolerable feelings of shame and vulnerability, we lash out at others, at ourselves, and at the world.

⁵To the ego the body is to attack with. ⁶Equating you with the body, it teaches that you are to attack with (it). ⁷The body, then, is not the source of its own health. ⁸The body's condition lies solely in your interpretation of its function. ([ACIM, T-8.VIII.1:5-8](#)).

Only the self-accused condemn.⁵ You never hate your brother for his sins, but only for your own (T-31.III.1)..... 7 If you did not believe that you deserved attack, it never would occur to you to give attack to anyone at all. 8 Why should you? 9 What would be the gain to you? (T-31.III.2).

We may even become sick (or welcome illness) as "proof" of our independence.
Sickness is anger taken out upon the body, so that it will suffer pain. (T-28.VI.5).

Sickness is a decision. 2 It is not a thing that happens to you, quite unsought, which makes you weak and brings you suffering. 3 It is a choice you make, a plan you lay, when for an instant truth arises in your own deluded mind, and all your world appears to totter and prepare to fall. 4 Now are you sick, that truth may go away and threaten your establishments no more. (W-pl.136.7).

.....

The remedy, repeated throughout ACIM.

Forgiveness is the healing of the perception of separation. 2 Correct perception of your brother is necessary, because minds have chosen to see themselves as separate. (T-3.V.9).

The real world is attained simply by the complete forgiveness of the old, the world you see without forgiveness (T-17.II.5)....6.1.....beauty will rise to bless your sight as you look upon the world with forgiving eyes. 2 For forgiveness literally transforms vision, and lets you see the real world reaching quietly and gently across chaos, removing all illusions that had twisted your perception and fixed it on the past. 3 The smallest leaf becomes a thing of wonder, and a blade of grass a sign of God's perfection (T-17.II.6.).

FURTHER STUDY

You could begin by reading through a few of the lessons, which typically comprise a fairly simple explanatory section, followed by advice on how to apply the suggested affirmations, if and when you decide to tackle the year-long program seriously.

Next, I've referred to a couple of sections from the "Manual for Teachers", which again, are easier than the text.

Finally, the text itself: while the sexist language and Christian terminology are easy to overlook (once you get used to them), the difficulty of much of the content is a greater barrier to some who are approaching ACIM for the first time. It is vital not to let yourself be put off by this; simply read a little at a time, reflecting on each paragraph, even each sentence, as you proceed, and accepting that there may be a lot you don't understand at a first attempt. I've suggested a number of sections of the text that may help you get started. Finally, at the end of these references, there is a complete section (T-4.I, that is, Text chapter 4, section I, with my commentary).

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Lessons:

- 7 and 8: how our thinking is preoccupied with the past
- 16: How our thoughts mold our reality.
- 22 and 23: About our constant "attack" on (resistance to) the world around us.
- 30, 35 and 37: A beginning look at how consciousness (God) creates the world through us.
- 39: And about learning how to see differently.
- 321-330: Jumping forward to get an idea of where the course of lessons is taking us.
- 135-137: A deep analysis of how we promote illness, and how to move towards healing (these lessons are a little more difficult – more like the text itself)

The Manual for Teachers:

Section 4, pp9-16: “The characteristics of God’s teachers”. Eight pages, describing the mental state a study of ACIM can bring you to, as you then become a “teacher”.

Section 5 pp17-19: “How is healing accomplished?”. A thought-provoking, if somewhat difficult, account of healing through coming to understand that we are not the body, but spirit, a part of the Whole.

The Text:

T-5.II.1-8. The beginning of healing is remembering God.

T-8.I.1-6. Moving away from direction by the ego-mind.

T-8.VII.10-13. Healing through communicating love, removing ego blocks.

T-8.IX.1-9. Shifting perception to understand who you are.

T-11.I.1-11. This and the next, adjacent section are about realizing our will and God’s are the same.

T-11.II.1-7.

T-11.VIII.1-15. More on healing.

T-18.IX.1-9. Comparing the world of the ego with God’s world.

T-21.I.6-9. A bit of poetry!

.....

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-4.1.3. 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-4.1.4. 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-4.1.5. 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-4.1.6. 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-4.1.7. 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-4.1.8. 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-4.1.9. 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-4.1.10. 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!

Topic 8: The Direct Path to realizing “non-duality”.

- The central idea of this approach is that we can know directly, without an appeal to “gods” or other beings, that we are a part of the one Consciousness, or Awareness.
- This underlying reality can be thought of as something like a field of force, such as gravity. It has no physical properties, but from it, the physical reality appears.
- The world, and our bodies, are thus not what they appear to be (i.e., the primary reality, independent of our observation). Our apparent separate “self” is simply a cluster of ideas.
- Our true selves, being non-physical, and part of the consciousness underpinning the world, do not suffer and die.
- Methods exist to confirm for ourselves that we are, in essence, consciousness.

KEY IDEAS: THEORY

At the heart of most (perhaps all) spiritual traditions is the idea that we are already part of a divine order or God, but have forgotten this; that there is, in fact, only this one consciousness, to which all apparently separate things and beings belong. A common name for this view is “non-duality”, indicating that there are not “two” (or many) things in reality, just one.

In reality, which means in our actual experience, all experience is one seamless substance. The duality between the inside self and the outside.... World.....is always imagined. (Spira: Nature of Consciousness, p58).

I’ll first try to describe this philosophy, noting what it says about “separation” from the divine ground. We’ll then look briefly at the kinds of practical exercise that can take us beyond theoretical understanding and to a felt-sense of the correctness of this view.

What the “non-dual” philosophy says about the nature of reality, and ourselves.

We are familiar with the idea, found in Christianity and some other religions, that we have a non-physical “soul”, which survives death of the body and returns to a God or heaven. Although widely adopted, a little thought shows that this is hard to explain if we think of ourselves as physical beings. “What is this ‘soul’, this non-material thing inside us?” “Non-duality”, by contrast, makes more sense logically: we are, in our essence, consciousness, and the physical form arises out of consciousness. Soul is consciousness; so, ultimately, is our body and mind. Our western culture, which assumes matter comes first, and that consciousness arises from it, has things back to front, so to speak. The non-dual view is succinctly expressed in the perhaps familiar saying (of uncertain origin): “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, but spiritual beings having a human experience”! It is a view that goes back thousands of years in early Indian philosophy, is echoed within Buddhism, and has been resurrected by a number of modern teachers.

Other words for consciousness are “Awareness”, “Presence”, or “Being”. In fact, we could define consciousness as “awareness of being”. The world is simply a kind of movie or dream, projected by consciousness: objects apparently “out there” are in fact arising in awareness. This is hard to accept

at first: “This world, and my body, seem 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 may be other levels beyond that which are not expressed physically (and see the Seth model, in topic 5). 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 figures in the dreams of a greater consciousness?

When God falls asleep, She dreams the world into existence (Spira, The Nature of Consciousness, p116)

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. It is obvious that an isolated wave makes no sense! What matters about the wave is that it is part of a much larger body of water. In other words, we mistakenly think we are the wave, when what we really are is the whole ocean! Bernardo Kastrup, a modern philosopher, whose books I highly recommend, uses the analogy 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!

A person is simply a collection of thoughts, sensations and perceptions that we call our “mind”, and with which we fashion the idea of a separate body in a physical world. We put together an idea of an “I” to which all experiences happen. What we ultimately are is not this mind, body and perceptions, but the underlying awareness with which they are known.

This can be confusing at first, I know; I think we simply have to read and re-read accounts of the nature of our reality by different non-duality authors. It gets clearer with time, repetition and reflection. Remember the ocean and the wave: each of us is a wave, arising out of the ocean, but remaining an integral part of the whole.

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

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

The discovery that our self is not essentially a body or a mind, but is in fact the aware Being or Presence that knows or witnesses them, has radical and profound implications (Spira: Presence, vol 1, p10).

- We typically 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. We assume our minds have “nothing to do with it”. Yet 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. As the Buddhists say: everything is interdependent!

- 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 what we think of as a gas than a solid!

It is only a thought that first identifies our self, aware Presence, with the body and subsequently imagines that we are located within it (Spira, Presence, vol 1, p13).

Events that are not explicable by materialism.

A number of relatively common phenomena, many of them studied by modern scientists, cannot be explained by materialism/physicalism (the idea that reality is only physical), but are much more readily understood when we realize that the underlying reality is consciousness, not matter. We’ve discussed relevant evidence earlier in the course, but to reiterate and restate some of the most relevant groups of observations:

- So-called “para-normal” or psi phenomena, like telepathy, clairvoyance (seeing at a distance), and precognition, all documented scientifically.
- The ability of mind to affect matter directly (psychokinesis), which has been thoroughly investigated by a number of scientific groups over many years. Effects are small but quite definite.
- Healing at a distance, both in animals and man, through the activity of the minds of healers.
- The phenomenon of channelling, demonstrating that intelligence can exist without being housed in a living body.
- The widespread occurrence of out-of-body and near-death experiences, which appear to demonstrate directly that our consciousness does not depend on the body. This evidence is not just a collection of single, anecdotal accounts: studies have been made, by physicians, of large numbers of cases, confirming that while subjects were experiencing detailed, convincing, if dream-like environments, no brain activity could be found.
- 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.
- The testimony of the mystics through the ages.

Advantages of the non-dual point of view.

This is all very interesting, 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 is the “non-dual” view. Some teachers, such as Adyashanti, (and Zen 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?

