

# Navigating the Local Mindscape

*One Possible Working Model*

Fourth Working Draught, 2013.09.21

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*Navigating the Local Mindscape: One Possible Working Model*, by Michael Marking

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## **Introduction**

### **One Possible Philosophy**

There is not only one single, truthful philosophy or set of guidelines for life. It defies both reason and experience to believe that there is only one truth for so many people who vary greatly in their backgrounds, abilities, and needs. A person going to a destination needs directions from his location, while a person starting from another place needs a different set of directions. We are all different, we begin from different points. We need different directions, though for many the directions will be similar to the directions for some others.

For what it might be worth to you, here is one approach to living, which has been useful to me. Take it for whatever portions might be useful to you. If you find it of value, then please pass it on to your friends. If you find it useless or misleading, then give it to your enemies.

### **Exploring Distant Lands**

Learning is a journey. The travel is not always through time and space, but you change as you learn. Under certain circumstances, you can view learning and change as two sides of the same coin: they go hand in glove.

The travel metaphor is useful. Your education, evolution, and progress, as you travel through life, is not much different from the experiences you acquire as you go on a journey. For me, the journey has been longer, and to way points and destinations farther away, than I ever imagined in the beginning. For most of you, if you follow this book completely, your journeys probably will be long as well.

Think of the journey as one of exploration. Look upon it as a vacation

trip. Have some fun with it.

## **Following Others**

No one begins a study such as this from scratch. Indeed, practically everything and every idea in this book comes from someone and somewhere else. Perhaps the only thing I offer is a new perspective: not new to the original author, but new to those who interpret his or her works.

There are others who have explored before us. A few have returned to tell their stories, to give advice. Not many of them give good directions, or are careful when drawing conclusions. Even worse, as the information is passed from one to another, it is distorted or parts are lost. That does not mean that their guidance is useless, only that we must be careful when considering it.

Suppose you were in a room, and someone were to come and tell you, "There is a man with blue eyes outside." Then someone else would enter and say, "There is a man with brown eyes outside." Someone else would then come and say, "There is a man with green eyes outside." What could you conclude? You might conclude there was probably a man outside, with eyes. You might not be sure of the colour. Maybe he doesn't have eyes, but only features on his face which look like eyes. When several observers take note of something, there is probably a reason.

Similarly, when several explorers return from their travels, and most of them bring back a common observation, then you might conclude, there is a basis for what they say. A good starting point for many inquiries is to determine what many teachers argue in common.

For example, most of the great philosophies and religions of the world advocate some form of what is called The Golden Rule, or the Principle of Reciprocity, or the same concept by some other name. These different schools

may call the principle by different names, but the ideas are similar. Therefore, we conclude that there may be some special significance to this rule. Perhaps it was simply an easy and useful axiom for Lao Tse, Mohammed, and Gautama, or maybe there is a deeper reason to employ it. However, its common nature hints of a fruitful line of inquiry.

On the other hand, sometimes many travellers make the same, common mistake. For instance, a lot of religions presume the same incorrect models of renewal, or redemption, or salvation, because they extrapolate from their own limited experiences and backgrounds. Merely because most people believe a thing, does not make it true. Catching these errors is sometimes difficult. Seeing such an error sometimes comes from the inconsistencies it implies, but that takes a bigger view of things. You cannot see an inconsistency in a single concept, you can only see inconsistencies when there are other concepts which must be combined together into a complete picture.

## When Words Fail

### Not the Way

A popular translation of the classic *Tao Te Ching* famously begins, “the way that can be told is not the eternal way”. (Note that this 23-century old work originally had no title, but was later called the *Tao Te Ching*, which means, more or less, “classic way of virtue”.) In other words, the way or process (*tao*) of the world cannot be described in words.

The recognition of this limitation on the power of words is echoed elsewhere, in other traditions. The old Hebrew teachings maintain that the name of God is ineffable; it cannot be spoken. Chan (Zen) Buddhism similarly avoids words when describing the Ultimate.

Sometimes, these practices are misunderstood. For instance, sometimes it is said that speaking the name of God is forbidden simply because there is a risk of dishonouring Him. The plain truth is that God cannot be limited to a mere word. Speaking the name isn't prohibited, it is just impossible, because names are limiting, and an unlimited God is not well served with a limited name.

You can take “the Ultimate” to mean several different things: God, Heaven, the basic laws of Nature, the innermost, fundamental workings of the Universe, and so on. The Ultimate is where you arrive when there are no more “why” or “how” questions to be asked, when all is understood and known.

The inadequacy of words to describe ultimate reality stems from several causes.

First, our experience is inadequate to understand the Ultimate. To see this, you need only accept that the nature of the Ultimate (the way, the *tao*, God, and so forth) is so far beyond our own experiences and knowledge that we

cannot comprehend, imagine, visualize, or analyze it. Then use some simple analogies: How can a cow or a hamster understand quantum physics? How can numerical analysis or micro-economics be described to a fish? How can a child understand adult psychology? (Although, to be fair, sometimes children are wiser than we adults.)

A point to be taken on faith: the Ultimate is farther beyond us, than we are from single celled organisms such as bacteria. (If you don't want to take this on faith, then take it as a working hypothesis, for purposes of argument or discussion.)

Second, our mundane language doesn't even have the vocabulary necessary to describe the Ultimate. Philosophy and its cousins (religion, mysticism, and so on) have their own jargon, their own words, just as do engineering, law, theatre, and sports. In the same way that it takes years to learn the terminology of, say, medicine or aviation, it takes years to learn the specialized language of philosophy. That does not mean that a specialized education is required to approach God; it only implies that a direct description won't do the job. Yet there is hope: I'm sure you can think of experiences in life which are beyond description, so the right experiences, the appropriate lessons, can make up for the inadequacy of the ordinary language.

Third, language is fundamentally limited. This inadequacy is more subtle, and may be more difficult to understand. Some of I'll have to explain as this text continues. For now, let me give some examples.

There are many hidden assumptions in our languages. This is true of English, Chinese, and so on. We are so accustomed to thinking in terms of our languages, we don't realize that the way we think is determined to a great extent by our language. (This is known as *linguistic relativity*, or as the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis*.) For instance, in English, every verb has a tense: the action or being is

in the past, present, or future. It is impossible to make statements in English which are not anchored in time. Even when we do not explicitly say it, a statement implies the past, present, or future. Why does this matter, you might ask, since everything must occur in the past, present, or future? The answer is that, in ultimate reality, some things are independent of time. *Time is an artefact of the way we think about things; time is not a basic principle of reality.* (There's another thing to take on faith, but you can put that on the shelf for now; we'll get to it later.)

And, yes, there are languages without tense, which can form statements devoid of a sense of time.

To frame another illustration, remember that there are also non-verbal languages such as music, painting, and dance. These non-verbal languages can be used to communicate some things which cannot be put well into words. There is no good reason to believe that verbal languages (that is, those with words) are superior to non-verbal ones when describing ultimate reality. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that *any* language, verbal or otherwise, is adequate for all purposes. Music can communicate feelings, sometimes when words cannot, but music doesn't do well at expressing tax law. Ultimately, they all fail when describing the Ultimate.

Fourth, words do not have uniform meanings to everyone. The meaning of a word depends on our background, experience, and culture. It varies with the meanings used by those around us. One man's "green" is another man's "blue". Translation from one language to another exacerbates the situation: even common words, such as the names of colours, are sometimes defined differently by different speakers. The best we can say is that the word for "green" in Chinese, for instance, is mostly the same, but not exactly the same, as the word "green" in English. (That is, English and Chinese speakers tend to give some of

the same hues different names.)

## Recipes & Formulae

### Paint the Moon

For centuries, poets and painters, and now photographers and scientists, have attempted to describe or portray the moon. No matter how good the rendering, however, you won't know the moon until you see it for yourself. The best way for me to tell you what the moon is like is to tell you to go outdoors on certain nights at certain times, and look upward for the brightest light in the sky, perhaps giving you a few clues more to make sure you don't mistake some other object for the Earth's largest satellite.

In the same way, when words do not suffice to convey the qualities of a phenomenon, explorers in quest of the Ultimate may mark the trails by formulae. They leave instructions, descriptions of procedures, for those behind them to follow. These range from the simple, sometimes deceptively simple, such as “Be still and know that I am God”, to the complex, as in books such as *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. The actions are sometimes meant to be performed once, as initiations, or periodically, such as observing holidays or recurring natural events. They may be isolated, or they may be episodic. They may be continual injunctions, such as the strictures to be mindful or to love one's neighbours. They may be conditional, such as the command to remove one's shoes when on holy ground.

Note that these recipes do not describe the end result. “Be still and know that I am God” does not tell you what your perception of God will be. Telling you to offer your breath to the rising sun does not hint at the result or consequences. There may be some ancillary advice or information, but the process is meant to result in your personal experience, for which the words of others are poor

substitutes.

## **Steps by Analogy**

Sometimes, it is not only the result which cannot be described: the process or recipe itself cannot be described literally. For instance, there are some exercises in alchemy which are described in terms of chemical processes, but which are meant to be performed in the mind. The alchemists' language has a dual meaning, describing both ordinary physical and chemical ideas, as well as psychological and spiritual ones. Often such “coded” instructions are taken as a way to conceal the true meaning of the message, as some sort of secret form of communication to be understood only by the uninitiated, but most commonly the truth is less sinister: the dual language is used only because the specialized topic has no appropriate vocabulary of its own among the users.

We sometimes use similar coded language ourselves, when we lack an alternative vocabulary. For example, those who grew up in the age of television might speak of “changing channels” or of being “amped up”. Even scholarly writers will use the language of the paradigm in vogue. Psychologists during the age of steam power, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, would view the mind as dealing with “pressures”, while more contemporary writers view the brain as a computer and think in terms of “signals” and “programmed behaviour”.

## **Accumulation & Subtleties**

It is not always immediately obvious what the effect of an exercise might be, or even if there is anything happening at all. Some practices must be performed for years before their impacts become apparent. The effects of an exercise might be extremely subtle. However, some of the subtle practices are

very powerful. Remember that the smallest units of matter may bind the most energy, which is why ever more powerful tools must be used to probe ever smaller subatomic particles.

There is not always an easy and straightforward way to tell if a procedure is producing a useful result. This is where teachers can be useful. Unfortunately, there is not always an easy and straightforward way to determine the value of a teacher. More on this, later.

## Figures of Speech

### No Buddha

Gautama Siddhartha, commonly called “Buddha”, had taught his students about enlightenment, karma, and other matters. Then he called his students together and told them, “There is no Buddha. It was only a figure of speech I used to get you thinking.” He continued, “There is no karma. There is no enlightenment... These are only figures of speech I used to teach you.”

Thus, in one lesson, Gautama told his students not to take any of the other lessons literally. This teaching is known to Buddhists as the beginning of the *Perfection of Wisdom*. In this case, the word “perfection” is used in the sense of “completion”, and is not taken in the sense of “free from defect”. That which is perfect is completed. It was one of the crowning sermons of Gautama's teachings. (The *Perfection of Wisdom*, or *Prajnaparamita*, goes beyond this warning about literalness, but the anti-literalness is at its beginning.)

Unfortunately, Buddhists often forget the *Perfection of Wisdom*. Even more unfortunately, non-Buddhists, such as Christians, Moslems, Confucians, and others usually never learned it, although it applies also to the lessons of Jesus, Mohammed, Confucius, and other great teachers.

Christians know that Jesus of Nazareth often spoke in parables. In fact, so did Gautama and others. The reason was not simply to make the lessons memorable, or to simplify or illustrate them. It was also because there are no exact words to describe the Ultimate. How can a person understand things for which he or she has no experience, but which are immeasurably beyond the things of this world?

So Jesus and Gautama and Moses and others used figures of speech. They

used metaphors, allegory, parables, irony, and the other tools of rhetoric to convey some sense of what they wanted to show, but which could not be illustrated exactly.

### **Poetic Lessons**

In most modern industrial civilization, literalness is prized. We think highly of those who can give precise definitions for words, who can be exact in their meanings, and who can command complex linguistic constructions. We have lost the ability to be poetic, to think and feel and understand as a poet might. We can no longer appreciate the lessons of the masters.

Poets, as opposed to mere versifiers, are not confined to literal thinking. Hard headed logical types may find poetry amusing or even occasionally inspiring, but to them the truth is usually in the precision of scientific, legal, scholarly, or technical jargon. We look down on poets and artists as being of lesser intelligence. In fact, they may be smarter than the rest of us because they see the limitations of the language, which implies that they see things which cannot be described in words.

Precise language has a place. Not every place, though.

### **Error of Literalness**

When literalness and precision are part of the message, then rigorous interpretation may be in order. However, when the message is metaphorical, or allegorical, or otherwise non-literal, then attempting to analyze it using exacting rules and definitions is simply erroneous.

To ignore the details of what might seem an important message may go against years of teaching and learned behaviour. However, poetry and poetic thought are in order, not logic and analysis.