- 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 and is affected by its surroundings. A human being commonly finds at least some meaning in social relationships; attitudes to nature, to one’s job, or 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. According to the non-dual view, meaning is built in, as it were; we are already an integral part of the one Consciousness.
- Related advantages: death is no longer a threat, provided we don’t identify with or think of ourselves as a body; it dies, but our essence as consciousness does not change.
- By contrast with most traditional religious paths, 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!
- Suffering is minimised: since we are not this separate self at all we are no longer lost in the drama of life, and can simply watch the antics of body-minds, whether pleasant or painful, with affectionate interest, gently steering our apparently individual body, and acting, when needed, under the guidance of higher levels of consciousness).
- 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.

KEY IDEAS: PRACTICE

How can we acquire this understanding, and realize what we are?

However strong the evidence may be that our habitual views about reality and ourselves are wrong, it is not likely to be enough to convince us: we need to acquire experience for ourselves, to know in mind, heart and gut that we are indeed what the sages tell us. In the non-dual view, our problem is not to “return” to union with the Divine, through refinement or improvement of the self, but to realize that we never left that state, and have forgotten or concealed the fact from ourselves. Over many centuries, numerous ways have been described to attain the “realization” that we are not separate beings but already and always part of the Divine. The classic methods can seem obscure to the modern mind (e.g., Indian Advaita philosophy), or arduous (the long meditations of Zen Buddhism), although these do appeal to some students. However, in the last few decades, a number of modern teachers (most still living) have presented the older ideas and techniques in ways more consistent with our culture. The defining feature of this “direct path” (at least in my view) is that it makes extensive use of

what is, by far, our most developed skill: analytical reasoning. While in the end we want to get “beyond the mind”, we can use our excellent minds to do so! This was, of course, known to the ancients as well, as in, for example, their advice: “Use a thorn to remove a thorn” (use the mind to remove the mind)!

In practical terms, how do I use this path to realize who I truly am? “Realization” can happen spontaneously, to highly receptive people, but this is rare. For most of us, a course of study is needed, and for many, a teacher and/or study group will be very helpful. There are many books and You-tube talks available. Here, we are not attempting to replicate a whole teaching course, but to give a sense of the process. I outline below some of the main ideas to be investigated (and modified) along the early stages of the path.

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Key ideas to be established by the student.

(The quotes in italics are all from various books by Rupert Spira)

1. Our essence is not matter, but the awareness of consciousness “behind” the body and mind.

Just sitting with eyes closed and mind relatively quiet, we realize that we are still perfectly “aware” of our “beingness”; no sensations or thoughts are needed to confirm this.

We have forgotten our essential identity of pure aware being and allowed it to become mixed up with the characteristics and qualities that define the body and mind (Presence, vol 1, p16).

2. We are not our bodies.

As a “thought experiment” imagine losing (many) parts of the body; provided we are still alive, this would clearly not affect our deep sense of “self” (although it might change our thoughts about it.) Even parts of the brain (although not all at once!) can be dispensed with!

The thought that imagines our self to be contracted within and limited to the body and mind is a fragile entity, a belief made out of the alliance between our (true) self, aware Presence, and a network of bodily sensations this new entity.....feels vulnerable....subject to disappearance and death (Presence, vol 1, p62).

3. We are not our minds.

This is a bit more difficult, since we identify most firmly with our minds. It is first helpful to see that there is no such structure as a “mind”: it is simply a collection of processes, thoughts, images, sensations and emotions. These processes come and go, while our awareness is always present. We find, on investigation, that we can “step back”, so to speak, and observe them coming and going. A transient process, like these thoughts, cannot be who we are.

...thought seems to obscure this simple knowing of our own being and makes it seem that our self is something other than the presence of Awareness (Presence, vol 1, p5)

4. We don’t know what things/objects are: we only know our awareness of the experience of perception.

This is hard to convey in a few sentences, but the process of “inner enquiry” can convince us that we don’t know what’s “out there”. For example, the old query about a tree falling in the forest: it’s not hard to see that it doesn’t make a sound unless there is a living creature with ability to hear nearby. What we hear is something “created” by the hearer; “sound” depends on a set of senses and a mind, in order to

be heard. The same applies to all the senses, for example, “colour” and “shape” are constructions of the mind.

As we come to see how our thinking minds have built up a picture of reality, we can apply this to our bodies, realizing that the concept of them as our solid “home” is created in much the same way as we conceive the idea of an apparent external world, and its relationship to us.

Our only knowledge of the mind is thinking, our only knowledge of the body is sensing, and our only knowledge of the world is perceiving, that is, seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling.....more simply, all we know is experiencing, and experiencing is made of our self, aware Presence. (Presence, vol 1, p111).

5. Our sense of self doesn't change over the lifespan.

Remembering back into childhood, we can recall a sense of “being” that has apparently not changed (although our thoughts about ourselves have changed substantially). Again, it is this sense of being that is our “self”.

The awareness that knows our current experience is not different from that which knew our experiences ten minutes, ten days or ten years ago. Our thoughts, sensations and perceptions change constantly, but awareness itself has not changed.....Throughout the adventure of our lives, we have not changed or aged. We are always in the same pristine, ageless condition (Being Myself, pp44-5).

6. Our awareness, or consciousness, doesn't appear to have any boundaries.

If we look for boundaries or edges to our awareness, we can't find them, contradicting the unexamined notion that awareness ends where body-mind meets “world”. Any such boundary would have to have physical properties, discernable to our senses.

In our own experience of self, we, awareness, are unlimited or infinite....we simply recognise our self as such (Being Myself, p 55).

7. Awareness/consciousness is not born and doesn't die.

Once we see that what we are is more like a field of force than a physical object it becomes clearer that, unlike physical objects, which are impermanent, awareness is not subject to processes of birth and death. It makes no sense to think of, say, gravity, as liable to die! One of the great benefits to non-dual study is realizing that, while our bodies die, our essential self does not.

If we stay close to our own being's experience of itself, without referring to thought, we discover that it has no knowledge of itself being born, evolving, growing old or dying. Only an object, such as a body or mind, could appear and disappear....The belief that we were born, that we change, evolve, grow old and die is simply a belief to which the vast majority of humanity subscribe..... (Presence vol 1, pp 19 and 22)

8.. There is no suffering since the events of mind and body are not “me”.

We can become a “witness” to whatever is happening, even to events with apparently drastic impact on body and mind. Pain remains, suffering goes, since it depends on the mind's appraisal that what is happening to “me” is unwelcome.

Just as nothing happens to the screen when a character in a movie becomes sick, so nothing happens to awareness when the body falls ill. It is for this reason that to know one's true nature of pure awareness is the ultimate healing. (Being Aware of Being Aware, p32).

The peace and happiness for which we long above all else, and habitually seek outside ourself, reside in the simple knowing of our own being as it is (Being Myself, p91)

At first reading, shifts in understanding like those outlined above can seem impossible. It is a process of re-learning: we have been strongly conditioned to think of reality, and ourselves, in a particular, physicalist way. Of course, there are many similar issues to be explored, and most of us need to repeat our contemplations many times, before we really “know” the truth of the new way of thinking. Furthermore, becoming a “witness” is by no means the end of this process, as the experts assure us; we can learn to see ourselves as an integral part of everything. However, to reach the witness stage of knowing oneself as an awareness or consciousness observing the body, and not be caught up in suffering, is an outstanding accomplishment in our materialistic culture, and one of great value to the person facing life-threatening disease.

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MORE KEY IDEAS: THEORY

Overcoming the idea of death:

There are many important practical consequences of knowing that our essential being is consciousness, but none, perhaps, as welcome as the seismic shift it makes in our idea of death. Yes, the body dies, and with it the mind, insofar as that is dependent on a living brain for its expression, but does consciousness die? What could that even mean? Here are some of the main consequences of the realization that we are consciousness, not matter:

- The idea of death applies only to apparently material objects in the world. It has no meaning in relation to non-material things, like fields of force (e.g., gravity, electromagnetic fields), and certainly not to consciousness itself.
- The body is simply a “configuration” or “modulation” of consciousness, and its death is just a change in that configuration or pattern of vibration of consciousness (recall the metaphor of the wave and the ocean).
- If there is only one consciousness, unless it all goes, nothing does, so to speak!
- If consciousness is outside of time and space, as the mystics tell us, then there is never any change in it: changes, like “death” apply only to material objects, which require time (and space) to exist.

The upshot of all this, and to repeat, one of the great benefits of non-dual study for people with life-threatening disease is that even if the body is failing, the essential self will not die. What happens to it? The apparently localised individual consciousness simply returns to the whole; death is a process of vast expansion, on this view, rather than one of loss. The “drop of water returns to the ocean”, as is said in Indian spirituality. Do I retain some (at least some, please!) of my precious personality. One could say – as Spira, Kastrup and others do - that the vortex of the self in the stream dissolves, but that nothing of it is lost, and elements of its “structure” may well continue “downstream”. However, the ultimate fate of the body is of little concern once the non-dual understanding becomes firmly integrated (although such a person may well wish to live longer in order to help others, or to deepen her own realization!).

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How does this compare with the ACIM view that all problems arise as “fallout” from our separation from the Divine?

You'll recall, from the last topic, how ACIM describes all our problems and suffering as a result of separation from the Divine Source. (ACIM, like most more traditional spiritual sources, uses metaphors to explain abstract ideas: "God" is a metaphor, a personalisation of a force or intelligence – we don't really know what, but certainly not an actual person!). Non-dual authors would agree, although they put it differently, without the metaphors. To the non-dual expert (and to Seth), we are consciousness itself, projecting an apparent physical world.

Why is there so much suffering in this world we have made? There are answers, of course, at the psychological and social levels, but to the non-dualist, it is ultimately an inevitable result of the illusion of separateness. Our natural state is "happiness"; it is our "default" position, as it were (as also explained by ACIM). Joy, love and peace are all part of this natural state. We've lost sight of this in our culture. Rupert Spira's recent book: *You are the Happiness You Seek*, discusses this:

We all feel that health is the natural state of the body. Why do we not feel that happiness is the natural state of the mind? In this book, I will suggest that it is, that happiness is the very nature of our being and self....accessible at all times.... (p 8)

It's a good question, isn't it? Why aren't we happy all the time? Put another way, why do we suffer? Most people, if asked this question, would probably say: "because bad things happen to me". A few, with some knowledge of the workings of their minds might say: "because of the way I tend to appraise the things that happen to me". The second answer is true as far as it goes, but the non-dualist probes much deeper:

From this point of view (non-duality), suffering is understood as the veiling or obscuring of our innate happiness. Thus, there is either happiness or the veiling of it, but never its absence. (p8).

At first, this may not seem to add much – unhappiness/suffering is just the lack of happiness! But look more closely. It is the "veiling", not the absence; the happiness is still there, just obscured. This immediately suggests a remedy: remove the veil! Easy!

No, simple, but not easy. What do we need to do? We need to acquire the central understanding of the non-dual approach, that we are not, in fact this body-mind, but the awareness or consciousness behind it. Spira again:

The transition from the belief that we are a person with the faculty of awareness to the understanding that we are awareness itself may seem like a small step (!), but it has enormous implications for any individual and for the evolution of humanity as a whole (p18).

How do we acquire this realization? Perhaps all spiritual traditions aim for it, usually indirectly, through gradual "self-improvement". ACIM, as we've seen, focusses a lot on "seeing our brother differently", removing the projection of our fear and guilt on to him or her. The "direct path of non-dual enquiry" has, as its name implies, a more direct approach: explore all your preconceptions about who you are, and your relationship to the whole, being guided only by what you find to be actual experience, rather than adopted beliefs:

Suffering ensues when we allow awareness of objects to eclipse awareness of being. Happiness is revealed when we allow awareness of being to outshine awareness of objects. (Spira: Being Myself, p90).

Does this mean ignoring such unpleasant emotions as fear and guilt? Not at all: all thoughts and emotions have to be examined, then no longer allowed to dominate us. The emotions, like the thoughts, must be met head on:

In the (necessary) exploration of the deeper layers (of the self in the body), feelings of fear, guilt, shame, inadequacy and un-lovableness are allowed to surface without resistance or agenda and to slowly reveal the sense of separation that lies at their heart. (Spira: Presence, vol 1, p152).

FURTHER STUDY

There are many excellent books and talks (e.g., on You-tube) that are readily available. I would recommend going first to books by 2 of the best of these authors, Rupert Spira (“You are the happiness you seek”) and Adyashanti (“Falling into grace”), then watching some of their many You-tube presentations. You may not at first understand everything said in the talks, but persevere – it gets clearer!

Some non-duality texts to read:

Rupert Spira:

To my mind, Spira is the pre-eminent teacher of non-duality today, at least in western countries. He has many (probably hundreds) of You-tube videos, and conducts online seminars. Some of his books:

- [Presence, vol 1: The Art of Peace and Happiness.](#)
- [Presence, vol 2: The Intimacy of All Experience.](#)

These 2 form a kind of “text-book” that with repeated, careful reading and contemplation, can help anyone to understand, and eventually “know”, the truth of the non-dual view of reality. They are not easy reads at first though.

- [The Nature of Consciousness.](#)

A somewhat more academic study of the ultimate reality.

- [Being Aware of Being Aware.](#)
- [Being Myself](#)
- [You are the Happiness You Seek.](#)

These last 3 are relatively recent books, and include most of his ideas. Difficult bits are interspersed with narrative, sometimes personal, accounts by the author, which makes them easier to read than the first 3 books above. “Happiness” would be a good one to start on.

Greg Goode:

Goode is a professionally-trained philosopher, and a wonderful teacher (through books, rather than 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](#)” (co-authored with Tomas Sander). A wide-ranging and very readable account of the Buddhist idea that things in themselves have no real meaning, compared with insights from Western philosophy. There are also many exercises/meditations for the reader.

Adyashanti:

Like Rupert Spira, Adyashanti (the name means “primordial peace”) is a clear and compelling spiritual teacher, on You-tube and in press. His books include:

- [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 for daily study.

Jackie (Jac) O’Keeffe:

This author presents non-duality in 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, aimed at people who have some meditation experience. It teaches more gradually, without probing as deeply as “Born”.

Bernardo Kastrup:

A modern philosopher who attacks materialism vigorously (one of his books is “[Why Materialism is Baloney](#)”!), and derives an argument for the existence of consciousness alone (idealism) based entirely on logical reasoning. His books may be a little difficult for non-philosophers, although “Baloney” and “[Brief Peeks Beyond](#)” are quite accessible; the latter covers a remarkable range of topics illuminated by the idealist perspective.

.....

Video links for topic 8.

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

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....

Poetic statement of how we “create” the world.

.....

[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!

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

.....

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

Brief description of an awakening experience- wants to help others
Very personable (of course)

.....

[The Journey Of Awakening](#) 4.09 Tolle

.....

[Seeing](#) 6.51 Spira.

Waking from a dream where images have appeared
Powerful, dramatic; images arise and fade repeatedly.

.....

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

Spir awakening: there isn't actually a self
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.

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.
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.
An emphatic statement!

.....

[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:

.....

[The Implication of the Non-Dual Understanding](#) Spira 11.28

Lovely short account of the state we aim for

.....

[Adyashanti - What Is Enlightenment?](#) 9.56

Delightful, light clear

.....

[Thomas Keating: a life surrendered to love](#) 18.58

A simple statement by a wonderful Christian elder.

.....

[On the Relationship Between Science and Liberation: Michael Singer](#) 15.10

Appealing merging of science with non-dual thought!

.....

[**Nonduality: Who You Really Are](#) 24.45 FredDavis

V good practical exercise on how to experience/accept/know your deeper levels.

Topic 9: Further teachings from Seth

- Our little selves, and the physical world, emerge from a vast, underlying, non-physical reality (consciousness).
- We are each a part of this consciousness: using our minds, in concert with others, we “create” or form our physical reality.
- This “creating” is done by selecting (usually in an unaware manner) from the infinite store of possible alternative events (Seth calls them “probabilities”) that exist in consciousness.
- This includes different versions or paths that our lives may take. We can select among them, or switch from one path to another, subject to constraints.
- Since there is no time in the higher consciousness, we can choose different “pasts” for ourselves, thus improving our “futures”.

KEY IDEAS: THEORY

We are familiar by now with the central spiritual idea: that we are not simply the separate, physical individuals that we seem to be, but in fact are part of an overarching consciousness. Consciousness is the primary reality, and the world, and our selves, emerge from it. (There is a very brief explanation by Seth of this process under “Further Study”, at the end of this topic).

While, according to Seth, all creatures expressing mental activity contribute to the ultimate result – the world we see – we humans are in a unique position. Thanks to the capacity we have developed for analytical thinking, we can come to understand our status, and with study and practice, to experience our selves as both consciousness and physical beings: we straddle both realities! Now we have the potential ability, as our animal friends do not, to use our evolved minds to connect with the higher consciousness, seeking help to influence our bodies and the world around us. This may take the form of asking “God” for help, which has a long history in human thought, but it can be approached in various ways. What Seth has done for us is to provide at least the outline of an explanation of how we may, in fact, attract help, the conditions that make it most effective, and how to apply the process to healing. As a culture, we have scarcely begun to investigate this, but interested individuals can use his teachings as a guide.

Now, the key idea for this topic. According to Seth, higher consciousness contains or represents an “infinite store” of alternative versions of all objects and events we see in physical reality. We have some power to promote healing by choosing among these alternatives (which he calls “probable” versions):

[Each of] you, with your beliefs and intents, tell the inner ego (i.e., the inner self) which of an infinite number of probable events you want to encounter. (“The Individual and the Nature of Mass Events”, p110).

In a way you choose from an infinite, endless, un-computable number of ideas, and sculpt these into the physical fragments that compose normal experience. You do this in such a way that the timeless events are experienced in time, and so that they mix and merge to conform to the dimensions of your reality. (Ibid, p 143).

He is telling us there is a gigantic, perhaps unlimited, store of events available to us, as alternatives to those we observe, but may not like. We don't "create our reality" from nothing, but select it, from this store. Our specific choice of an event becomes the "official" version of that event; other potential versions remain available, but unmanifested. Furthermore, events can be put together in unexpected ways in this "higher" dimension, ways that might be impossible in the physical reality, then translated into the concrete, material world, where we see the results. Note the difference here from the conventional view, which is that what happens in any situation depends entirely on the physical starting conditions. Do you begin to see the possibilities for healing that may be unveiled as we consider the Seth account? (*If you want to pursue this further, read chapters 3 and 4 of "The Individual and the Nature of Mass Events", A Seth book, channelled by Jane Roberts*).

You might well ask why it is not obvious to us that there is such potential for change in the nature of objects, or in the way events play out. Why can't we just make things happen the way we want? This seems to be because in our lives we quickly settle on one way to perceive things, or expect events to unfold. As we develop from early childhood, we encounter a world that operates in a particular, restricted way, as result of the input of other people, and from other creatures with mental activity. This "conditioning" is so thorough that our patterns of thought and behaviour become fixed; the very possibility of altering what we observe through mental activity alone seems absurd to us.

According to Seth, however, we can choose to change the paths that our individual lives are taking and have taken up to now; we can even change the past (to a degree)! Changing the past depends on a second key idea, this one common to most spiritual traditions: that there is no time, or rather, linear time is an invention we use to establish a sense of order in the physical reality. Our whole life, from birth to death, is "here now". Furthermore, there are many, perhaps an infinite number, of versions of it, only one of which was/is selected. To visualise this rather startling claim, imagine a large relief map laid out on the ground, complete with mountains, rivers and other physical features. It all exists in this present moment. Then imagine an ant, beginning at one side of the map, intent on travelling to the other side. Clearly there are very many ways it can get there, representing many life paths. We (ants) choose only one of these per lifetime, but others exist, and furthermore, we could at any point, switch from one path to at least some among the others, in Seth's account.