Almost all of the specialized words taken up by religions and philosophies derived from the words of travellers to the Ultimate are misused and abused. Just as Gautama explained, “There is no enlightenment”, the followers of Jesus should understand, “There is no salvation”. The pawn shop and captive slave market metaphors (redemption, salvation, and so on) are merely metaphors. Even numbers should not be taken literally: to say that there are two categories of beings (damned to Hell or admitted to Heaven) is totally absurd even on its face, for everyone knows that nothing in real life is so straightforward as to admit such simple categorizations. Even to say that there are seven or three or some other number of levels of heaven is just a way of saying that some places are different from others. And, of course, there is no heaven, anyway.

The use of classification, specialization, and jargon when interpreting the words of the Masters is misunderstanding and revisionism run amok.

This is not to say that there is no value in the use of comparisons and figures of speech; it is important, however, not to *misuse* them. Instead of saying that there is salvation, for example, it is more accurate to say that there is something *similar in some way* to the purchase of a captive slave's freedom.

## Religion & Propaganda

### Evils of Vagueness

The vagueness and ambiguity necessary to the poet and mystic are important tools of the propagandist and evildoer. It is no accident that there is a close relationship between religion and deception.

Consider the use of the word “God”, for example. Dozens of people in a room might agree that they all “believe” in God, but, as each might have a different definition of the word, “God”, they all, in practice, might believe in different Gods. Of course, they might all say that they believe in the same God, but without a common understanding they will all act and reason differently. The differences, in practice, might be trivial, but it is likely that even most small groups can vigorously discuss the implications of those disagreements.

There is nothing wrong, *per se*, with differences and disagreements. Indeed, it would be a dull and boring world if we were all to think alike. The problem arises when those deviations are exploited.

A politician might attempt to unite a group behind a war by saying, “We all believe in the same God”. However, the God of some says that there should be no killing, while the God of others says that killing unborn children is acceptable, while the God of still others says that killing children of another group is all right if we want the oil belonging to their parents. The important debate doesn't take place, and the illusion of unity is only an illusion. The illusion leads to death, based on the same ambiguity in describing God which, under other circumstances, might instead unite them behind God rather than behind the politician.

Of course, the exploitation of ambiguity need not have anything to do

with religion or the Ultimate. For instance, the word “freedom” is ambiguous, and can be used to justify a law or a war, without in fact dealing with the meaning of “freedom”. People worship not only gods, but also flags and words, without questioning their meanings and implications.

Laws may not be considered onerous by those affected. Consumption of pork is illegal in much of the Arab world, but a Moslem probably doesn't want to eat it anyway. Restaurants in many parts of the United States cannot serve cat or dog, but most Americans do not want to eat it anyway. Most Americans don't feel encumbered by laws against serving cats or dogs, and most Moslems aren't bothered by laws against pork. Are Americans or Arabs less free than citizens of Korea or China, who can order pork, cat, or dog at their eateries? The logical problem is explained by the observation that freedom applies not just to people as a whole, but also to individuals. A group may be free in some ways, but its members slaves in other ways. However, the word “freedom” is thrown about without qualification. Americans think they are free, only when they do not think too much. We usually are not aware of our subliminal fears, but in truth they permeate our lives.

Such words as “God” and “freedom” can be used or misused. Because God cannot, in the end, be described with words, the ambiguity necessarily accompanies the usage. Those who seek power take advantage of the situation to control others.

### **Atheists & Agnostics, Read This**

I'm not going to ask you to believe in God. As I've just explained, it would be wrong to define “God”, so it would make me look fairly stupid to ask you to believe in something I refuse to define. If you are bothered by my use of the word God, don't be. As Gautama would have said, it's just a figure of speech.

Albert Einstein explained that certain distortions in the space-time continuum appeared as forces, such as gravity. In other words, there is no independent concept of “gravity”. Gravity doesn't really exist. What we think is gravity is, in fact, our experience of space-time in the presence of mass-energy. But the word, gravity, is still useful. I'm not aware that Einstein ever strolled off the top of buildings, or jumped out of sixth floor windows. Gravity may be only a word, but sometimes it's convenient to use a simplified model, to act as if something is real even when it is not.

In other words, if it looks like a duck, and walks like a duck, and swims like a duck, it might be a duck. On the other hand, it might be a goose. Or, maybe, you've been doing too many mushrooms.

## Mind of God

### God and Gods

As discussed earlier, the word “God” is fairly ambiguous. The inhabitants of Mount Olympus — Zeus and his siblings — are called gods. Zeus, especially, is called God. The god of Moses is called God. Brahman is called God. By “God”, which god is meant?

In this book, when I used “God”, with an upper case or capital “G” I will mean the kind of god which is considered to be omniscient or omnipotent, or both. The definition will be left vague, intentionally, because concepts such as omniscience and omnipotence are not so straightforward as might be first assumed.

Therefore, God includes Brahman. It sometimes includes the Hebrew God, Yahweh or Elohim, but not always. Zeus doesn't qualify, because, although he was powerful, he wasn't omnipotent or omniscient.

The “sometimes” qualification for the Hebrew and Christian God is because the *Tanak* and the Christian New Testament use the name in different ways. Sometimes, God is omniscient, but sometimes He doesn't appear to know things in advance. Also, there is no reason for an omnipotent God to be angry or jealous, because if you're omnipotent you have no problems or rivals. If you're omnipotent, and you have a problem, then you have no one to blame but yourself.

Hinduism, on the other hand, distinguishes among God or Brahman, and his emanations, avatars, and manifestations. Christianity does not. Judaism, in Qabbalism, has some discussion of these ideas. Mostly, however, the Christians and the Jews just lump all of these concepts together. That isn't necessarily a

bad thing, depending on how far the analogies are stretched. Every analogy has its limits. We must remember that these are all merely approximations, because the Ultimate is beyond description.

## **Omniscience**

Suppose, for some suitably vague concept of God, we assume that God knows everything. He knows what every thinking or sentient being has in its mind, what those beings are feeling, where every grain of sand lies, and where every elementary particle is going. He knows the past, present, and future. In other words, knowledge of everything is in the Mind of God.

If there is a reality, physical or otherwise, outside of God's mind, then it is pretty much irrelevant, because it merely duplicates what is in God's mind. What God is thinking **is** reality.

Every other mind is within God's mind. God has the super-mind, the hyper-mind, the mind which contains all other minds. Your mind is a corner of God's mind.

Now, instead suppose that there is no God, and, no mind of God. Let us instead take the opposite extreme, and conclude that there is an objective, outside reality, the physical universe. Under that hypothesis, you are, rather than a corner of God's mind, a corner of the objective universe.

The result, under either assumption, is about the same. Note that I am not saying that the Universe *is* God, but rather that the Universe is a map of the content of God's mind. In other words, this isn't pantheism, but it does bear a resemblance.

So, if you choose not to believe in God, that's OK, there is an equivalent model without his name on it.

## **Consciousness**

When you contemplate a flower or a rock, or any phenomenon, there is a distinction between the observer and the observed. There is an implicit assumption that you and the thing you perceive, the thing of which you are aware or conscious, are two different entities. This kind of awareness of consciousness is called *dualistic* consciousness. This definition applies not only to phenomena, which are external, but also to noumena, which are entirely within your mind. In other words, if you imagine something which has no physical existence, you imagine “it” as something separate from you, even when it exists only in your imagination.

An omniscient God will not have dualistic consciousness. Because everything is in his mind, he cannot observe it in the common manner. To observe something and to consider it as external, God would have to divide himself, somehow, into observer and object of observation. But, if God were to divide himself, he would no longer be God.

Clearly, however, God is aware of you within his mind. Equivalently, in a Godless universe, you are clearly a part of nature, and the other parts of physical reality must interact with you at times. This type of consciousness is called *unitary* consciousness.

You approach having unitary consciousness at times. For example, when you move your body by walking, you do not ordinarily think of your legs or feet as separate entities. If you are trying to walk in some way different from usual, you might think of your feet and how to move them, which is dualistic awareness. However, most of the time, you don't think of your body as separate, and you have something akin to unitary consciousness.

Similarly, when you identify strongly with a group or a team, and you are acting with the group, then you may at moments be unaware of your own

separate identity. Your mind is expanded from “I” to “we”, and you have something like a unitary group consciousness.

Although the analogy is imperfect, it is toward the direction of God's unitary consciousness.

There is an important observation here: your field of quasi-unitary consciousness can expand or it can shrink. Sometimes your feet are separate objects, at other times your feet are part of you. Sometimes other people are separate objects, at other times they are part of you. This expansion and contraction of quasi-unitary awareness, sometimes called simply an expansion and contraction of consciousness, is something which can be learned. As will be explained, it is an important lesson to learn.

This expansion and contraction is not the only aspect of your own mind to be considered, but it is a key component.

The foregoing should also illuminate something that Jesus of Nazareth said. When asked what was the most important commandment, Jesus said it was to love God with all your heart. Then he said, a similar commandment was to love your neighbour as you love yourself. Loving your neighbour is part of the process of expanding your unitary field of consciousness, so that your self-identity is more “we” than “I”. Loving God and loving your neighbour both help to accomplish this purpose, and both make your consciousness more similar to God's consciousness.

## Approaching Holiness

### Healing, Holiness, and the Whole

Over time, the meanings of words change. Each language offers clues in its vocabulary and grammar to the original meanings behind some of its words.

In English, three words of common origin are “heal”, “holy”, and “whole“. They all trace back to the proto-Indo European root *kailo*, and they all reflect similar concepts. The mind of God contains everything: it contains the *whole* world within it. Thus, God is *holy*. To *heal* is to make *whole* or *holy*. These words point to the relationship between the infinite unitary consciousness of God, and the expansion of the limited consciousness of lesser beings.

It is important to note that expansion of consciousness is expansion of *unitary* consciousness, not the expansion of dualistic consciousness. The awareness of many things as objects is not equivalent to the awareness of those things as part of the unitary whole.

### Only the Beginning

As might be expected, the entirety of God's mind is not so simply explained as differing from our minds only in having unitary consciousness.

Unitary consciousness was defined above as a condition where subject and object are indistinguishable, merged into one. A distinction has been collapsed. We might also say that the distinction has been completed, or destroyed, or mapped out of existence.

In God's mind, it is not only the subject-object distinction which ceases to exist. Distinctions cease to exist in other ways, as well.

First, the entire range of physical and logical distinctions is collapsed.

This includes not only the logical separation of subject from object, or observer from observed, but also the dimensions of time and space. There is no distinction between past and future, between here and there, or between any values of any of the coordinates of space and time. Currently, the science of physics deals with about eleven dimensions of space and time, not only the usual three spatial dimensions and the one time dimension, but also others which are normally unobserved. There are others not yet known, but all of them are collapsed in God's mind. In other words, all of space and time are One to God, and with God.

Second, while our puny minds mostly see one set of possibilities, which we deem “inevitable”, God sees infinite possibilities at all points of time and space. Zen (Chan) Buddhism makes an analogy with a beginner's mind: the expert knows how to do a thing, but the beginner, unconditioned and untrained, knows many ways. It ought to be our goal to have the mind of a beginner, where all possible ways, if not already known, remain to be discovered.

The collapse of distinctions in time implies knowing the past, present, and future as one. The outcome of all pasts is present in the future, and the origins of all futures are present in the past. To know a moment is to know all moments.

Albert Einstein famously said, “I want to know God's thoughts.” I'm with Einstein on that.

Among other realizations, Einstein discovered the principle of simultaneity, which says that there is no intrinsic ordering of events. The sequence of two or more events is dependent on the observer. In other words, one observer might see A, then B, while another observer might see B first, then A. Neither is incorrect. The sequence depends on the observation, and not on the events themselves. Time does not always flow one way.

Quantum mechanics further elaborated by saying that *all* observations

depend on the observer. Neither you nor I can make an observation without affecting the thing observed. All is subjective.

Transitively, all things are thus connected and related.

## The Origin of Things

### Creation

The word, phenomenon, refers to things which are sensed or experienced. In some philosophies, there are also noumena. A noumenon is the reality behind a phenomenon, it is the ideal which can only be known in the mind, as opposed to a phenomenon, which we know through touch or taste or whatever. This kind of thing can keep philosophers busy discussing and debating, but it's a detail, and I bring it up here to explain that I'm just going to lump noumena and phenomena together. Let us just call them, the created, or phenomenal, world. Once again, precision is not always a good thing.

In *Bereshit*, in Genesis, it is said that God created things just by saying they ought to exist. Well, it's almost that simple. That is how things are created, not only by God but also by us. They first arise in our minds. Yes, *our* minds, since your mind and my mind are corners of God's mind. We create, too: we're partners with God in creation, whether we are aware of it or not.

If you believe in a subjective, external reality, then this will go against the grain. Quantum mechanics has been saying for years that there is no objectivity, anyway, because any meaningful reality is affected by its observation. Physicists, for the most part, however, are not quite willing to get rid of the “external” part, because doing so destroys some critical assumptions and raises a lot of difficult and uncomfortable questions. Some of those questions go to the heart of the scientific method itself.