Applying these ideas to healing.

To reiterate: we have, from Seth, 2 esoteric ideas that seem highly relevant to healing the body through mind and spirit:

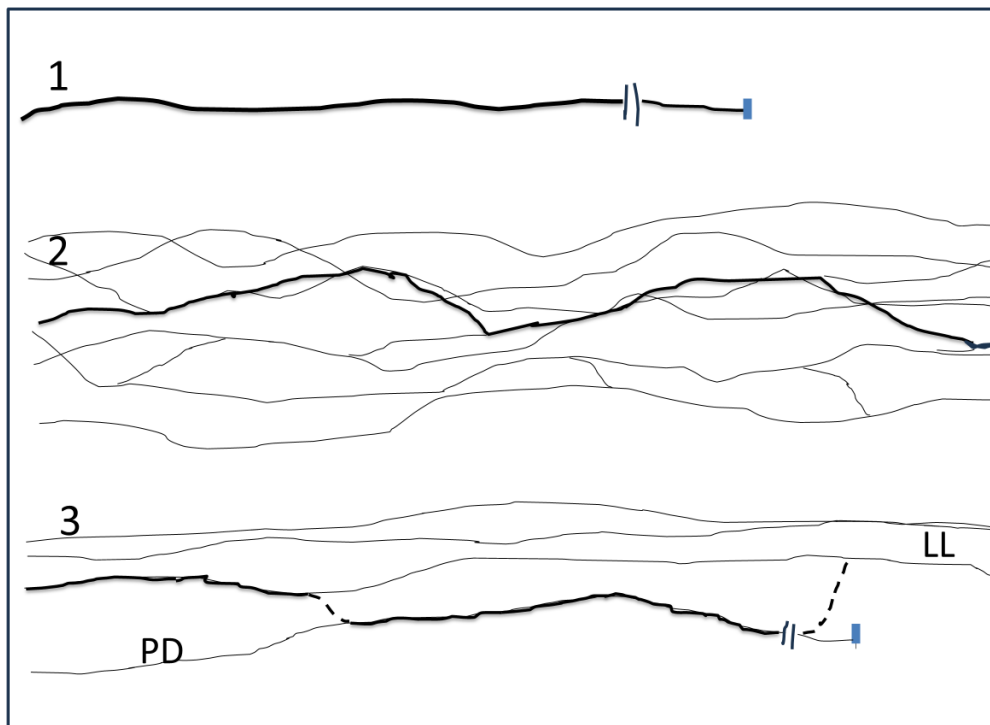
- The higher consciousness, of which we are a part, contains many, perhaps infinite variations on what we perceive here "on Earth", including many different life pathways. If true, that means there will be lives that follow a pattern of contracting a serious disease, then recovering from it. Perhaps I can switch to such a path!
- There is ultimately no time – all is here now! That means the past (and future?) are as accessible now as is the present!

Let's say I have a cancer diagnosis, and that the prognosis is not hopeful. Can I change this situation, drawing on these ideas? Can I switch my life "path", and if so, how? Could I even pick a path where I never contracted cancer in the first place? Chapters 14 and 15 of "The Nature of Personal Reality" (precis appended below under "Further Study") offer some ideas.

Clearly, there must be limits to what is possible, at least as expressed in our physical world. I can't expect to suddenly switch to a life where I never had cancer, since many knowledgeable people, in recent months, have examined me and declared that I do have it. A shift to "never cancer" would mean changing the life experiences of all of these people, as well as my own life (*Seth doesn't explore this point directly, although he hints at it*). But if there are infinite possibilities, then some potential life paths exist where my health status at the present moment is essentially as it appears to be, and yet progression and death is no longer inevitable, as experts may think. One possible mechanism for this happy state of affairs: way back, years ago, when the mutations that triggered my cancer occurred, they led to a disease that appeared serious, but in fact was not so bad, because the cells with those mutations were programmed to die after a certain number of divisions (this phenomenon is known in cell biology). Other possibilities: perhaps the cancerous cells were/are surprisingly susceptible to a new chemotherapy; or again, because of other unanticipated changes in the body, such as the development of immune responses capable of destroying the cancer. These are all unlikely, hypothetical situations, but the point is that given infinite or very large numbers of potential life paths, almost any possibility we can imagine will exist. There may be many ways that the higher consciousness or God can find to "get around" an apparently grave health situation! If I, the patient, am sufficiently motivated to apply Seth's methods (as in topics 1 and 2, and also below), that is, to establish a sense of connection with higher consciousness, to manage my beliefs, and have a strong desire and reason to live, I may "switch" to another life path with a different outcome.

Present beliefs can indeed alter the past. In some cases of healing, in the spontaneous disappearance of cancer, for instance, or of any other disease, certain alterations are made that affect cellular memory, genetic codes, or neuronal patterns in the past. (Seth: Nature of Personal Reality, p279).

A diagram may help to explain some of this:



Part 1, at the top of the diagram, shows the conventional understanding. A person's life is a singular, physical event. If cancer occurs (diagnosed: double marks), death may follow, or life may be prolonged or cured by an intervention.

Part 2: the Sethian view, that there are multiple alternative ("probable") lives, proceeding in a covert way. An individual's life path may switch from one covert version to another as it unfolds. The resulting hybrid becomes the final, "official" version, recognised by the person (darker line).

Part 3 shows, for simplicity, just 4 lines representing life paths. The top 3 ("LL") are paths that denote long lives. The bottom one ("PD" – the lighter line, partially overlaid by a heavier line), shows a life path leading to premature death. A person's official life (dark line) may begin on a path to longevity, then significant life events, physical or psychological, may cause the life to switch to a "premature death, PD, path. However, after the diagnosis of cancer (double marks), the individual may, as a result of a shift in attitude, switch paths again to the original, or some other, healthy path.

This kind of potential is, of course, not recognised yet in our culture, but if cultivated, might provide much greater opportunities for responding in a healing way to serious illness. Now consider that if there is no time, the whole "tapestry" of alternative potential lives associated with an individual is already in place, from birth to death. From any point in the tapestry, e.g. when cancer is diagnosed, the subject is able to reach back, as it were, to other points in her "past", and make adjustments, perhaps "splicing" into her life some healing potential from another, covert life path, which will have an effect on the path she is on after diagnosis. (*I tried to draw this, but the diagrams were more confusing than helpful!*).

You may think of some of the paradoxes that arise when we play with time like this! The important point is that the Seth model allows for events to be put together in ways that would not be possible if we are restricted to materialist ideas – i.e., that what happens to a person at any time is totally dependent on physical status at that time. I suggest that we should not "over-think" all of this, that is, try to make complete sense of it according to our usual notions of time and causality. The "real" situation, involving an interaction between physical reality and higher consciousness, is undoubtedly much more complex than described here.

With this as background, you may wish to read the precis of Seth's NPR chapters 14 and 15 (under "Further Study"). Scattered through that text are various suggestions for healing practice. I have tried to combine these into a single healing exercise (just below).

KEY IDEAS: PRACTICE

Exercise on healing the body, using affirmations and imagining a different "past".

PRELIMINARIES

Step 1. Cultivating a healing state of mind.

- 1.1. We need to trust that we are part of the greater consciousness, and that this will help us if we contact it appropriately.
- 1.2. Obviously, we need a quiet mind and relaxed body to invoke this help.

- 1.3. We may reach out to the higher consciousness in ways that feel effective to us, for example, using visualisation, perhaps of an inner healer, or through prayer.

Step 2. “Getting out of the way”.

- 2.1. We need to be comfortable with the idea that we (our ego minds) are not the agents that bring about change; rather we state what we want and expect, then keep out of the way and allow it to happen.
- 2.2. As in all this work, it is vital to identify, and drop, all sceptical, self-critical, or pessimistic thoughts and images.
- 2.3. Recognise (remind yourself) that the present situation is just the expression of one probability, and that others are possible.

THE REQUEST FOR HEALING

Step 3. Stating what we desire.

- 3.1. We provide a “blueprint” to the higher consciousness (inner self, or “inner ego” as Seth usually calls it in NPR) describing what we desire. This can be in the form of words and/or images.
- 3.2. We associate this with a belief or expectation that it will happen, to the fullest extent possible, within the constraints of our biology. Assuming the desire is to become healthy and live longer, it is important to clarify why we want to live. Pessimistic rumination must be kept in check.
- 3.3. This desire needs to be “fuelled” by strong emotion.
- 3.4. We bring into our meditation memories of past “successes” in ventures relevant to healing, e.g., a memory of rapid recovery from a wound or illness (and avoid all ideas or memories of any “failures”). We may “return”, in imagination, to various times in our apparent past when we made decisions that may have contributed to ill-health – then imagine that we made different decisions. These have led to subtle changes such that our “present”, although superficially the same, is better placed to lead to a healing outcome.
- 3.5. We may talk to our bodies, or cells, encouraging them, stating our belief in them and gratitude for their ongoing support.

THE FOLLOW UP

Step 4. Trust, and allow time.

- 4.1. Any event, such as a disease, in the physical world, has momentum, and takes time to change course.
- 4.2. While waiting (!) Seth tells us to conduct our lives joyfully, avoiding any focus on “being ill”.
- 4.3. Constant checking to see if “anything is happening” is also inadvisable, since it implies doubt in the process of healing.

Note: The “diagnostic” phase.

The account above summarises Seth’s advice from chapters 14 and 15, and is concerned mainly with the “therapeutic” side of healing through the mind. Not specified there (apart from a brief mention on page 293), but implied throughout his books, is the importance of a preliminary “diagnosis” of mental factors contributing to illness. There is a list of these in the Appendix to part I of this course, under the heading “Constraints hampering mental efforts”, where the aim is to understand our negative beliefs that promote illness, and the various factors that cause us to have these beliefs: psychological, social and existential. Examples are: unresolved psychological problems, like guilt, ideas about our

“unworthiness”, and the sense of lack of meaning in one’s life. Once we understand these distorted ideas, the need to change them is usually obvious.

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Notes on exercises and readings that will help develop healing skills. *(These relate to the numbered items in the healing exercise above)*

Step 1. Cultivating a healing state of mind.

1.3. The “reaching out” or opening to awareness of higher consciousness or God is typically done through meditation or prayer. Quiet reflection on spiritual matters, along with spiritual reading, are also helpful, as are walking quietly in nature, listening to relevant talks, and mind-body exercises like tai chi, chi gong or hatha yoga. We can explore a variety of methods, then choose one and pursue it regularly and deeply. The “Inner Healer” visualisation/meditation exercise is one we have used often in HJ classes: there is a description of it in topic 2.

Step 2. “Getting out of the way”.

2.1. “Affirmations” of what we hope to change, while they can be effective (e.g., the “self-hypnosis” exercise in NPR chapter 16, pg 309), simply state what we want without much subtlety! In the process described above, by contrast, we acknowledge that we, the ego-body-mind, are not the agents of change: we “hand it over” to higher consciousness, more as a request than a demand. There is tacit acknowledgement that this greater level will know what would help us most – in fact, in many religious settings, the attempt may be to surrender entirely to the “will of God”, trusting that He will provide. Seth differs somewhat from this, putting more emphasis on our own role: to state clearly what we hope for, and actively draw on perhaps hidden abilities from our past (point 3.4 below).

2.2. We need to trust that we have the power to play our part in this process, rather than collapsing into the “victim” role, if we are ill. Our underlying concept of our self and our worth will influence this complex matter: there are some relevant exercises in topic 3.

Step 3. Stating what we desire.

3.1. The kinds of words and images likely to be useful as a “blueprint” for what we hope the higher consciousness/Inner Self will materialise have been discussed through the HJ. Such statements should be brief, unambiguous, clear, positive, and believable, and accompanied by a strong emotional charge. Images should also have these qualities, and can be of many kinds: oneself moving around in good health; being held by a divine figure; being a serene, and healthy older person.....it is up to each of us to devise our own.

3.4. As will be seen in chapters 14 and 15 of NPR, Seth advocates making lists of all one’s “successes” in life, avoiding any concentration on “failures”, and also listing any latent or subordinate qualities or abilities we may have that have lain undeveloped up to the present. A quote from chapter 14:

In daily practical experience, try to concentrate for a while upon seemingly subordinate abilities, ones that you think of as latent. If you do so consistently, using your imagination and will, then those abilities will become prominent in your present. The current beliefs will reprogram and alter past experience. It is not simply that past, forgotten, unconsciously perceived events will be put together in a new way and organized under a new heading, but that in that past (now not perceivable), the entire bodily response to seemingly past events will change. Your desire or belief will literally be reaching back into time, teaching

the nerves new tricks. Definite reorganizations in that past will occur in your present, allowing you to behave in entirely new fashions. (NPR. P282).

It is possible, Seth says, to actually become aware of some “probable” variants of our past lives. Exercises for this purpose are described in “The Unknown Reality, vols 1 and 2”. They are difficult, however!

Step 4. Trust, and allow time.

Having done what we can, we have to wait and accept what happens; the final outcome is not up to the ego mind, but rather depends on what higher levels of consciousness can accomplish. A dedicated follower of a theistic religion might say it depends on the will of God. Seth’s account is, I think, more in the nature of an explanation of how the mind-body interaction actually works: the Inner Self/Inner Ego, perhaps in concert with still more expanded levels of consciousness, will attempt to provide what we desire, but will be constrained by a number of factors operating in this physical reality: the nature of our biology, and the physical laws it must adhere to, plus the current set of beliefs that we hold, which limit what we accept as possible.

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The practical healing exercise above is an interpretation of what Seth has to say in chapters 14 and 15. Almost every paragraph delivers valuable, sometimes startling ideas, that need careful attention. There are several exercises scattered throughout: you may prefer to construct your own healing practice based on the information in these chapters.

FURTHER STUDY

Seth on how the world, self/individual arose.

(Abbreviations: DEVFI = Dreams, Evolution and Value fulfillment, vol 1; NPR = Nature of Personal Reality; SS = Seth Speaks; INME = The Individual and the Nature of Mass Events; URI and URII = The Unknown Reality, vols 1 and 2; NP = Nature of the Psyche. All Seth books are authored by Jane Roberts).

Consciousness is the underlying reality:

The universe formed out of what God is.....The universe is the natural extension of divine creativity and intent, lovingly formed from the inside out—so there was consciousness before there was matter, and not the other way around. (DEVFI. 156).

How did the physical form of the earth, and living things, arise?

There was a point where consciousness, thru intent, impressed itself into matter... at the moment that ATI (“All That Is”, Seth’s name for God) conceived of a physical system it was invisibly created. The design and the designer are interwoven, inseparable. (URII.668).

The way the overarching consciousness creates form, in the absence of time, is probably not something we can expect to understand. What is practically important, however, is the claim that the ultimate form of the world and all its wonderful structure and life forms is not a kind of stage, on to which we are “dropped”, but a reality to which all living things all have contributed:

Individually and en masse, you form the world that you know, yet it has an overall individual and mass basis so that some things are agreed upon. You view those things through your own unique vision. You form the reality. It is a valid one. It is experience. It is not therefore unreal, but one of the appearances that reality takes (URII.372).

Your material reality is formed through joint cooperation. Your own ideas, objectified, become a part of the physical environment. In this vast cooperative venture, the thoughts and feelings of each living being take root, so to speak, springing up as objectified data. (URII 322).

At various points in his many books, Seth does provide some information on the mechanisms underlying the production of matter from consciousness: he speaks of “consciousness units” giving rise to “electromagnetic energy units” which ultimately become material form. However, this is not of much practical use to us since we have no idea how to measure these things.

.....thoughts and emotions are formed into physical matter by very definite methods and through laws quite valid, though they may be presently unknown.... these emanations in varying degrees rise from all consciousness, not simply your own (SS.68).

Who are we anyway”? What is an individual, an identity?

An identity is not a thing... it is a unit of consciousness, ever itself and inviolate, while free to enter other combinations. (URII 480).

So, what does it mean to say I am “a unit of consciousness”? Seth tells us:

You are that portion of the psyche that you presently recognise. (NP.29). And: “Your ‘life’ is simply the only portion of your existence of which you are presently aware. (NP.27).

The implication is: “I” am much more than I currently recognise; just one portion of a much larger entity, currently appearing as a body and mind (and see topic 5). Our primary nature, to reiterate, is not physical but non-material consciousness, extending far beyond the present life. You might say we are the software, behind the hardware of the body. However, he reassures us that we will not lose our present sense of self after the body dies (a statement that seems to be borne out by his own, non-material existence!):

You are not fated to dissolve into All That Is. The aspects of your personality as you presently understand them will be retained (SS.363.)

What is my mind? How is it related to my brain and to the greater consciousness?

The brain, while a complex physical object, does not “produce” the mind (as modern neuroscience assumes); instead, it acts as a kind of filter and organiser of the data that the mind decides to deal with.

A mind is a psychic pattern through which you interpret and form reality (NP.41).

The brain is primarily an event-forming psycho-mechanism through which consciousness operates. (NP 174). It organises activity and translates events, but it does not initiate them.

- *The mind, as the brain's non-physical counterpart, decides what data the brain will deal with (NP.180-184).*

The conscious mind exists before material life and after it. In corporeal (physical) 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 (NPR99).

There is an enormous amount of material on all of the points above – this is just a taste of it. The important ideas: matter comes from consciousness; we are “units” of this one, all-embracing consciousness, our mind being part of this consciousness, and our brain is the physical mechanism through which the mind operates in this world.

Precis of Nature of Personal Reality, chs 14 and 15

Chapter 14. “Which You? Which World? Your daily reality as the expression of specific probable events.”

274. The brain can be called simply the physical counterpart of the mind. By means of the brain the functions of the soul and intellect are connected with the body. Through the characteristics of the brain, events that are of nonphysical origin become physically valid. There is a definite filtering and focusing effect at work, then. Practically speaking, you do indeed form the appearance that reality takes through your conscious beliefs. Those beliefs are used as screening and directing agents, separating certain nonphysical probable events from others, and bringing them into three-dimensional actuality.

274. Other probable events could just as well become physically experienced ones. Those beliefs about yourself form your own self-image, and define your concepts of what is possible or not possible for you. You will choose from those nonphysical probable events, therefore, only those you feel you are in accord with.

275. Because of your psychological and psychic structure, there is within the rich makeup of your being a literally endless variety of what you may call probable selves. In one reality or another these will all be experienced. In your present existence however you will utilize only those psychological characteristics that you believe you possess. So, you see, the personality cannot be defined as being thus-and-so.

275. The physical constitution of the body follows your beliefs, and so all of its sense data will faithfully mirror the beliefs that direct its activity. In certain terms hypnosis is simply an exercise in the alteration of beliefs, and only too clearly shows that sense experience follows expectations.