I'm not going to ask you to buy into the “it's all in your mind” (or maybe, in your head) theory, either. The apparent dichotomy regarding reality, either being in your mind or external, is illusory, just as is mind itself, just as is reality

itself. There is no Buddha, there is no karma, there is no mind, there is no reality, and so forth. These things are all artefacts of our perspectives, all transient and impermanent. Yes, this all sounds very fuzzy headed, like something from someone who has – excuse the comparison – lost his grip on reality. Just bear with me for a while, and it'll start to make sense.

### **Brain as Television**

The prevailing belief in our culture is that we think with our brains. In truth, that notion is taken on faith, not much differently than the notion that there is some kind of God.

As evidence of this belief in the cerebral origins of thought, there is an extensive body of work ranging from surgical experiences to chemical experiments to imaging of the brain, as it functions, correlating various observations with evidence of the thoughts. For instance, if electrical probes are applied to the brain, they can elicit memories or sensations of various kinds. This supposedly shows that those thoughts come from the brain, and are switched on by the potential in the probes. Similarly, imaging the brain, observing for chemical activity, shows that thoughts are associated with chemical reactions. We can control the brain by chemical and electrical means, thus controlling thought and sensation. Therefore, the argument goes, the brain is the source of these thoughts and sensations, because there is no other organ which might plausibly play that role.

There is, however, an example which hints at another possibility. Consider a television, or even a networked computer. We can inject signals into that computer and affect what is seen on the screen, and observe changes on the signals and behaviour inside. We can mechanically alter the device, and the programs and operations behave differently. No one believes, though, that the

people on your television screen, or the content of the multimedia programs on your computer monitor, are in fact within the devices themselves. We know they come from the outside, through the air in wireless connections, or through cables in wired instances.

Thus, there is a similar possibility that the brain is only a sense organ, with signal receptors – antennae, if you will – and integrated decoding mechanisms. Your thoughts don't come from your brain, they come from the outside, and your brain only perceives them. The idea that the brain is only a sense organ is not new. It has been accepted as true, by many, for thousands of years. Many philosophies over the ages have considered the senses to include taste, touch, vision, hearing, and thought.

There is a principle, highly respected in science, called Occam's Razor, sometimes called the preference for parsimony of assumptions. It states that a simple explanation, that involves fewer assumptions, is preferable to a complex explanation, when choosing among competing hypotheses. In this case, however, Occam's Razor doesn't help much, since the idea of an external mind isn't more or less complex than the idea of the brain-as-computer. Whence come those thoughts? The situation here is similar to exploring a valley, and finding discovering some new species of animal. Do we know if those creatures originated in this valley, or do we conclude that they came from the next valley over? Unfortunately, we don't know how to get through the mountains into the next valley. Sometimes, it's best not to reach a conclusion at all. There is no clear advantage here from jumping to conclusions. Let us have beginners' minds.

At the edges, on the frontiers of what passes for “knowledge”, we know from quantum physics that cause and effect isn't a simple proposition, and we know also that time doesn't necessarily flow in any specific direction.

By Dante's telling, there is a sign at the entrance to Hell, admonishing

travellers to abandon all hope upon entrance. There is a similar sign at the exit, advising those who would leave Hell to abandon all unwarranted assumptions and preconceived notions. Carry no excess baggage on your journey: you don't need the extra weight. After all, angels fly because they take themselves lightly.

### **Cloud Skrying**

Let us return to the idea of creation.

There is a game, usually played by children, but sometimes by adults who have not been foolish enough to forget how. You lie on your back, and look up at the clouds, looking for images. Maybe you see animals, or trees, people, or other things. In the same cloud, one player might see a dog, but another perceives the same cloud as having the shape of a horse. The players create horses and dogs from clouds.

Of course, it is a long way from creating a horse in a cloud, to creating stars, planets, life, and light. This is an analogy, however. It is a metaphor, and is meant to convey some semblance of the basic idea. Cloud scrying is a form of creation far removed from popping pulsars out of the galactic ovens, but consider another example of how other dissimilar things are extremes of the same idea: think of tools. From the time that men and women figured out how to chip flakes from flint to form knives and arrowheads, to when we learned how to make computer controlled plasma cutting torches and laser surgical scalpels, maybe 100,000 years passed, but both are considered examples of the human ability to make and use tools. Moreover, there is little reason to believe that an infant, plucked from a neolithic village and transported to a modern town with a machine shop and technical school, could not be making and using milling machines and lathes after a couple of decades of training. Although prehistoric people did not make automobiles and aircraft, there is no reason to

believe they didn't have the innate ability. Similarly, we don't in our culture routinely create biospheres entirely from mind stuff, but, as cloud scrying shows a little, we have the innate ability.

We have within us the potential to become gods.

### **Appaloosas from Nothing, Canines for Free**

There are some big holes in this argument, so far. Where did the ideas of horses and dogs originate, in the first place? How do we get from the idea of a dog to a flesh-and-blood hound? From the concept of a horse to a real, hay-burning draught animal?

To ensuing chapters will be left part of the answer, but, for now, consider that we are confined to the limits of our imaginations. You will not likely find a platypus in a cloud, if you've never before seen a platypus. Nor will you see a capybara in the skies, if you don't already have the idea of a capybara. Most of us have very few original ideas. Almost everything we hold in our minds comes from somewhere or someone else. To understand the implications, we must consider the structure and dynamics of the phenomenal, created world, as a corner of God's mind.

## Conditioned Existence

### Three Marks

Gautama taught that the phenomenal world is marked by three characteristics. By the phenomenal world, I mean the noumenal world as well, which includes all constructs of mind, even those without physical manifestations. As I will show later, this is, basically, all of Creation. There are other non-created realms, but they will be left to later. In fact, we cannot comprehend the non-created realms, we are so bound to our own created existence as to leave them inaccessible, but we will use metaphor, analogy, and other figures of speech to discuss them.

Sometimes these characteristics are called the three marks of existence. Calling creation and existence the same thing may be unsettling to those who might feel, for example, that God is not created but he nevertheless exists. Don't worry about it. This is not a mathematics textbook, or a set of books of account which need to be balanced to the penny. This is poetry, so enjoy the freedom you have from the petty need for consistency.

At times, these are called the three marks of conditioned existence. The adjective reminds us that such existence is subject to conditions: it has been created, fabricated, compounded, or constructed. That which has been created, can also be destroyed.

The three marks are impermanence, dissatisfaction, and non-self. These are three words used to translate Gautama's original words, *anitya*, *duḥkha*, and *anātman*. Other words are also used to render these three, Sanskrit terms. It is far more important to approach the underlying meaning than it is to find a precise translation. Once again, undue precision will destroy metaphors and analogies.

Therefore, as I discuss them, and offer some other English equivalents, remember that all are approximations.

## **Impermanence**

All things are impermanent. They come and they go. They change.

While this may be obvious – to some, anyway – it has subtle but profound implications. Some of these are closely related to the other two marks of existence, while others are associated with the practices used to achieve liberation from all suffering and delusion.

Some will disagree with the premise that all is impermanent. They will claim that some things are “eternal”, without beginning or end, enduring forever. This belief originates in the misapprehension of certain teachings, in the difficulty of describing the ultimate to those who are incapable of directly comprehending the doctrine. It arises partly from the limitations of languages. Languages are all dualistic in nature: they communicate from one entity to another. A dualistic language can point toward a holistic concept, but cannot express it directly.

When you hear of something described as eternal or enduring forever, consider that what might really be meant is “outside of time” or “independent of time”. For example, the numbers 1, 2, 3, and so on, might be considered eternal: their existence is separate from time, independent of time. This is not exactly true, but it is a good approximation for now.

Why this concern with impermanence? Obviously, some things endure a very long time. If something will last a million years, that is as good as forever, for many purposes. Religious discussions often talk about eternity, and things which are everlasting, but these are abstract and irrelevant to some. If you don't care whether heaven lasts forever, because you don't believe in heaven in the

first place, then the whole issue may seem without purpose. In that case, don't be too concerned about it. However, it's still significant, in that failure to accept the impermanence of the phenomenal world will lead to logical contradictions later. This will become more obvious as this model is expanded and explored.

The understanding of impermanence also plays a role in certain exercises used to expand the mind. In that way, it has immediate practical importance.

### **Dissatisfaction**

The Sanskrit term which I render as dissatisfaction is often translated as *suffering*, leading to the misunderstanding that Buddhism says, “everything is suffering”. Neither word is a perfect translation, and Gautama was talking about conditioned existence, not about “everything”, so this idea that everything is suffering isn't correct.

The conditioned nature of conditioned existence is reason enough to grasp, at least tentatively, that such existence is unsatisfactory. When we rely on, or enjoy, or otherwise experience phenomena which are based on some conditions, and those conditions are impermanence, then we are forced to deal with change, with uncertainty, with contingencies. Every created thing will pass away, even those things which we love and enjoy, so the inevitable end of pleasure is the beginning of dissatisfaction.

We have a tendency to grasp, to attach, to phenomena. This grasping and attachment is another misused, misunderstood process. We say we have attachments, as if they are all things we like and enjoy: we say we are attached to this or that, or that we grasp some things, as if we are seeking some qualities of those objects. What is really meant here is a process of attachment and grasping independent of the nature of the thing sought. For example, we attach to, and grasp for certainty, or at least for less uncertainty. We build models of

the world, in our minds, in attempt to understand, so we can control, and reduce the dissatisfaction. We might be attached to children or money or jellied doughnuts, but we are just as attached to the beliefs that time only moves in one direction, that the familiar is safe, and that we have control over at least some small corner of the world. We hold on to the idea that some things are evil, or bad, just as much as to the belief that others are good.

The process of grasping may seem quite benign, as when we see an image in the clouds, instead of seeing the chaos and formlessness. It may seem malignant, as with paranoia or phobia. This is not to be judged, or condemned. It is merely to be noted. To do otherwise is to layer another attachment over the one we observe. We will not deal with the problem by fighting it, or conquering it. It isn't even a problem, any more than the numbers in an algebraic equation are evil. They are, but, as the next mark shows, they aren't, either.

### **Non-Self**

This mark of conditioned existence is sometimes described by saying that conditioned phenomena have no intrinsic nature. That is, the qualities we ascribe to them are not part of them, they arise from our own processes of observation and evaluation.

We might say that a thing is hot or cold, complex or simple, blue or green. However, the thing itself does not know of heat, or of complexity, or of colours. The nature of things is an illusion, coming from our failure to apprehend the processes of our own operation. All of the qualities of phenomena are assigned by us, and are not intrinsic to the thing observed or sensed or experienced.

It is easy to ridicule this concept. When you burn yourself on a hot stove, or break three bones after falling out of a tree, or succumb to a painful disease,

it is a little difficult to accept that these things are illusions. When you have an epiphany, fall deeply in love, or are overcome with joy, you don't buy the idea that these things didn't really happen to you. Note, however, that I have not said that nothing happens under these circumstances: what I said was that freezing water and angels aren't really what they appear. This emphatically does not mean that nothing happens. It does not mean that there are no broken bones or diseases or priceless newborn babies. Rather, it is saying that the appearances you give them are from within you. A flower and a bird are real, but they are not flowers or birds.

If you cannot accept this premise, then try a compromise: assume for the duration that there is an extreme amount of distortion between reality and what you perceive. We're talking a very, very extreme amount of distortion. Start by assuming a little distortion, if you want, continue to apply the idea, and you will find that your awareness of the illusions will continue to grow. Once you begin to look for it, you'll find it, and wonder why you never saw it previously.

The most profound implication of this hypothesis lies in your own nature. Just as the things you observe aren't what you believe they are, you will find that you, yourself, are not what, or who, you think yourself to be.

## Theatre of the Mind

### Suspension of Disbelief

One of the goals of the most common story-telling theatre, film, and television shows is called the *suspension of disbelief*. That is achieved when the audience no longer sees the actors as actors, but rather as the characters they play. The audience forgets that it is watching a performance, and becomes absorbed in the story, often shutting out signals from the “real”, outside world. The viewers and hearers might start by believing that the performance is merely acting, but surrender that belief, even if only temporarily. They no longer disbelieve the story. In common parlance, they are sucked in, mesmerized by the show. The play or story becomes real for them.

This can even happen with written stories in books or magazines.

The listeners experience the pain and joy and hatred and desire and other feelings imparted by the cast and context. They laugh and they cry. The events on stage are experienced and observed as if they were real.

This is similar to what happens when we forget the three marks of phenomenal existence, when we see the illusion, the spectacle, as if it were real. We surrender to the stories that we see in the clouds, imagining them to be true, believing them to have a basis in some kind of solid, permanent reality.

One of the main differences between a film or play or television show and so-called real-life is the duration of the performance. A sporting event or movie is over in a few hours, while the illusion of reality goes on for a lifetime. Instead of half-time shows, commercial breaks, and intermissions, we get sleep. At the end of the show, we die, but we linger at the same theatre for the sequel, known in common parlance as re-incarnation.