275. The "you" that you presently conceive yourself to be represents the emergence into physical experience of but one probable state of your being, who then directs corporeal life and "frames" and defines all sense data. When your ideas about yourself change, so does your experience. Even the intimate body experience alters. You may say that you are you. But which you are you? In the most personal terms each individual creates his own world. The biological equipment of your creature-hood directs your mass experience enough so that agreement is reached, but only along certain general lines.

275. The overall private experience that you perceive forms your world, period. But which world do you inhabit? For if you altered your beliefs and therefore your private sensations of reality, then that world,

seemingly the only one, would also change. You do go through transformations of beliefs all the time, and your perception of the world is different. You seem to be, no longer, the person that you were. You are quite correct — you are not the person that you were, and your world has changed, and not just symbolically.

276. In your terms probable events are brought into actuality by utilizing the body's nerve structure through certain intensifies of will or conscious belief.

276. In surface terms the sense of "I" that you possess is the result of constantly emerging probable identities, given continuity in time through the physical apparatus of the body with its built-in intervals of nerve reaction. You only remember the portion of your identity that is physically realized — those portions that are drawn into corporeal pattern.

277. You perceive a certain event is present. Your beliefs give it entry through the nerve synapses, and attract it. It then seems to become the past. You have only tuned into a portion of it physically, though; that past event continues to exist with its own "future," which you may or may not perceive, according to which probable action you pull into your next experiences of actuality.

The past does have its own past, present and future, therefore.

278. The physical structure itself contains within it the necessary prerequisites for what you would call evolutions of consciousness — and even for, within certain limits, the organization of experience in ways that might seem quite alien to you now. Sense data can be organized in different fashions.

279. A new belief in the present, however, can cause changes in the past on a neuronal level. You must understand that basically time is simultaneous. Present beliefs can indeed alter the past. In some cases of healing, in the spontaneous disappearance of cancer, for instance, or of any other disease, certain alterations are made that affect cellular memory, genetic codes, or neuronal patterns in the past. In such instances there is, as easily as I can explain it, a reaching into deep biological structures as they existed at one time; at that point the probabilities are altered, and the condition erased in your present — but also in your past.

280. A sudden or intense belief in health can indeed "reverse" a disease, but in a very practical way it is a reversal in terms of time. New memories are inserted in place of the old ones, as far as cells are concerned under such conditions. This kind of therapy happens quite frequently on a spontaneous basis when people rid themselves of diseases they do not even know they possess.

280. When you alter your beliefs today you also reprogram your past. As far as you are concerned the present is your point of action, focus, and power, and from that point of volition you form both your future and past. Realizing this, you will understand that you are not at the mercy of a past over which you have no control.

281. While your present conscious beliefs dictate your current experience, and while your physical body wears its solidity only in present time to your senses, beneath this both the ever-changing elements of your body and your consciousness are relatively free in time. They exist in a multidimensionality with which rational consciousness is not yet equipped to deal.

281. Your consciousness is not a thing that you possess. Your individuality is not a thing with limits. If you ask, "What is my individuality in all of this?" or, "Which I am I?" then you are automatically thinking of yourself as a psychological entity with definite boundaries that must be protected at all costs.

281. Which you? Which world? A sudden contemporary belief in illness will actually reach back into the past, affecting the organism at that level, and inserting into the past experience of the cells the initiation of those biological events that will then seem to give birth to a present disease.

282. The future is in no way predetermined on basic levels. This does not mean that the future cannot be predicted sometimes, for in practical terms you will often continue with certain lines of probability which can be seen "ahead of time." Such predictions can affect the probabilities, of course, and reinforce a present line of belief. Physicians often wonder whether they should tell terminal patients of their impending deaths. There is great controversy. In some cases, such a prediction can make death a fact — while its opposite can regenerate the patient's belief in his or her own ability to live.

282. No man will die simply because a physician tells him he is going to, however. No one is so at the mercy of another's beliefs. Each individual, generally speaking, knows his challenges and overall programs, and the time of his death. But even such decisions can be altered at any time in your "now" — the entire body can be regenerated in a way that would be impossible to predict in usual medical terms.

282. You rule your experiences from the focal point of your present, where your beliefs directly intercept with the body and the physical world on the one hand, and the invisible world from which you draw your energy and strength on the other. This applies to individuals, societies, races and nations, and to sociological, biological and psychic activities.

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282. Exercise: Subordinate abilities

In daily practical experience, try to concentrate for a while upon seemingly subordinate abilities, ones that you think of as latent. If you do so consistently, using your imagination and will, then those abilities will become prominent in your present. The current beliefs will reprogram and alter past experience. It is not simply that past, forgotten, unconsciously perceived events will be put together in a new way and organized under a new heading, but that in that past (now not perceivable), the entire bodily response to seemingly past events will change. Your desire or belief will literally be reaching back into time, teaching the nerves new tricks. Definite reorganizations in that past will occur in your present, allowing you to behave in entirely new fashions.

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283. Learned behavior therefore alters not only present and future but also past conduct. Your power as a rational consciousness focused in the present provides you with opportunities for creativity that you are but vaguely learning to understand. As you do learn, you will automatically begin to appreciate the multidimensional nature of not only your own species but of others as well. The moment as you think of it, then, is the creative framework through which you, the nonphysical self, constantly form corporeal reality; and through that window into earthly existence you form both its future and its past.

285. A death is but one night to the soul. The vaster entity of which you are part follows your progress as easily as you follow your own through the days. As a rule, most of you wake up in the same bed in the same house or town, but certainly you wake up as the same person in the same century. In those terms

the entity wakes up as a different person each day, in a different century, each life seeming like a day in its level of experience. It carries the memory and simultaneous experience of each of those selves.

285. A form is basically nonphysical. What you see of form is only that part that can be effectively active or materialized within your system of reality. So the entity in its own way possesses what you can think of as future neuronal structures. Within that vast form is your own, which is briefer, yet is not lost, not limited and not predetermined. You form your corner of the universe, which is itself a part of another one. Within this the actions and beliefs of one affect all. Each part is vital, and in one way or another there is instant communication between the smallest and the largest, the cobweb and the spider, the man, the entity, and the star — and each spins its own web of probabilities from which other universes continually spring.

285. Which you? Which world?

All of this may seem to have little to do with your daily personal experience, and yet it is intimately connected, for personally and en masse you can indeed create "the best" of all possible worlds.

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Chapter 15. "Which You? Which World? Only you can answer. How to free yourself from limitations".

287. Since your conscious beliefs determine those unconscious functions that bring about your personal experience, your first step is to enlarge those beliefs. The concepts given in this book should have already helped you do that to some extent. Within your own subjective reality are traces of all those roads not taken, those abilities not used. You may think of yourself as primarily a parent, or mainly in terms of your job or profession. As much as possible, for now, forget the normal familiar light in which you see yourself, and consider your identity.

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(287 Exercise: latent abilities)

Write down or enumerate all of your known physical and mental abilities, whether they have been developed or not, and all of those inclinations toward particular activities — even those only remotely considered — as well as those that have come at all vividly to mind. These represent the varied probable characteristics from which you have chosen to activate your particular main interest. Out of these attributes, therefore, you chose what you now consider to be your hard-bed reality.

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288. Any of those directions, followed, can enrich the existence that you know, and in turn open up other probabilities that now escape you. The main image of yourself that you have held has, to a large extent, also closed your mind to these other probable interests and identifications. If you think in terms of a multidimensional self, then you will realize that you have many more avenues open to expression and fulfillment than you have been using. These probable achievements will lie latent unless you consciously decide to bring them into being. Whatever talents you sense you have can be developed only if you determine to do so. The simple act of decision will then activate the unconscious mechanisms.

288. If you chose illness, again there is a probable reality ready for initiation in which you choose health. If you are lonely there are probable friends you refused to meet in the past, but who are readily available. In your mind, therefore, see those probable abilities or events taking place. As you do, the **intensity of your desire** brings them into your experience. There are no boundaries, again, set about the self.

288. There are literally many other probable you's. You can draw upon their abilities, as in their own way they call upon your own, for you are all intimately connected. You must realize that you are indeed a probable you. Your experience is the result of beliefs. Your neuronal structure necessitates a certain focus so that other experiences counter to your conscious assumptions remain probable or latent. Alter the beliefs and a probable self can, within certain limitations, be actualized.

290. When you try to change your convictions in order to change your experience, **you also have to first stop the momentum that you have already built up**, so to speak. You are changing the messages while the body is used to reacting smoothly, unquestioningly, to a certain set of beliefs. There is a steady even flow in which conscious activity through the neurological structure brings about events, and a familiar pattern of reaction is established. When you alter these conscious beliefs through effort, then a period of time is necessary while the structure learns to adjust to the new preferred situation. If beliefs are changed overnight, comparatively less time is required.

290. In a manner of speaking, each belief can be seen as a powerful station, pulling to it from fields of probabilities only those signals to which it is attuned, and blocking out all others. When you set up a new station there may be some static or bleed-through from an old one for a while. Any ability you have, then, can be "brought in more clearly," amplified, and become practical rather than probable. But in such a case you must concentrate upon the attribute — not, for example, upon the fact that you have not used it well thus far.

291. The abilities, strengths and variants that you may want to actualize are already latent, in your terms, and at your disposal.

291. Suppose that you are unhealthy and desire health. If you understand the nature of probabilities, you will not need to pretend to ignore your present situation. You will recognize it instead as a probable reality that you have physically materialized. Taking that for granted, you will then begin the process necessary to bring a different probability into physical experience. You will do this by concentrating upon what you want, but feeling no conflict between that and what you have, because one will not contradict the other; each will be seen as a reflection of belief in daily life. As it took some time to build up your present image with its unhealthy aspects, so it may take time to change that picture. But concentration upon the present unhealthy situation will only prolong it.

291. Your present convictions will act like a magnet, activating all such past issues, happy or sad. You will choose from your previous experience all of those events that reinforce your conscious beliefs, and so ignore those that do not; the latter may even seem to be nonexistent. As mentioned in this book (*in Chapter Four, for instance*), the emerging memories will then turn on the body mechanisms, merging past and present in some kind of harmonious picture. This means that the pieces will fit together whether they are joyful or not.

292. This joining of the past and present, in that context, predisposes you to similar future events, for you have geared yourself for them. Change now quite practically alters both the past and the future. For

you, because of your neurological organization, the present is obviously the only point from which past and future can be changed, or when action becomes effected.

292. I am not speaking symbolically. In the most intimate of terms, your past and future are modified by your present reactions. Alterations occur within the body. Circuits within the nervous system are changed, and energies that you do not understand seek out new connections on much deeper levels far beyond consciousness. Your present beliefs govern the actualization of events. Creativity and experience are being formed moment by moment by each individual.

292. Now: You must understand that your present is the point at which flesh and matter meet with the spirit. Therefore the present is your point of power in your current lifetime, as you think of it. If you assign greater force to the past, then you will feel ineffective and deny yourself your own energy.

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(292. Exercise: point of power) leads to ex on pg 299)

For an exercise, sit with your eyes wide open, looking about you, and realize that this moment represents the point of your power, through which you can affect both past and future events.

The present seen before you, with its intimate physical experience, is the result of action in other such presents. Do not be intimidated therefore by the past or the future. There is no need at all for undesirable aspects of your contemporary reality to be projected into the future, unless you use the power of the present to do so.

If you learn to get hold of this feeling of power now, you can use it most effectively to alter your life situation in whatever way you choose — again, within those limitations set by your creaturehood. If you were born without a limb, for example, your power in the present cannot automatically regenerate it in this life, although in other systems of reality you do possess that limb.

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293. Exterior conditions can always be changed if you understand the principles of which I am speaking. **Diseases can be eliminated, even those that seem fatal — but only if the beliefs behind them are erased or altered enough so that their specific focusing effect upon the body is sufficiently released.** The present as you think of it, and in practical working terms, is that point at which you select your physical experience from all those events that could be materialized. Your physical circumstances change automatically as your beliefs do. As your knowledge grows, so your experience becomes more fulfilling. This does not necessarily mean that it evens out in any way, or that there are not peaks and valleys. Each aspiration presupposes the admission of a lack, each challenge presupposes a barrier to be overcome.

In each case, however, the point of power is the present, and from that moment you choose which you, and which world. The experience of a country is the cumulative result of the choice of each individual in it, so as you choose your own circumstances you affect each other person within your country and your world....

293. It would do you all good — young, middle-aged and old alike — to forget the number of your years, because in your culture so many beliefs are limiting in those ways.

295. THE PRESENT IS THE POINT OF POWER (one of the most important sentences in this book in practical terms, and working within the framework of time as you understand it).

296. All of your physical, mental and spiritual abilities are focused together, then, in the brilliant concentration of “present” experience. You are not at the mercy of the past, or of previous convictions, unless you believe that you are. If you fully comprehend your power in the present, you will realize that action at that point also alters the past, its beliefs and your reactions.

In other words, I am telling you that your present beliefs, in a manner of speaking, are like the directions given to the entire personality, simultaneously organizing and reorganizing past experience according to your current concepts of reality.

The future — the probable future — is being altered in the same way, of course. To look backward for the source of current problems can lead you into the habit of seeking only negative episodes from your past, and prevent you from experiencing it as a source of pleasure, accomplishment, or success. You are structuring your earlier life through the dissatisfactions of the present, and therefore reinforcing your problems.

297. When you are trying to alter your beliefs, look through your past with the new conceptions in mind. **If you are ill, remember when you were not. Search your life for proofs of your health.** Your very life itself is hard evidence that health is within you! In almost all cases of present limitation, there is one main theme in that particular area: The individual has schooled himself or herself to stress “negative” aspects, for whatever reasons.

297. I have frequently said that beliefs cause reality, and that no **symptom** will simply fade away unless the “reason” is ascertained — but such **reasons go far beneath your current ideas of cause and effect.** They involve intimate philosophical value judgments on the part of each individual. Beneath them, the apparent causes of limitations in personal life, there are other far-reaching beliefs, and each individual will use those elements in his private experience to back these up. This applies to any kind of lack or hindrance severe enough to be a problem.

298. To rid yourself of annoying restrictions then, my dear friend, you re-pattern your past from the present. Whatever your circumstances, you use the past as a rich source, looking through it for your successes, restructuring it. When you search it looking for what is wrong, then you become blind to what was right, in those terms, so that the past only mirrors the shortcomings that now face you.

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299. **Exercise: point of power in present; changing the pattern of your life**

(follows from ex on pg 292)

You must look within yourself for evidences of what you want in terms of positive experience. Examine your past with that in mind. Imagine your future from the power point of the present. In such a way at least you are not using the past to reinforce your limitations, or projecting them into the future. It is only natural to contrast what you want with what you have, and it is very easy to become discouraged in so doing, but looking for errors in the past will not help you. A correctly utilized five-minute period of time can be of great benefit, however. In this period concentrate upon the fact that the point of power is now. Feel and dwell upon the certainty that your emotional, spiritual and psychic abilities are focused through the flesh, and for five minutes only direct all of your attention toward what you want. Use visualization or verbal thought — whatever comes most naturally to you; but for that period do not concentrate upon any lacks, just upon your desire.

Use all of your energy and attention. Then forget about it. Do not check to see how well it is working. Simply make sure that in that period your intentions are clear. Then in one way or another, according to your own individual situation, make one physical gesture or act that is in line with your belief or desire. Behave physically, then, at least once a day in a way that shows that you have faith in what you are doing. **In health terms, it involves conducting yourself once a day as though you were not sick in whatever way given you.** But the belief in the present, reinforced for five minutes, plus such a physical action, will sometimes bring literally awesome results.

301. **YOU FORM YOUR REALITY NOW**, through the intersection of soul in flesh.

304. Think of the present as a pool of experience drawn from many sources, fed, in your terms, by tributaries from both the past and the future. There are an infinite number of such tributaries (probabilities), and through your beliefs you choose from these, adjusting their currents.

For example: If you constantly focus on the belief that your early background was damaging and negative, then only such experiences will flow into your present life from the past. It does no good to say, “But my life was traumatic,” therefore reinforcing the belief. You must in one way or another modify that conviction, or preferably change it entirely — or you will never escape from its effects.

305. The shutting out of superfluous data and the narrowing of focus are the two most important ingredients. Relaxation can help simply because the body messages are also quieted, and the mind not concerned with them.

Conclusion: A wider understanding of healing through the mind

This course explores the potential our minds have to heal our bodies and ourselves. To benefit fully from it, we need to be willing to move on from our society's materialism (matter is our ultimate reality) and draw on the much wider view put forward by mystics, channelled sources, and other civilizations through the ages. Our physical existence, real enough in its own terms, arises from a deeper reality that is non-material; we are, in our essence, "spiritual beings having a human experience". There is constant communication between our assumed reality and the transcendent, spiritual one; no real barriers exist except those we erect with our own minds. To understand all this, we've looked at teachings from a number of sources, seeking advice on how to acquire our own experience. This last chapter is a summary of the main "takeaways" from the course, and suggestions about where to go from here.

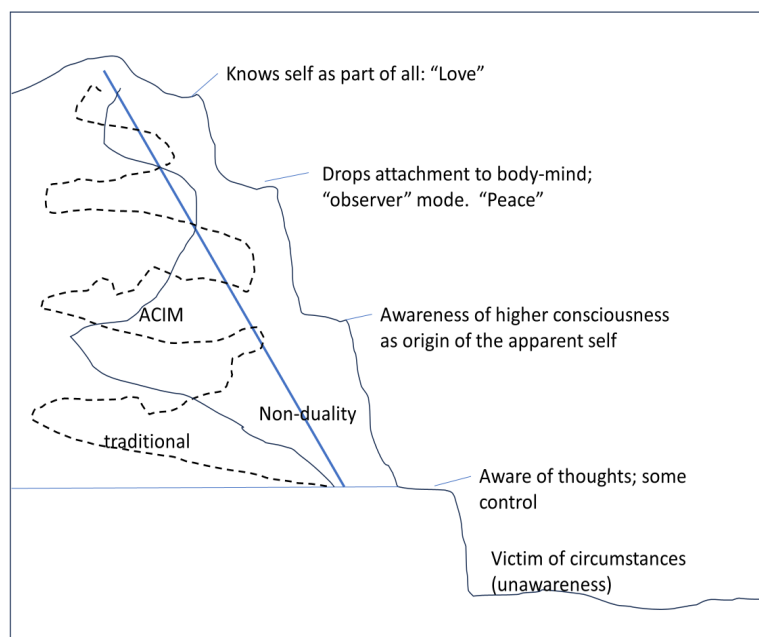
We began ("Preliminaries") with a very brief review of the main psychological skills essential to undertaking a spiritual journey: in essence, getting to know what is running through our minds all the time, and changing it where desired. This is no small project, and is not one we can expect to complete in a matter of weeks – it continues throughout our lives. Also in this preliminary section, we discussed the principles of spirituality as opposed to religion: it is a search for experience, not simple acceptance of dogma; there is no one "path up the mountain", no one tradition that holds the only truth. Perhaps the most important idea, new to many beginning this study, is that we can move away from the old idea of a "God", external to ourselves (although this has been a helpful metaphor for many); instead, and this makes much more sense, we can see the ultimate basis of reality as an abstract quality, consciousness, presence, or some similar term, more like an energy field than a superhuman person. We learn that we are already an integral part of this consciousness, and need not "perfect" ourselves to attract divine approval, but instead need only remove the mistaken ideas that obscure our realization of "belonging". If we do this completely – again, a life-long endeavour for most – we are healed.