This is not merely an example of being fooled by the quality of a theatre production. Unlike most theatre productions, this show incorporates audience participation. We create the plot and story when we take action in real life, furthering the illusion. In fact, a large part of the reason we act as we do is to help preserve the illusion. Once the suspension of disbelief is shattered, we die, which is unsatisfying (one of the three marks), so we actively promote the continuation. We want to know how the story ends, but it never ends, just as an alcoholic never has that one, last, satisfying drink which will end his or her desire to drink some more.

(When we act in the illusion, then that is also an illusion. Our actions, the perception of which is buttressed by feedback loops small and large, are selected from the clouds, in the same way that others' actions are chosen. The difference between your action and another's action is complicated by the structure of what might be called "the greater I"; this will be discussed later in this book.)

## **Laugh Tracks**

When it comes to true, independent action, we are almost all cowards.

Even when we pretend to show our "independence", we almost invariably do it in ways which are approved and appreciated by others. Most so-called individuality is a sham, a fraud.

When someone has a courageous attitude, it is usually bolstered by an admiring audience. When someone demonstrates fierceness or tenacity, subduing an opponent or succeeding against great odds at some task, then that persistence is usually born of applause and approval. This terror of individual action is sometimes derided as a "herd" instinct, and most people are criticized as being mere sheep. It is also sometimes viewed as a survival trait, which keeps us together. Regardless of the value judgement, it is well nigh universal among

us.

This fear keeps us not only from appearing differently from others, or from acting differently from others, it also serves to prevent the development of independent thinking. Among the rarest of gems is a thought which is different in any substantial way from the thoughts of others. We pretend that we have opinions, but this ordinarily means that we echo opinions we have heard somewhere else. Then we turn around and cite the agreement among the sheep as evidence that there is some sort of objective reality. Otherwise, why would so many not agree on its features?

Often, we cannot even laugh by ourselves. Directors of mundane television comedies add laugh tracks, with laughter inserted into the audio so we will feel permitted to laugh at the jokes and gags in the shows. “Hey, that was a joke, everyone else is laughing now, it was funny, it’s all right for you to see the humour and to laugh now, too.” Of course, it would help if the performance were funnier, but people need permission to laugh even when the humour is authentic.

So, when one person sees a toucan in the clouds, a lot of other people will see toucans, as well. The original visionary of the toucan may be long departed from the earth, but we will all agree on the opinions purloined from one another.

Almost primordial in this web of beliefs, is the conclusion that these perceptions of phenomena are tantamount to reality itself. We are deathly afraid to see otherwise, else we are isolated to a tiny minority which is unwelcome in most society.

Various travellers, having seen otherwise, took different approaches to teaching us better. Some said, never mind the toucan and other phenomena, we need to consider more important things. Others said, let us consider how to

destroy the illusion of the toucan. Still others said, let us jump over the toucan and go directly to the cloud itself. Some said, as long as you see toucans, let's discuss toucans in an enlightened and rational way, and maybe some day we'll move onward to the cloud. And so on and so on.

For their troubles, these teachers were often killed, ridiculed, persecuted, and mostly forgotten, not exactly examples most of us would want to follow.

### **Focus versus Wholeness**

There is a fundamental tension between narrowness of focus, and wholeness. As already noted, wholeness is analogous to holiness, to the world as God sees it, to the Ultimate Reality, at least in one of our metaphors. It would be easy to decry television, written language, music, and other focusing activities as evil in some way, given that concentration on such things appears antithetical to expansion of consciousness.

It's not quite so simple.

Consciously or otherwise, travellers toward the Ultimate have developed ways to utilize focusing mechanisms to shatter the illusion. In fact, focusing the mind is one of the primary ways to escape the unreality.

For example, the mind has a natural tendency to notice changes, to perceive differences as they occur. By focusing on repetitious activities, the mind can be caused to lose interest, and the focus might then be dropped entirely if the field of view is sufficiently constrained. This method employs activities ranging from dancing to mantras to poetry, and is used by a wide variety of groups to expand consciousness.

As another example, there are some meditation techniques in which the mind is first focused, and then the object of the focus is de-constructed or removed, leaving the mind without an object of focus.

In techniques of these sorts, however, it is common to require active use of the mind. This is different from being a zombie in front of a television or video game. In fact, it can be terribly difficult work to employ some of these procedures.

That does not mean that zombie tools do not have their uses. However, they must be employed with care. When watching television, to note, the mind is in a state akin to the minds of subjects in hypnosis, passive and susceptible to suggestion by the programmers. Be careful what you watch. Nevertheless, the right programming can be useful. If, for instance, you are going on a journey, downloading beforehand a foreign language program or travelogue might be advantageous.

### **Some Devil's Tools**

At the first level, instead of knowing reality directly, we perceive it. We absorb notions of it through our senses, through phenomena. The phenomenal world is not reality, it is an illusion.

Such an experience, flawed though it is, is far better than seeing the world through the lens of a camera. Consider a horse. Horses have a certain smell, just as do other animals like dogs, cats, and birds. You will never even come close to knowing what a horse is without that smell.

Even if, someday, a smell-e-vision machine is developed, which allows you to smell the horse along with seeing it, such a device would have at least two serious flaws. First, it would be incomplete and imperfect, just as the best high definition movies aren't equivalent to seeing the set yourself. Second, you're seeing, or smelling, what the director chooses, not what you would choose yourself. Whoever builds that machine, with whatever limitations and capabilities, is making decisions for you. Whoever operates that machine is also

deciding questions for you. You are passive, and activity, whether of the mind or of the body, is essential to engaging the universe.

The same principle applies in the realm of abstract ideas. When you read a book, even a good technical or academic book which tries to present an unbiased view of the subject matter, the author inevitably makes selections for you. He might tell you about a battle from some time in history, but he won't always tell you what it was like on the battlefield in any meaningful way. She might not give you information about how it touched the lives of the non-combatants. And you may not have the opportunity to explore a point by asking questions here and there.

The use of what is lately called "the media" to gain information is as inferior to the actual phenomenal world, as the phenomenal world is to direct knowledge of reality. Again, they have their uses. But the more nearly real thing is the better thing, on your journey out of Hell.

## Soul & Psychology

### Common Senses

Although the phenomenal world is illusory, it is the roadmap we have. To ignore the road because it is not the destination, would be unproductive. Furthermore, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with illusion, as long as we can return to reality. A fantasy or a film, a concert or a book, has a useful role in life, as long as we don't confuse it with "reality". Games are fun, but they don't pay the bills. And, yes, we can learn from them.

The word *sense* is instructive. We use it as "meaning", as in, "The sense of his message was..." We use it to describe perception, as in, "She sensed the changing temperature." We use it in the phrase, "common sense", to describe something basic and logical. Originally – going back to Old German – it also meant to travel or to journey, and even to meditate. This breadth of meanings provides a clue to the deep importance of senses, of phenomena. The journey of the senses, where deep apprehension of sensations is, itself, a journey, can take us to important places. It can take us into our souls.

The popular meaning of many words, "sense" among the, changes over time.

Nowadays, we associate use of the word *soul* with religions or poetry. A soul is seen as some kind of inner essence or origin, but not much considered beyond that. Most people who aren't religious or poetic don't think of souls very much. However, the soul is always nearby, even if we cannot see it or understand it. Occasionally, someone comes along and attempts to understand it, to pierce the shrouds surrounding its mysteries. The social institutions resulting from these attempts to re-link or to re-connect with our souls are

loosely known as religions. Typically, however, they stray far from their original premises.

The hallmarks of a failed search for the soul are dogma and refusal to consider the insights of outsiders. Healthy debate is a sign of life, but a corpse senses and learns nothing: it is dead. Dead philosophies and religions can act as zombies for centuries after their deaths.

It is instructive to consider one newer religion in the early stages of failure: psychology. Yes, psychology is a kind of religion, it purportedly attempts to re-link and to re-connect us to our souls. The word *psyche*, from which “psychology” derives, means, simply, soul. Psychology is study of the soul, and psychologists are the priests of the religion. As for this religion’s God, read on...

When I speak here of psychology, I’m referring to what might be called modern psychology. The included areas of study go back millenia. However, the first known use of the word itself dates to the fifteenth century or so, by a humanist, Catholic poet who wanted to understand the natural basis of the soul. Modern psychology, however, as a field of scientific study, really started in the nineteenth century, when modern science and the scientific method became established. (That is not to disparage earlier thinkers, though, from whom we have much to learn.) Although there had been previous analyses, modern psychology began when scientists in the nineteenth century first began to employ the scientific method to understand mental processes and structure.

In its early days, psychology was the mental counterpart to anatomy. One dealt with the mental, and the other with the physical. There are two obvious ways to explore the mind in this context: one is to consider the thoughts, emotions, and other constituents of the mind itself, and the other is to delve into the relationship of the mind with the body and with other aspects of the physical world. In other words, study the soul from the inside, and from the outside. As

always, there are only imprecise and not universally agreed distinctions between mind, soul, and the components of these things. At any rate, psychology began to die when the first approach (the internal) became overwhelmed and was dominated by the second. Nowadays, most of psychology studies the soul from the outside, but is afraid to enter.

Nevertheless, there are vibrant, living branches of the internal approach. Although they are usually considered as children of psychology itself, they are sometimes considered as somewhat outside the mainstream, or even as fringe studies.

The exile of soul study from mainstream psychology is based largely on arguments that the soul-internal branches – psychoanalysis, analytical psychology, trans-personal psychology, and others – aren't scientific enough. This is based on several factors, including the difficulty or even impossibility of remaining objective in a scientific sense, the practical and ethical considerations preventing the implementation of controlled experiments, and the lack of acceptable metrics to evaluate observations and conclusions. From a scientific point of view, these are legitimate arguments. However, the philosophy of science does not permit it to cover all types of human knowledge. Science will not investigate certain questions regarding the existence of God, for example, because they are not based on falsifiable hypotheses. Science keeps its nose out of certain areas, and some branches of psychology inevitably find their way into those areas.

The fracture and destruction of whole psychology arises as an aftershock, subsequent to one of the most momentous eras in European culture. Remarkably, the salient event has no common name. Each corner of a fragmented culture, remembers it as a different event, but the events are all centred around the beginning of the sixteenth century. Martin Luther signalled

the beginning of the Protestant Reformation with his Ninety Five Theses in 1517. The Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire collapsed after the siege of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Johannes Gutenberg developed his printing press in 1450. Europe began substantial commerce with the Americas in 1490, and with India in 1497, and with China in 1568; during the next two centuries, four fifths of the American Indian population would die from European diseases. Thomas More invented the word, *utopia*, in 1516, as part of his general social criticism of Europe, in the wake of the rediscovery in the Renaissance of classical Latin and Greek culture after the dark of the Middle Ages. In 1534, Henry VIII split the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church; More's opposition had resulted in his beheading previously, in 1532. Niccolò Machiavelli wrote *Il Principe (The Prince)* in 1513; it was promptly banned by the Church. The first African slaves are imported to the Americas in 1502, beginning a migration which dwarfed the colonization by Europeans. (African and Asians, both slave and free, far outnumbered Europeans in the New World for centuries, but modern history books ignore that. Basically, the Americas were colonized by coloured people more than by whites.) In 1512, Copernicus moved the Sun to the centre of the Universe, displacing the Earth. There were wars and plagues and famines too numerous to list here.

Prior to this time, the world's greatest empires and cultures by almost any measure – population, standard of living, geographic size, military strength, literary and artistic culture, or scientific knowledge – were to be found in Africa, Asia, and in the Americas. A few centuries later, the tables had turned, and Europe was well on its way to dominating the world.

A critical component of these changes in Europe was the loss of dominance by the Church. Indeed, all of Christianity has been in decline since. Although it is disguised by the rise of Protestantism and other movements,

Christianity, including both Protestants and Catholics, has never recovered. Occasional resurgent movements and revivals are basically the involuntary spasms of a dying or dead patient.

(It is important to note here that, Christianity is not what Jesus of Nazareth taught. Some of his lessons are incorporated into the common culture, although often they are surface traits and not deeply held or understood beliefs and practices. However, most of what we call Christian culture is in opposition to, or at least irrelevant to, Jesus's messages. The vast distinctions between what Jesus said, and what Christianity practices and preaches, will be explored later in this book.)

Concomitant with Christianity's decline has been the rise of secularism, including the roots of what was is now called science. Science did not spring suddenly from the scholastic tradition; it evolved, and the scientific method did not take strong hold until the nineteenth century. Nor did science or scientists reject God or religion. Many scientists today are religious, and some of the most intriguing inquiries into the mind of God, into the nature of the Ultimate, have come from scientists well-respected by their peers. Despite the personal inclinations of many scientists, however, the demand for objectivity and falsifiability inherent in the accepted paradigms of the scientific method, has driven most science away from the study of the soul.

Psychologists, then, could only look for a mechanistic, objective god, mostly from the outside. The God of those psychologists, those external psychologists, is chemical, electrical, and biological: our minds were created by our genetics, our environment, and our bodies. Their God is a machine.

Do you have a problem? Are you depressed or unhappy or tired or afraid? Take a pill. Change your behaviour, change your environment, change your genetics, but don't be concerned about your dreams or about those troubling

thoughts you have while you're awake. There's another pill for those pesky dreams, and yet another for those uncomfortable thoughts.

The internal psychologists, however, the ones who still believe that the details of what you think and feel carry significant messages, are true to the original meaning of the word, psychology, as knowledge of the soul.

### **Heaven Within**

Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is within you. A similar concept is understood in some corners of Buddhism, where Buddhists may greet each another by bowing, not to each other, but each to the Buddha within the other. The Qur'aan teaches that Allah is closer to a man than is that man's own jugular vein. Qabalah explains that Man contains everything in heaven and earth. Similar teachings are found within traditions ranging from Hinduism to that of the Quakers.

These are not claims that a man or a woman *is* God, but rather that God, or at least Heaven, is *within* us.

Most Christians do not know this, although Jesus did. Nor do most Moslems remember, although Mohammed understood. Most Hindus aren't aware of this, either. The same is true for almost all religions, even though the original teaching – that God or Heaven is within us – can be found in the scriptures of most traditions.

We forget this truth because it is difficult, painful, uncomfortable, frightening, confusing, and unfamiliar to look inside. There is a Sufi story about a man looking on the ground, obviously searching for something perhaps dropped or lost. A passerby asks, "Did you lose something here?" The seeker replies, "No, I lost it over there, but the light is better for searching here." That is the way we are: we look where it is easiest and simplest to understand.

When we look inside ourselves, we see nightmares and broken dreams; we see hopes of better times and circumstances, also, but have been disappointed so often we are afraid to believe them. We see pain and discomfort; we see pleasure, also, but it never lasts forever. We see failures; we see successes, too, but there are other failures lurking around the corner. We see both the good and the bad, but we remember that the good will not last. As Gautama explained, it's all unsatisfactory.

With all of this dissatisfaction towards what is in the mind, we rarely venture too far in. Instead, we look outside. It's easier, it's safer, it's less frightening and less disturbing. Unfortunately, to find heaven and God, we need to go inward, not outward.

### **At Heaven's Gate**

The entrance to the soul is inhabited by emotions, thoughts, feelings, dreams, hallucinations, and all things perceived. On the outside, these may be connected with various chemicals, mechanical structures, or electrical potentials. These parallels can be interesting and informative, but in what follows, I'm going to focus on the internal phenomena. There may be a drug or hormone associated with euphoria or fear or excitement, but I want to talk first about the feelings and emotions. Later, I will explain the connections to the external world.

We are aware of certain mental phenomena. Those of which we have awareness are circumscribed by the boundaries of our consciousness. Just as in the external world, there are things within of which we are not aware, of which we have no consciousness. However, they are there nonetheless.

Internal psychology explores these structures and events which we do not perceive directly. Sometimes we become aware of them by analysis: we conclude

by logic that they exist, based on those phenomena of which we are conscious. There are also mechanisms and procedures to expand our consciousness, so that we perceive formerly hidden things directly. It is well within the ordinary boundaries of science to talk of things which cannot be perceived directly. For instance, we speak of a photon impinging upon an electron, affecting the electron's energy level, but we cannot perceive the electron directly. We even speak of mathematical abstractions, such as the wave function of the electron, which is not usually thought of as having any kind of physical existence. At times we have instruments to help us visualize these things, such as microscopes which can photograph individual atoms or molecules. When such an instrument probes the unseeable, however, we don't really see the object. Instead, we see a pattern in something which can be seen. We don't see the object itself, we see a pattern in something else, but we take the pattern for the object. What we see is something similar in some way to the reality which cannot be directly visualized. We see something which can be related to the familiar, even when the object itself is unapproachable and strange.

(Remember, now, one of the things I said near the beginning of this book: there are times when precision, accuracy, and consistency are the enemies of understanding. This is one of those times. For instance, there are times when you might be able to see the unseeable, or hear the inaudible, or touch the intangible. I'll explain, and I'll even illustrate that, later. For now, simply take all of my descriptions as approximations, as metaphors, as figures of speech; and do not forget that such devices are appropriate and "true" only in context.)

To illustrate, consider a phenomenon which psychologists call an *archetype*. Roughly, an archetype is a kind of mould or pattern from which other things are fashioned. One kind of archetype is the *self*, which is how we view ourselves. My self may not be the same as your self. If I think of myself as weak,

by archetypal self is weak; if I think of myself as strong, then my archetypal self is strong. There are certain qualities which we dislike, and we collect them together into an archetype called our *shadow*. The point of this illustration is that we cannot easily view a list of disowned qualities, but we can, and often do, see our shadows as a real person. Our shadow is sometimes visualized as a person with all of the qualities we have disowned. For example, if we think it is bad or unacceptable to be weak, we may see our shadow as a weak person.

Thus, like an electron which we cannot really see but which we might visualize as, say, a fuzzy ball, archetypes which cannot really be seen might be visualized as people. Often, for example, we will see these archetypes as people in our dreams or in hallucinations. Sometimes, we encounter people who remind us of the archetypes, and we have strong, visceral reactions to those people because of the similarities, even when we are not conscious of why they affect us so strongly.

Not all archetypes, by the way, are seen as people. Some archetypes are events, some are stories, some are energies. Their common, basic property is that they are fundamental patterns, from which other events, stories, energies, or other phenomena are created. They epitomize certain essential qualities or traits.

### **The Journey Inward**

A common metaphor, which can also be considered an archetype, for spiritual progress is, the journey. This metaphorical journey is more than merely travel: the experience changes the traveller in ways usually expected to be positive and enlightening.

Sometimes a spatial or temporal journey echoes a spiritual journey, as when, on a conventional trip the traveller simultaneously travels into his own soul to assist his encounters with physical world phenomena. This is a staple of

certain literary and theatrical genres: consider all of the films and books talking about the adventures of an expedition, voyage, or even a military mission, wherein the protagonist also travels inside to learn various lessons as he or she goes on the adventure.

Not all journeys are spiritual journeys. One of the essential attributes of a spiritual journey is the approach toward the holy: the joining together of parts and pieces to progress toward the whole. This may manifest in several ways. One is the recognition of some outside phenomenon as being, in truth, a part of one's self. Another is the realization that the separation of two or more things, especially from one's self, is an illusion. A third common motif is an increased awareness of interconnections, most significantly with one's self. Yet another is gaining the knowledge associating outside phenomena with phenomena of the mind. The list continues, and varies also with the levels of integration of the traveller on various planes. It also varies from one cultural or biological background to another, as each tribe, nation, and species tends to start from a different place than any others. Of course, figures of speech, as figures of mind and figures of vision, translate from one milieu to others with varying degrees of difficulty and success.

This book consists of notes from my own journey. It is not done in chronological order. I merely decided to make a list of things I wanted to say, in short phrases which aren't even complete sentences. These were grouped somewhat into categories with related contents. Each one, two, or three phrases is evolving into a chapter. The order and sequence is the order and sequence in which I thought of them.

When a land is well explored and understood, you can find books or articles which are organized and planned, based on the experiences of others. For a geographical place, it might be organized around regions, or as a history,

or around social or economic lines. The earliest travellers, however, don't have textbooks; they have articles, letters, and other, often very personal, works by other explorers. I'm certain that others have gone before me, that there is very little new in this book, but I've never seen these things in one place before, so I thought it might be worthwhile to create something spanning a broad array of topics, a step up from an initial description, but still distant from what might be called an organized guide or textbook.

You are reading the results.

There is a lot of wisdom that isn't written in the world's well-known bodies of literature, scripture, research reports, and other artefacts. Instead of acting like members of various herds, we need to say, each of us, what he or she feels and thinks and believes, things which aren't the parroted echoes of dead doctrine passed from one zombie to the next. I am not reassured when a lot of people believe the same things: it is a sign of possible error, not a reasoned vote for the truth. It may sound paradoxical, but we'll all come closer together when we see and accept one another's differences. That will be an approach to the whole, the healthy, and the holy.

## **Maps Phantasmic**

There are many ways to map the phenomena of the mind. Keeping with the principle that no language can precisely convey the indescribable, none of the various ways are true. However, if we remember that they are all metaphors, then there is some truth in many of them.

It is with no little trepidation that I write this chapter, for I fear that it will be taken too literally and too completely. Suppose I were to describe something as less than six feet tall, with brown hair, having a mass of twenty stone, and a dark colour. Each of those by itself is misleading: many things are of that size, many things have brown hair, many things have such a mass, and many things are dark. Clearly, each separate description might lead one to many different conclusions. Even taken all together, it is not clear if I am describing a very obese, sun-tanned man or a very slender gorilla.

Moreover, there are local regions where the direction is opposite to the general tendency. For instance, while there is an axis of complexity tending toward the simple as we progress internally, the space is locally distorted sometimes by knots which make the inward direction seem more complicated. *Caveat nauta.*

So, each of the following sections is illustrative, but even when taken all together they barely begin to paint the complete picture. Even more important, none of this is to be taken literally. Put on your poetry hats.

### **Axes of Good and Evil**

We use latitude and longitude to describe a location on the earth, as astronomers use declination and right ascension. Coordinate systems such as these involve angles and axes. The same position can be described differently in

alternative coordinate systems, but the mechanisms will lead to the same point. Some systems are subsets of others. For instance, latitude and longitude omit the third coordinate of altitude, and a fourth coordinate of time.

One of the important measures of position within the mind is simplicity. Suppose I see a tree. That's pretty simple, just me and the tree, but if I add the seeing, then that's three things, and knowing about the seeing makes it four. Quickly it becomes obvious that simple things are elusive, because we, with our monkey minds, pile on layers of complexity when we think about them.

When physicists or mathematicians or philosophers or biologists strive to learn the most important things, they go for the simplest. They want to construct the entire universe from a few basic components, or find the broad general factors that will account for the details of complex, diverse systems. Simple is good.

Complex things are built from simple things, which means that complex things are farther from the fundamental. In theological language, God made the simple – the atomic particles, the nucleotides, the other basic components – and the rest is built from them. The simple things are closest to the creator. It might follow that the creator himself is so simple that he or she or it has no description, as I said earlier. God came before counting, before numbers, before light and dark, so he must be simple, indeed. God is simple beyond comprehension.

Yes, it is impossible to comprehend things which are too simple. You may have an elegant, sophisticated theory of grammar, but how can it analyze the chirp of a bird first hatching from its egg, or the welcome message of warm sunlight on a chilly morning? To get close to God, we must discard our imperfect tools. When God said, Let there be light, you can bet there weren't any verbs to conjugate or clauses to parse in that sentence.

A staple of some Christian tent revivals, especially as portrayed in popular culture, is the preacher, exclaiming, Throw down your crutches and walk! I say, throw down your thoughts and know!

Coming from the other direction, as we enter the gates of the soul and begin our journey inwards, towards God, we meet various phenomena, including creatures and beings. Many of these are the archetypes described in the previous chapter. The deeper we go, the more fundamental the archetype. We may meet someone who does this evil, or that bad, but as we go deeper we begin to meet the baddest and the most evil, until we can see unholiness itself as an object. Eventually we eat that unholiness, that evil, that badness; that is how we conquer it, we absorb it and make it part of ourselves. We take it all back to God, simplifying it as we go, until there is nothing left to simplify and we come to the end which is not an end, because ends are illusions, too.

We make one from two or three, simplifying. We combine, we absorb, we merge, we approach the one, then we go beyond the one and beyond the zero to where there are no numbers and there is no counting. Along the way, we, ourselves, vanish and cease to exist.

Sometimes it is difficult to tell good from evil, righteousness from bad. A good measure of direction is simplicity, but it must be applied without fear or ambition. When deciding whether to take one course of action or another, don't simply ask which choice is simplest. Ask, instead, about the assumptions you have made in modelling the scenario. When including the assumptions, which is the simplest model? For example, if you can see a team or a partnership instead of two enemies, then there are fewer protagonists, and that is simpler.

Simple does not mean easy. Simple can be the most difficult possible choice. When the only tool you have is a hammer, then you tend to think of everything as a nail. When your only models are complex, then you tend to

think of all phenomena as complex. One way to view the difficulty is, when we have invested a lot of effort or energy or other resources in something, we ascribe value to it (look how much that cost me!) and forget that, maybe, we overpaid, or we bought something flawed. So it is with theories and beliefs: the more we have invested in our beliefs, the more difficult to let go of them. We don't want to throw away all of that investment. We have a lot invested in complexity, our culture even values it, so it may seem foolish to discard it. However, why carry around a burden you don't need?

Unlearning is more difficult than learning, but we need to unlearn. We need to become as children, to have beginners' minds.

Seeking the truth is like riding an ox, in search of an ox. When we say we are seeking the truth, we are most probably seeking an explanation of the truth. We end up with another layer of explanation, to be unlearned. It takes us further from the truth itself. The trick is to unlearn, to forget the explanations. Then we arrive at our destination.

When you finish with this book, best to forget it.