Part I of this course is meant to be simple, practical and non-controversial – in fact it could be helpful even to those who don't wish to subscribe to a spiritual view of reality. In topics 1 and 2 (T1 and T2) the main idea is that to change both mind and body we need to remove "negative" (harmful, pessimistic) self-suggestions, and substitute beliefs and expectations that have a healing intent. While effects of mind on mood would be endorsed by conventional psychology, effects on the body usually would not (except, perhaps, for hypnotherapy). To understand how this happens we need a non-conventional view; here I've drawn on explanations given by Seth (a channelled entity). According to him, the communication between our ego minds and our bodies occurs not just through nerves and hormones, although these play a role, but also involves a part or area of consciousness that we may call the "inner self"; that is, there's another element in the mind-body "loop": mind - inner self – body. This gives us access to the vast store of possible healing change that lies in the greater consciousness (as briefly described in T9). The potential effectiveness of mind-mediated healing of the body derives from this unconventional principle. However, we generally don't use it effectively, and erect major blocks to mind-body healing, some of which are explored with practical exercises in T3. Part I ends with an account of the need to clarify purpose or direction in our lives, ultimately a search for meaning, which comes from our relationship to something larger than ourselves. At this stage, that something tends to be our social environment.

In part II the emphasis shifts to healing the "whole self", not only the body which, in T5, we come to see means examining our relationship to a transcendent, non-material order. We are asking "what is my purpose" in spiritual terms? and "how do I fit into this larger picture?" A clearer view of

this relationship helps us to know what to do in our lives, for healing purposes, or simply to find peace; in other words, it offers guidance. Many answers to such questions have been provided in various traditions. As usual, Seth gives us a simple explanation which we discuss in this topic. In T6 we look briefly at some other accounts: “traditional” views of spirituality, which usually (not always, as in Buddhism) assume a relationship to a separate, spiritual entity or God.

Topic 7 is devoted to A Course in Miracles (ACIM), a modern text, channelled from an entity identifying as the historical Jesus. For those willing to accept this claim, it offers a direct set of teachings by this towering spiritual figure, comprehensive, psychologically sophisticated, logically clear, and not edited by less enlightened beings. ACIM describes all suffering as a result of separation from God, and healing as a reversal, a return to full awareness that we are part of Him. A diagram in T6 (repeated below) compares traditional and ACIM approaches as different paths up a mountain, arriving ultimately at the same place, with the “non-duality” of T8 as a further path to a similar end point.



Topics 8 and 9 are a bit more demanding, since understanding them requires an unequivocal shift from the usual, conventional ways of viewing reality and ourselves. T8 discusses the “direct” path to “non-duality” or non-dual understanding. There has been a recent surge of interest in this approach in recent decades, although it goes back thousands of years in human history, and there are some outstanding teachers currently alive, writing and recording interviews and courses. The main appeal is that, as the name implies, it can move us directly to an understanding of our place in consciousness, without detours into improving the personality! In practice, however, it is a demanding process, the main obstacle being our tenacious hold on the idea of our “separateness”, and our identification with the body and mind.

Topic 9 looks at some of Seth’s more esoteric teachings, which underpin his claim that we have much more potential than we usually imagine to change both the condition of our bodies and our life paths generally. Specifically, within consciousness there exists an infinite store of possible alternatives to what we perceive as happening, and from which we can make choices. Furthermore, time does not exist (a feature of many spiritual teachings): we invent time (and space) as a way of organising experience in

an imagined physical world. This means that aspects of our past, including precursors of illness, can be changed to some degree, altering both present and future.

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So: I've got a cancer diagnosis, and I want to help myself. How does all this help me? What do I do now? Here I'll offer some suggestions in a more personal way.

Of course, our first line of defense against cancer is medical treatment. It may be that you can be cured by this, or you may be left with progressing disease, or a likelihood of recurrence, in which case, you may want to do all you can to tip the balance towards remaining well.

If you are, or feel you are, a complete beginner still, then the very first thing to do is get acquainted with your tricky, but marvellous, mind. Start to notice what it does, continuously; journal about it; find a course or therapist devoted to helping with that. Have you understood how your mind causes all your suffering? (That's a good diagnostic test for self-awareness). Learn about meditation and have a daily practice, at a specific time and place (before breakfast is good). Don't worry too much if you can't keep your mind quiet for long – most of us can't, but try not to let it lead you off into long, pessimistic ruminations (i.e., suffering). Now you are at the low plateau level in the diagram above: "aware of thoughts, some control"!

Bring spiritual reading into the mix: I've suggested some authors in topic 6. Tolle is familiar to many, Easwaran less so, but he's simple and excellent. There are many others; explore, looking for authors who have "gone the distance" themselves, not just commentators. If you are already connected to a religion or spiritual group, you could consult the principals for advice towards a deeper dive into that path. They may want you to stick with "their" tradition. That might work, but an alternative strategy, at this stage, is to explore a number of approaches before settling on any one for study in depth.

Now you are starting to climb above the plateau in the "paths" diagram. That's about where I was when I was diagnosed around 40 years ago. I was told I had 1 chance in 3 of surviving – not good odds, so plenty of motivation! I spent months at an ashram, which helped me take spirituality more seriously – it's like any new enterprise: to improve, you need to mix with people who know more than you do! Spending substantial periods of time at an ashram or spiritual centre may not seem feasible in your own case, but I mention it to emphasise that we need to be willing to make serious changes in our lives, even if it causes some disruption and financial sacrifice. Most spiritual organisations offer retreats, and even a weekend or a week of that can jolt us a bit further up the mountain, so to speak.

In our classes at the Healing Journey ("level 6 spiritual") I introduce people to the main paths I've studied, and these are the four I've written about here: Seth, ACIM, "non-duality", and various more traditional routes, my experience there being mainly with aspects of yoga practice and psychology. Of course there are more. Buddhism comes in various forms; Christianity also has a number of sects. If you have a Christian background, I'd warmly recommend immersing yourself in ACIM, which cuts through to the main purpose of spiritual work; it may seem difficult to read at first, but it yields to perseverance.

So, what is the ultimate aim or point of spiritual endeavour, if it hasn't quite become clear to you yet? To know who we are, in our essence; just that. To know ourselves as consciousness, part of the one consciousness that encompasses everything. Moral improvement, a quiet mind in meditation, correct practice of various exercises and rituals – these are means to this end, not ends in themselves. I have

found the non-dual teachings to be the most straightforward route to this understanding – hence the straight line in the diagram! It is not difficult to understand, but “knowing” it deeply, living as consciousness rather than as an individual, is difficult for most of us to achieve. ACIM, while demanding, is likewise a clear path to the same goal.

You might say, this is all very well, but I am focussed on becoming, and remaining, healthy again; my spiritual study is mainly aimed at helping me get there. This is an understandable point of view, and for this purpose, I have found the Seth material to be far and away the most relevant and clearest source of advice available anywhere, which is why it forms the bulk of this course. Topics 1 - 4, combined with reading the first few chapters of “The Nature of Personal Reality” will equip you with the basic tools. Further reading of the sections of Seth’s books that I’ve suggested in later topics will explain why a simple approach like “replacing negatives with positives” can have such profound effects. If spirituality starts to hold your interest for its own sake, you will find that reading spiritual works from the masters in most traditions will paint a picture of one’s self in the world, projected from consciousness, that is much broader than our conventional views, and is both exciting and immensely satisfying.

Most important practically is to take charge of your healing. Get help from others, of course – doctors, teachers, supporters – but its ultimately your project. Don’t permit yourself “the luxury of being a victim”, as I’ve heard the usual stance described! As I look back over nearly half a century of this work, my clinical observations support our research findings: those who get most involved tend to live longer and better. If you want to be an “Olympic athlete” of healing, then healing needs to become the dominant theme and preoccupation of your life, at least for a time, just as training is for the top athlete. I’ve met a few such remarkable people over the years: people who have recovered from diseases that were thought to be “terminal”. If, however, as inevitably often happens, the cancer proves resistant to all efforts, medical and psycho-spiritual, then your spiritual study can make the prospect of the body’s dying much less troubling. It may become clear to you that we are all part of something that is beyond time, and that this human life is simply a brief adventure in physicality, one of perhaps very many possible experiences.

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Here’s a very brief summary of the main stages in healing through mind and spirit:

1. Acknowledge honestly the diagnosis and its implications. Accept the situation - i.e. say "Yes" to it - which does not mean being passive or resigned.
2. Identify and try to drop all the fearful, negative stories we tend to build around our diagnosis and what may happen. (Some may go further and "dismantle" the whole story of being a separate, physical being - see 4d below).
3. "Open up" to the higher consciousness/Divine within, in whatever ways make sense to you: prayer, meditation, reflection, spiritual reading, "Inner Healer" exercises, dream analysis, etc.....
4. Now at this stage, having tried to be in touch with the Divine, (step 3), people may follow various paths; here are the main ones we have discussed:
 - 4a. Just ask for help (from God) then hope and trust (traditional practice of theistic religions).

- 4b. Surrender completely to God/Divine/Higher consciousness. Aim to return to knowing you are part of that....(ACIM).
 - 4c. Construct a positive (i.e., healing) story, with words and images (Seth) - recognising the past can be changed, and that it is possible to choose among many outcomes. “Listen” for guidance from higher dimensions of the Self.
 - 4d. Through inner enquiry and reflection, come to see that you are not this body-mind: that its fate is of little importance (non-duality), although this study may make healing of the body more likely.
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