## **Hall of Mirrors**

For most of us, our culture separates the internal from the external. We are taught (unless you grew up in a very few alternative cultures) that there is an external, objective reality, which somehow is a yardstick of the "truth". We are taught that, in order to "learn", we must acquire the knowledge of the external reality, and make our own, internal thoughts conform to the external world. If we think differently from what is outside, then we are deluded or confused or maybe ill, possibly even bad or criminal or a threat to society and to the world in general.

This model serves the established order very well. It is very evil. Volumes,

may, shelves of volumes and entire libraries, have been written to debunk the idea that the external world is the only objective reality. In this book, I will attempt to be content with only a minor rebuttal. I'm not sure that those volumes of counter-models have done much good, anyway.

Take it as an hypothesis, to be proven and verified later, that the distinction between the internal and external worlds is yet another illusion. At the very least, I will show you that, by thinking of the internal and external worlds as two views of the same reality, you will come to no harm and you will gain some significant knowledge and power.

You have already heard my condemnation of some – but not all – external psychologists. Notice that I did not find fault with them for exploring the external world. In fact, I'm rather fond of science. I'm fond of a lot of external things, material goods, and a few external people who are dear to me. What I dislike is the attitude that the internal world isn't important, as important as the external one. The internal world is as real as the external world, which is to say, they're both illusions.

Closely related to the distinction between internal and external is the definition of the self. We cannot say "internal", without knowing "internal to what". Where do I end, and you begin? What are my boundaries? How is it decided whether a phenomenon is inside or outside? Often, we cannot tell. There is no bright line boundary between me and the rest of so-called reality, whether in the physical world or otherwise. When does a molecule leaving my body cease to be a part of me? When is a thought mine, and no longer an echo of a thought or perception from the outside? There are no definitive answers to these questions, because there is no separate "me" or "you". We are parts of a larger system, and cannot be delineated as strictly separable components. The idea of a self or identity is an approximation, useful at times, but not absolute.

Even with a strong concept the boundary between self and other, many have dreams that appear as real and the outside, and can experience times where the outside seems unreal. The frequency of such occurrences differs among different people, and also among different cultures. In some populations, ghosts and spirits are routinely considered real, whereas the same manifestations are considered hallucinations or delusions among other populations.

Moreover, the definition of what is a person varies over time. What you consider inside or outside changes over the years, and even from moment to moment.

### **Centre of Focus**

There are correspondences among internal and external phenomena. These relationships are vague and mutable. Roughly, for each external phenomenon, there is an internal one. The events of the outside are duplicated inside, but the details are transformed and distorted. An illustration of this is given by dreams, which often correspond to outside events. In dreams, we commonly experience, and even expect, distortion. A personality in a dream may, for instance, correspond to a group of people in the external world, and a person outside may have no name or face in the dream. A form in one world may be a feeling in another, and an inanimate object in one realm may take human form in the other.

It may be helpful to diagram these correspondences. In such a diagram, you are in the middle. A line from the internal phenomenon runs through you to the external phenomenon. A relationship between two internal entities corresponds to a relationship between external ones, and the relationships themselves are yet other phenomena which you perceive. You perceive the relationships, just as you perceive the related entities. If you connect the

relationships, then, that line, also, passes through you.

You act in a way similar to that of a mirror, reflecting the internal to the external, and *vice versa*, but you modify and distort the image. Because of the modification and distortion, the internal is not a direct copy of the external. The nature of these modifications and distortions will be discussed later, when the internal structure of the mind is considered in greater detail.

### **Solid Versus Ethereal**

From the outside, the inner world appears ethereal, ephemeral, and unreal. From the inside, the outside world appears solid, unchanging, and dead.

Dead? Yes, dead, because it does not change, because the outer world consists of artefacts of past processes and events. Creation, in the conventional sense, flows from inner to outer. We have ideas, then we realize them. The thought is father to the tangible result. The living system is internal, the outside world is created as a by-product. Creation is a dynamic act. The result is static.

Of course, all phenomena, and noumena, are ephemeral and impermanent. The difference between the inner and outer is a matter of degree. Time itself is an illusion, an artefact, of perception.

Perversely, perhaps, this leads to a contradiction to the above: while an idea is outside of time, and seemingly immortal – unless you stand back some more and see the illusion – the related artefact is physical, and subject to decay. The concept of of an iron gate is independent of the passage of time, or so it seems, whereas a tangible iron gate will eventually rust away. The paradox is somewhat resolved when we remember that the intangible idea is perceived as less real than the gate itself: we have already discounted its reality.

This seeming unreality of the inner world, especially the deep inner world, is a factor in our ignorance of its existence. It simply doesn't seem real.

We can see a fight, we can touch a flesh wound, we can feel physical pain. Going inward a little, we can perceive the feelings which give rise to an attack creating the wound. Going inward even more, however, things seem vague and shadowy, and we conclude that these entities running around in our subconscious minds are merely figments of our imaginations, of little consequence. We decide that only the physical world is real, because the inner world is too subtle to perceive.

Another way to characterize the axis is, gross at one end, subtle at the other.

### **Tip of the Iceberg**

The inner world is vast, compared to the outer world. Although there are billions and billions of galaxies in the outer world, each with unimaginable numbers of stars and planets, the inner world is larger.

If there is a correspondence between inner phenomena and outer phenomena, how can this be? Shouldn't the two worlds have the same complexity?

There are several reasons why this is true.

One reason is that the outer world is a simplified version of the inner one. This is because the outer world is focused, and the scope of our vision is narrowed when we perceive it. We see an outer phenomenon to the exclusion of some other outer phenomenon. When we look at one zebra from the herd, we are excluding the other zebras. We are also excluding the non-zebras: the grass, the sky, the other animals in the scene. We have simplified by focusing.

In the outer world, as in the inner world, people wear masks. The word *person* originally mean "mask", as the kind of mask worn by an actor in a theatre to indicate the role he was playing. In some forms of theatre, the mask, not

costume or other designation, is the way to tell the players apart. Our *personality* is the mask we wear when facing the audience of others, to show the role we are playing in the stage of real life. In the outside world, there is the mask, the personality. On the inside, however, is the complexity of the real organism behind the mask. Moreover, people almost never have a single personality. We are not individuals: each of us is a group, a crowd, a complex of entities, assuming different roles under different circumstances.

The other reason that the internal world is more complex than the external one, is that not all thoughts are brought through to realization or to fruition. Maybe somewhere in there, God thought about making some birds with only one wing each, or with one wing longer than the other, then he rejected the idea. Even though they might fly only in circles, they might be useful in some way, but it just wasn't worth the effort, or there would be disadvantages. In our own mind, we consider possibilities which we eventually reject. So in our own minds, and in God's, there are ideas and thoughts which never made it to the physical world.

### **Ad Centrum**

A model commonly used by some religious philosophies to describe the universe might be called, "God-at-the-centre". A converse but almost equivalent model – except for the metaphor – might be called "God at the edge".

In the God-at-the-centre model, God is at the centre of the universe, and the rest of creation branches out from God. You might simplistically think in terms of God created atoms, atoms created molecules, and everything is created from molecules. Thus there is a chain of creation, beginning with God, extending to all things.

The God-at-the-edge model is more anthropocentric or geocentric. God is

seen as upward, beyond heaven, in every direction. Creation flows downward to us, or maybe to all things. The centre is somewhat more complex in this model, given that we are, each and every one, at the centre.

Both of these models are metaphors, approximations used to illustrate a general principle which is beyond ordinary physical experience. To show how they are not models of physical reality, think of a hologram, a kind of three-dimensional photograph. The reflective stacked-image feature called a hologram and used on many credit cards, banknotes, and other items isn't a true hologram; it is a pseudo-hologram, a simulation. A true hologram appears to be speckled, and the image isn't visible in ordinary light. When lit in certain ways, however, with a light source duplicating features of the original illumination used to make the photograph, the original image becomes visible, in three dimensions.

One remarkable feature of a holographic image is that, when the speckled film is cut in half, each half contains the entire image. You can cut one of the halves half into quarters, and each quarter will contain the entire image. The divisions don't need to be exact halves: any fraction of the film will contain the entire three-dimensional image. However, as the film is divided, the quality of the image in each fragment is degraded proportionally.

Simply because it's a little easier to use for my purposes, consider here the God-at-the-center model. Now add a few extra steps...

Just as the entire image of a hologram is found in each piece of the film, the centre of the universe is at every point of the universe.

God is at the centre of the universe, so each of us contains a complete image of God.

Finally, on our internal-external mind axis, God is at the deepest interior of our minds, while physical reality is beyond our consciousness, at the opposite

end from God, toward the exterior. Of course, we still perceive the interior and exterior, although our consciousness is at the edge between the two.

Of course, this is an amalgam of different models, a hodge-podge of metaphors. It isn't right, it's only to point you in the right direction, a way of giving you a way of thinking. It isn't literally true. As with all analogies, it has limited applicability.

It doesn't even mean that contradictory models are wrong.

To know the universe at it is, you must change. You, your mind, must be transformed, expanded, and, eventually, annihilated.

## **Alternative Maps**

There are other models, with other maps and coordinate systems. Some of them can be coerced or massaged into something approximating mutual equivalence. For instance, the God-at-the-centre model is almost a simple inversion of the God-at-the-edge model. Others make different assumptions, and aren't really compatible.

The following are gross simplifications, rather like explaining differential equations in a sound bite. Don't take them as too accurate or precise, they are only meant to give an idea of alternatives.

Plato divided the mind or soul into three parts: one part had the drives needed to stay alive, another was a rational part, and the third housed the "higher" instincts such as honour and victory. Plato taught that there ought to exist a proper balance among the three components.

Freud's model also had three parts. One was the conscious part, what we think of as ourselves, the "ego". Ego is Latin for "I". Above the ego, he saw the super-ego, "over me", which was a kind of moral mind, and below, he saw the id. "Id" is Latin for "it", is a kind of base, pleasure seeking mind. Thus Freud

envisioned the mind as in a tension between base impulses and moral ones.

The Platonic and Freudian model are too rigid to play with my model.

In the Hindu model, there are four parts of the mind (*antahkaran*, or “inner cause”). The ego (*ahamkāra*) identifies with the body. There is also an intellect (*buddhi*), and a third part (*manas*) which embodies the will. The fourth part (*citta*) is memory and forgetting. To map the Hindu model to the God-at-the centre model requires a kind of transition into a different dimension. The Hindu model is instructive, but more difficult to grasp for most of us until you get the hang of it.

The most common Buddhist model is subtly different, because it mingles functions with forms. The model is highly dynamic, acknowledging the transient, changing, and impermanent nature of phenomenal existence. It has five components, called aggregates (*skandhas*). Three are the mental formations of feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saṃjñā*), and formations (*saṅkhāra*). This third item, formations, is more or less equivalent to the part of the mind which sees the images in the clouds: it creates forms from nothingness. Form, or that which can be sensed (*rūpa*), as well as these mental formations give rise to consciousness (*viññāna*), but consciousness, in turn, alters the mental formations in a kind of feedback loop. Everything in the system depends on something else; this is called *inter-dependant arising*. All causes are effects, and all effects are causes. Form, or that which can be sensed, is considered external to the model, somewhat *a priori*.

Mapping the Buddhist model to the God-at-the-centre model requires a re-orientation, similar to what might happen if you were to think of God as a verb rather than as a noun. God *is* a verb, didn't you know? Such a transition is like a transformation into a higher dimension. There is, however, the missing link, connecting form as an external to the creative mind; this link will be discussed

in a later chapter. For now, note that form is itself usually also considered conditioned, and the forms themselves are interdependent. There are some logical knots here which must be untied.

Although many Buddhists would say that the Hindus are wrong, and vice versa, it's more a case of things looking different from different perspectives. They're both right, each highlighting some aspects, but neither is a completely faithful representation of reality. Nor is the God-at-the-centre completely faithful, either. They're all just figures of speech.

There are also several models which describe the transition from internal to external; that is, they explain how is the external world mapped from, or created from, the internal world.

One such model is prominent in yoga and in Vedanta. It describes the ultimate self as being wrapped in various sheaths (*kośas*). These are the layers that separate the physical body from the “true”, internal self. Removing the sheaths or layers corresponds to higher levels of awareness. One of the most common versions of the model has five such sheaths. The innermost is the bliss sheath (*anandamaya kośa*), which corresponds to the soul, or reflects the bliss which constitutes the absolute; it is also called the causal body. The second layer is the sheath of the intellect (*vijnanamaya kośa*); unlike the bliss sheath, it is transient and changing; it is roughly equivalent to the collective unconscious. The third layer is the mind sheath (*manomaya kośa*), which is similar to the personal unconscious. The fourth layer is the vital sheath (*pranamaya kośa*), which is the essence or energy of physical life. The fifth or outermost layer is the physical sheath (*annamaya kośa*), which is the physical body. The bodies or layers below the outermost sheath are sometimes called subtle bodies.

There are other models in addition to those above.

Each model has its uses and limitations. I will move among them in this

book as my own composite model is explained.

## Convergence

### Common Ground

The archetypes which inhabit the interiors of our minds, along with other inhabitants, are not mere passive models. From a practical point of view, they can often but not always be viewed and treated as persons, with habits, memories, wills, likes, and dislikes, and the other characteristics of ordinary people. They simply don't have a physical existence, usually, but are realized physically as components of more complex phenomena.

Many people, depending especially on their acculturation and experience, do not see these internal beings except in dreams, and many of these see them only rarely. However, they exist in everyone, and can be manifest using a variety of techniques ranging from drugs to therapy to breathing exercises to mediation and more.

In our first model, God is at the infinite extreme interior of the mind. As we said, the kingdom of God is within us. However, we all share the same God. We all meet in the middle.

Along the way, as we proceed toward the interior, we share more and more of our minds. The deeper we go, the more we have in common with others. These shared phenomena inhabit what is loosely called our collective unconscious. It is called "unconscious" because we are not normally aware of it, and cannot usually perceive it directly. However, as explained above, there are techniques to show it to us. As I explore my own mind, I'm exploring yours as well, and *vice versa*.

That is not to say that my subconscious is the same as yours. Rather, when each of us goes deep enough, then we reach some shared territory. There

is no bright-line boundary, and the border is fuzzy and changing.

This is the basis for many metaphysical phenomena, such as extrasensory perception (ESP), clairvoyance, clairaudience, and telepathy. We can read minds because the other minds have shared areas with our own. It is also the reason that these are almost impossible to prove using scientific, external techniques: the mechanisms bypass or short-circuit the physical, to achieve direct interaction within the non-physical world of the mind's interior.

This is also the basis for the ability of some to remember previous lives, that is, the reason that re-incarnation or metempsychosis work. When you re-incarnate, you share a higher proportion of your mind with your previous incarnation, so you have common memories and other attributes. Birth and death are merely changes of external phenomena which correlate to internal cycles.

The extent of the commonality of one mind with another correlates with genetics, environment, and, generally, with the distance of one entity or being from another. Remember: correlation is not causality. You share parts of your mind with other people, and as you go more deeply, with other non-human beings such as animals and beings from other planets and galaxies.

The inhabitants of your subconscious or unconscious mind are every bit as real as the physical beings on the exterior. In fact, the deepest beings are the most real. Remember, however, that all is ephemeral and changing. An archetype may last for millions of years, but it, too, has a lifetime, just as physical humans do. The deeper archetypes tend to live longer.

When we see these internal beings, we do not need physical sight, yet they appear real to us. Blind people, without working physical eyes, can see the internal world. Although some appear human, others appear only partly human, or similar to human. Some are seen as angels, or daemons, or monsters, or gods.

The way we see them depends, again, on our background. Going back to the early chapters, if you've never heard of a capybara, you're not likely to see one in the clouds. Similarly, if you've never heard of a rakshasa, you're not likely to identify an internal being as a rakshasa: you're more likely to call it something you've been trained to recognize. One man's or woman's troll is another man's or woman's space alien.

## **Identity**

If all of us share the collective unconscious, then where do you stop and I begin?

The idea that you and I are distinct is too simplistic. It is a convenient assumption, but has no absolute basis in fact. It works for some purposes, but will fail when we explore the interior deeply. As with other phenomena, the concepts of "you" and "I" are mutable and temporary. Moreover, useful definitions do not always make a bright-line distinction between self and other. Sometimes, for example, an atomic thing might belong mostly to me, but partly to someone else. Other things are composites, as the collective unconscious. The entity to which a component belongs is sometimes indeterminate.

The very concept of identity is problematic at times. If every helium-4 atom is alike, then what does it mean to identify a specific helium-4 atom except in the context of some interaction with other atoms? In other words, an identity is not something which necessarily follows, independent of the rest of the universe. Identity may be contextually sensitive.

One way to label things is by their function. For example, the concept of forms (*rūpa*) in Buddhist psychology is based on their function: a form is that which can be sensed, irrespective of its composition. Hence, forms may be physical, or metaphysical. The model drifts toward a meta-model.

Another problem with the concept of identity is its transitory nature. When a pebble is dropped into a pond, ripples spread outward from the point of impact. The ripples are transitory. A ripple is not made of the water, it has no fixed components. It is a phenomenon. In the same way, the mind or soul is a phenomenon. The ripple is an orderly-appearing cousin to the ocelot in the clouds. It is a compound illusion, based on other illusions such as the illusion of the passage of time, and the illusion of space.

Your mind, my mind, and all such minds are complex, compound illusions. They can be sensed and perceived by other such illusions which share some of the same illusory components. We can communicate with one another because we have a common background, with common word understandings when the communication is verbal. Dualistic consciousness is based on communication, on an exchange of symbols found in the clouds. There is no one-way communication, as transmitter and receiver are components of a larger system.

The fundamental characteristic of dualistic consciousness is that there are at least two objects involved, hence it is “dualistic”. When you are conscious, you are conscious of *something*. A related concept is that, in some way, the object of your consciousness is conscious of you, as well. Together, the conscious objects form a system.

Whales can paint pictures in sound for one another. A whale hears a three-dimensional or four-dimensional object, rather than seeing it optically. By reproducing aspects of the sounds it hears, it conveys the acoustic image to another whale. We do not share the same acoustic and mental apparatus with whales, so we must use machines to translate whale images to forms we can understand. When we communicate with whales, the larger system incorporates the machinery of translation.

Because consciousness is based on communication, which in turn requires sensory phenomena, it makes sense to extend the concept of consciousness to what we might think of as inert objects. When a rock receives a chemical signal from a lichen, for example, it reacts and is changed thereby. The change is the rock's memory.

The point here is not to convey the idea that rocks have feelings and emotions. We are not anthropomorphising rocks. Rather, the point is to expand the concepts of consciousness and communication. If you want to apply them to rocks, go ahead, but such uses are secondary. I want you to understand this model of consciousness, that even your mind and soul are dependent on interaction with other elements of the system, that all is highly dynamic, and that you and I do not exist independently of the rest of the universe.

### **Origin of Reciprocity**

Confucians call it the principle of reciprocity. In the West, it is often called the Golden Rule. It has different formulations. Jesus of Nazareth expressed it as, "Love your neighbour as yourself".

Reciprocity has been almost universally advocated by teachers from major and minor traditions. It is part of Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and almost every other religion or philosophy you can think of.

It's a law of nature, along with gravity, the laws of thermodynamics, relativity, and so on. Of course, it isn't always so simple to apply. It has its twists and peculiarities. Just as you can spend years learning about entropy, the study of reciprocity also can take years. However, it is basic and fundamental.

The foundation is this: Since you and your neighbour have a common, collective, unconscious, what you do to your neighbour, you also do to yourself.

If you injure your neighbour, then you injure yourself. If you help your neighbour, then you help yourself. There may be some delays and transformations, but it is basic good sense.

There are two reasons to follow the principle of reciprocity, the golden rule, or whatever you want to call it. The first is basic selfishness, the desire to make things better for yourself. The second is a little more indirect, but equally important: when you think in these terms, then you expand your own consciousness.

I've spoken before of expansion of consciousness, but haven't much developed the topic. For now, the motivation is, when your consciousness expands, then you approach God. Put into starker, atheistic terms, you acquire the powers and traits traditionally and usually ascribed to gods, whether you actually believe in such an entity or not.

At the point of the collective unconscious inward, and in the reflection of those domains to the external world, your consciousness overlaps with the consciousness of others. It will be discussed more later, but going inward, you move into what is sometimes called the god realm. The denizens of the god realm are those beings which are commonly called gods. When your consciousness moves into this realm, you move into this realm. In other words, you become a god.

There is a slight catch to this: as your consciousness expands and overlaps the consciousness of others, you acquire all of their memories, perceptions, thoughts, and other components. You absorb them into yourself. You might say that you assemble your greater consciousness from the components of other consciousnesses; you might also say that you eat the other consciousnesses, and become what you eat. Eventually, you will feel the joy and pain of others, which is the basis for the selfish reason to observe the principle of reciprocity. If you

cause someone else to be happy, you will eventually, as you evolve, know that happiness yourself. If you cause someone else pain, then you will eventually know his or her pain. The only way out is to forego godhood, to remain forever limited.

The concept of reward and punishment, heaven and hell, as rewards for good behaviour, derive from this aspect of your evolution. Eventually you will reap what you sow, or you will be left behind. You will come to know the consequences of your actions for others, as your mind expands to include other minds. This is not from the judgement of some god: it is as much a law of nature as are the laws of gravity and thermodynamics.

The concept of *karma* is somewhat related to this, but is not exactly the same. Going back to the highly dynamic Buddhist model of the mind, karma is akin to the energy which keeps the system going. Looking at it another way, karma is the energy of the ripple on the pond. It holds up and preserves the illusion, which makes transitory phenomena appear permanent. Karma is the force which preserves the memories and dynamics of the illusory system. It is the fuel which makes the mechanism go. Without karma, it all disappears.

The happiness and misery which you and others experience, which you will ultimately know as you evolve, is driven by karma. Karma is neutral, there is no good karma or bad karma. Just as light is neither good nor bad, but can be used to paint good or bad pictures, karma can carry both good and bad, desirable and repulsive. Your reward is painted with karma just as light paints a picture. That is why karma is often conflated with reward and punishment, although karma is merely the vehicle to bring them to you.

## Activity and Obligation

### Greatest Commandment

Jesus of Nazareth was asked, Which commandment from God was the greatest? His answer was interesting: the greatest commandment was to love God, but he noted that it was like another commandment, “Love your neighbour”. Then he proceeded to give an example, commonly known as the parable of the Good Samaritan.

That two commandments are alike, does not *ipso facto* mean that they are the same commandment. It doesn't even mean, on the surface, that the two commandments have the same importance. However, the similarities are profound. They go beyond their common injunction to love, either God or another.

As was noted above, the objects of the required love are both within your expanded mind, and to properly obey the commandment requires expansion of your consciousness, for you cannot love that which you do not understand: loving someone requires making their feelings and needs, to some extent, co-extensive with your own. The kingdom of heaven is within you, and within everyone else, so we all contain a common core. If I love my own heaven, I must love yours. Still more on all of that, later.

The example of the Good Samaritan sheds more light on the illustration.

### Parable of the Good Samaritan

Strictly speaking, at least according to the literal reading of the text as we know it, the parable was not given as an illustration of the commandment to love one's neighbour, but rather as an answer to the question, Who is your

neighbour? We can assume, however, that, in context, it was an illustration of the commandment itself, and not merely an offhand functional definition of the word, “neighbour”.

The reader is referred elsewhere for details, but the story is basically this: A man has been beaten and robbed, and is lying on the road. Two Jews, one a priest and the other a Levite, come by in succession, and avoid the man. Then a Samaritan happens by. The Samaritan goes to lengths to see to it that the beaten man has care. Jesus declares, in a roundabout but clear way, that the Samaritan – not the Jews – was the neighbour.

It is truly amazing how much has been read over the years into this narrative. Various writers claim that this or that actor – the Samaritan, the robbers, the beaten man, the two Jews – are symbolic of this or that person, ranging from Jesus to Satan to various personified actions. The parable has been described as highly metaphorical, allegorical, and rife with deep hidden meaning. The interpretations bring in Adam and Eve, the Second Coming, and a lot of other peripheral noise. They invoke details of Jewish ritual law, and various background information. They are almost all rubbish. The story is, in fact, straightforward, and the obvious meaning is much more probable than the various interpretations.

Some context is in order. Jesus’s audience is likely Jewish. Jesus himself was Jewish. Priests and Levites have some standing within the Jewish hierarchy, and might be considered members of a kind of upper class or authoritative class. The Samaritans and the Jews didn’t get along, and as groups disliked and disparaged and often hated each other.

The way the story would have come across to the audience, it would have been like a white man telling a white audience in a racist and *de facto* segregated country that the only person who did right and helped the beaten

man, who was presumably also white, was a black man. The upper class whites ignored the problem. The audience would have been at least a little shocked or startled by this story and its message.

The simple interpretation is this: In following the most important commandment, action is required; someone who takes no action violates the commandment. The commandment requires us to love even those who we might consider to be despicable, low, or hated.

That's it. It's simple. It has nothing to do, directly, anyway, with the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the Second Coming of Christ, or with any of the remainder of that. It's just a way of saying: The most important commandment is to take action to care for God and everyone, friend or enemy. Don't sit on your arse and do nothing.

Perhaps the most striking omission from the various interpretations of this parable is that almost no one emphasizes distinction between the three behaviours described in the story: doing harm (the robbers), doing nothing (the priest and Levite), and doing good (the Samaritan).

This chapter will take up the first part of the lesson, that the commandment enjoins us to take action. The rest, regarding what is love and who is your neighbour, will be covered elsewhere in this book.

## **Karma and Action**

As explained before, *karma* means “action”. Karma is to be avoided, because it binds us to the illusion. This would seem to be a contradiction to what Jesus said, to take action, rather than to be passive.

If the beaten man in the road is an illusion, then why bother to help him?

Karma, though to be avoided, is still, itself, part of the illusion. It is, as Gautama explained, a “figure of speech”, a rhetorical and logical device or

fiction used as a temporary means to set us to think in the correct direction. As any phenomenon is symbolic, so is karma. Metaphors, rules, and other illustrations based upon symbols are imperfect. Analogies can be taken too far, or too literally.

Suppose you were to fall into a pool of moving water. You might exert yourself, swimming and swimming to stay afloat. Eventually you decide that you must come ashore, to end the exertion. To end it, you must swim to shore. You must exert yourself to end the exertion. Thus it is with karma: sometimes you might be adjacent to the shore, and little is required to exit the water, while at other times you must swim to arrive at the shore. Sometimes you can simply cease generation of karma, at other times you must generate some to avoid creating an even greater amount.

By actively helping your neighbour, you help yourself to see through the illusion that your neighbour is not a part of you. You trade the effort of maintaining the separation for the effort of integration, on the whole coming out ahead.

When you do nothing to help others, you are passively creating karma. An enormous effort is required to maintain the illusion. A great deal of energy is trapped in the matter that you create. You may be accustomed to the effort, even oblivious to it. Nevertheless, when you fail to see others as part of you, the very failure to see is karmically expensive.

It can be as if you are riding inside some moving vehicle, without a view to the outside. Everything in the vehicle is motionless relative to you, because you, the other occupants, the seats, the bulkheads, the floor and ceiling and the air you breath, are all moving together. There is, indeed, evidence that motion exists, for you may feel jostling and shaking and hear rumbling or other noises. But, when you are closed in, you do not necessarily know that the entire vehicle

and its contents, including you, are moving. Thus it is with the illusion: you only see it when you, as the saying goes, look outside the box.

When you help another, you begin to tear down the wall between you and that person, just as you begin to tear down the wall of the vehicle to gain a view of the outside.

Originally, the word *passion* meant, “pain”. Someone who was “passionate” was in pain because he or she was at the mercy of outside forces, and not in control. As with other words, the meaning over time has changed, and sometimes now “passionate” is used to describe someone who harbours those forces, but is not always perceived as being gripped and controlled, and even tortured, by them. The original meaning explains the related word, *passive*: someone who is passive is not in control, and does not act against the forces from without.

A subtly different word is *enthusiasm*. That word derives from the Greek, *entheos*, which means “possessed by [a] god”. (The *theos* part means “god”, in the same way that theology is the study of God.) An alternative word, from Latin, is *inspiration*, the quality of being filled with [the] spirit. With enthusiasm, there is not the implication of pain, which comes with passion. A person who is enthusiastic acts from a different level, from one who is passionate.

There is an effective balance point between passivity and activity. Passivity leads to pain, activity leads to enthrallment to the illusion, which also leads to pain. Carlos Castaneda asked Don Juan, Which path do I choose? The answer: The path without fear or ambition. In other words, do not fear the world, and do not seek power. Rather, seek to rise above the world, and act accordingly.

## **Destinations: Nowhere**

### **Get Your Bearings**

Most major traditions teach about some sort of after-life, and many teach about various kinds of before-lives and inter-lives as well. Teachings use the lure of heavens and the horrors of hells to warn their adherents to behave properly. In between and among are various kinds of purgatories, bardos, and realms of existence near and far, depending on the specific religion and on the qualities of one's imagination and inventiveness.

The best that can be said of "Heaven", "Hell", and their ilk is that they are relative terms. Heaven and Hell are part of the larger scheme of here and now, the geography of the universe which we inhabit. We're already in Heaven, in someone's heaven, and we're already in Hell, in someone's hell. There are better and worse spots within the current universe, which we might consider to be Heaven or Hell, but they differ in their attractiveness, or in their repulsiveness, not by being in some entirely different universe. Being phenomena, they have the same transitory nature, mutability, and unsatisfying qualities which all phenomena possess.

The essential difference between Heaven and Hell is, we want the one and want to avoid the other. In this simple statement of contrast is a clue to a deeper truth: both conditions involve want, desire, dissatisfaction. In this way, both Heaven and Hell are fundamentally alike. The dissatisfaction is precisely an example of the third mark of phenomenal existence.

It matters not that when you have reached the goal – either Heaven or Hell – the wanting continues. Obviously, in Hell, you will want to leave. Less obviously, in Heaven, you will want to remain, and thus will continue to suffer

from the dissatisfaction. Thus Hell and Heaven are both compartments in this common realm, the phenomenal realm, characterized by the three marks: ephemerality, mutability, and unsatisfactoriness.

If neither Heaven nor Hell are to be desired, then why did Jesus and Mohammed tempt us with the former? As Gautama said, in the *prajnaparamita*, these things do not exist; he only used them as figures of speech to cause us to think and, thereby, to teach us.

In order for us to be truly free, we must also be free of want and desire. That does not mean that we are to give up all life and feelings, nor does it mean that we ought to want the calmness of rocks and stones. Rather, true freedom would consist of choosing, effortlessly, from among our options.

Suppose, for example, that we enjoy parties, and that every day a limousine arrives to carry us to a different party. Life is good, is it not? But would you not, instead, be the one selecting which party is each day's destination? Even better, once you have been to many, many parties, you no longer have a desire to go to any more: you can take them or leave them. This is just as a child does, when he or she matures and loses interest in the pursuits of children. They are always available, of course: as an adult, it is sometimes fun to play the games of children. When you have everything, though, you eventually want nothing. If this happens with wisdom and without boredom, without losing the vigour of youth while still acquiring the knowledge of adulthood, then it is analogous to a state beyond desire. When such a state permeates your existence, so that you no longer desire even sleep or food, then you are going in the basic direction: you are departing both Heaven and Hell for places even better, but which cannot really be compared to this reality. Even the idea of "better" is illusory.

You might, of course, try an approach such as this: go to a lot of parties

until, you expect, that you will no longer want them. However, this doesn't often work very well. In the process of indulging your desires, you will create consequences that will expand your problems even more, tying you that much more strongly to the phenomenal world.

The solution lies, first and most importantly, in an awareness of the illusion. The truth, you see, will indeed set you free, because your mind, almost as if on autopilot, will make the right decisions. Obviously, we cannot make the right decisions, except perhaps on occasion by accident, without understanding the choices. So the real question is, How do we know the truth?

### **Sin of Ignorance**

A truly stupid idea has taken hold in some quarters, that good intentions are enough to save us, to get us to some kind of heaven. All we have to do, some think, is to be "good" people, and God will judge us as worthy, or, if we're atheists, then the Universe will reward us for our good aims and directions, maybe by some kind of statistical average of the consequences of our actions. God, or the mechanism of the Universe, will "forgive" us somehow, because we meant well.

It doesn't work that way.

In fact, the idea is fairly ridiculous when you think about it. A mechanic requires not only good intentions, but also skill in what he or she does. So, also, do carpenters, bakers, parents, and just about every other kind of actor on the world stage. Why would life as a whole be any different? God didn't, one day, suddenly declare, You don't need to know what you're doing.

Even outside humanity, skill is needed. A predator animal will not survive by being cute and cuddly: he or she must hunt and kill game for food. Trees must know how to extract nutrients from the soil. Bacteria must know how to

convert food substances into ones useful for their metabolism. Animals which are prey must know how to evade the predators which seek them. Intentions count for little: what matters is getting the job done.

Of course, the intentions will help set the direction. If it is your intention to understand the illusion, then you will make decisions which will lead you in that direction. In this way, intentions are like maps or goals: they will lead you to wherever you go. However, they will not, by themselves, get you there. A map, though perhaps useful, is not by itself, sufficient for travel.

Other artefacts of intentions are often not recognized as such. An agreement, for example, expresses an intention. The agreement is not its own execution. I may agree to exchange my cow for your horse, but the agreement itself is not the exchange. We give weight to an agreement, but it is only a signal, and a fraudulent agreement is a false signal.

In matters of government, laws are merely agreements. It is not the law which has effect, but rather the enforcement – or disregard – of it which has effect. Even fundamental documents are merely signs. A right of free speech or to a jury trial, written into a constitution or statute, is merely a signal that an agreement was made, and that agreement may have been founded on misunderstanding or perfidy. A regulation, law, or constitution gives you no more rights than a blueprint gives you a house. Your so-called rights, if any, do not come from a document, they come from action, perhaps but not necessarily in accord with some words previously spoken or penned.

Just as an agreement by our ancestors is not to be taken as binding on us, although its consequences might affect us, a law by our ancestors has no value unless it is renewed by us through our actions. Our laws do not come from those dead, they come from the living, and if the words of the dead are taken for granted then they have no value for us or to us.

When we do not keep our agreements, then we are said to lack honesty and integrity. The matter is more complex than this, but the same principle applies to our intentions. If we claim, even privately to ourselves, an intention of some kind, and do not keep that intention, we lack some measure of integrity.

The word, “integrity”, is derived from Latin, and carries the concept of being whole, complete, or untouched. Thus, the idea of integrity is related to the idea of wholeness, healing, and holiness. “Integrity” and “holiness” derive from the same fundamental principle. As discussed earlier, the ultimate principle is non-dual, with neither subject nor object, and the closer we get to being holy, or whole, the more integrity we have.

That which does not have integrity is dis-integrated, fractured, or broken. Of course, this is a matter of degree: unless you go to absurd lengths with definitions, it is possible to have more or less integrity, or to be more or less broken. (Ultimately, there is no integrity. The ultimate is beyond integrity.)

When something is broken, not whole, then the parts act separately. With multiple parts, one part may not agree with another, one part may not have knowledge of the other parts, or one part may even deceive another part. This is the model for failing to keep agreements, or for failing to act according to intentions. It can be seen as being less than whole, less than holy.

There are two very important points to make at this juncture: the level of wholeness is entirely a function of the mind, and repair of breakage must take place by repairing the mind.

To illustrate the first point, consider the physical body of an animal. There are cells within the body, but many of them die every day. This process of programmed cell death is called *apoptosis*, and it results in a longer life for the whole body. For example, in the embryo, the hands are webbed, with the fingers connected. Only because of apoptosis, the cells which constitute the webbing

die, the fingers become distinct, and the organism after birth has the functionality needed to survive. As another illustration, large numbers of blood cells die each day, the pieces to be eaten by other blood cells, ultimately allowing toxins and waste to be removed from the body.

We do not think of our body, at least when not diseased, as being at war with itself. We do not consider cells eating their own brethren and sisters to be cannibals. In fact, we normally don't think at all of the body as consisting of separate cells. The idea of wholeness, as with a whole body, is in the mind, a matter of perspective, which comes from whence the mind chooses to view the situation.

To illustrate the second point, suppose we decide to repair a breakage by gluing the pieces together: the result now has a new component, the glue, which only draws attention to the fracture. A problem which arises in the mind cannot be solved by repairing the consequences. A problem which arises in the mind can only be repaired by going to the root cause, which is the wholeness, or brokenness, of the mind itself.

How we heal a fractured, dis-integrated mind, and make it whole and holy, will be discussed in later chapters. The most important point, however, has already been made: it is a matter of consciousness. The larger, more expansive the mind, the less is seen as broken. We need to expand our consciousnesses, but not in the trivial sense of adding more pieces. If we only add more pieces, then we get more brokenness. Healing the mind requires that things be seen as one. Eventually, the mind itself is also seen as part of the one, and there is nothing else. This is the annihilation of the mind, the attainment of holiness.

I will close this section by providing another word story that may act as a mnemonic for this second point. In the selling of pottery, it was once common to conceal cracks and other imperfections in the clay by covering them with wax.

An honest seller would not do this. From this we get the word, *sincere*, which comes from Latin, and means, “without wax”.

## **Relative Wrong**

Because we lack integrity, it is almost inevitable that we will commit wrongs and errors on the path to wholeness. We simply cannot know what we need to know, in order to proceed optimally. At times we cannot properly choose from among paths, at times we are not even aware that certain paths exist.

There are useful guidelines, such as reciprocity (called in Christian culture, “the golden rule”), Occam’s razor, and others. Some are less fundamental than others, especially collections of precepts such as the Decalogue (“ten commandments”), the Five Precepts, the Five Pillars, Four Agreements, and similar collections. The reason they are less fundamental, is that they can be derived from smaller collections of more general principles. For example, the common admonition against killing or murder, and the law against lying or failing to tell the truth, can both be derived from the basic requirement to love your neighbour or to treat others as you, yourself, would want to be treated. As Rabbi Hillel explained in the Talmud, there is a fundamental commandment, which is to avoid doing to others that which you would not want done to yourself. He continued by telling his student that the rest of the laws were commentary: go study them.

The short collections of precepts are useful, however, especially when they draw attention to the most common errors in a way that’s easy to remember. Lying is a common problem, so most short lists include prohibitions against lying.

The further we get from the fundamental, however, the more likely we

are to encounter rules which are contradictory or even simply wrong. Take, for instance, the rule against lying. Suppose someone from some criminal or government organization were to come to your door, seeking your children to torture them, when you know that your children have done no wrong. Almost no one would say you would do wrong by lying to the visitor to protect your children. In fact, lying might be considered the most moral and righteous thing to do. Why is this? Because the more fundamental rule is against imposing your will on anyone. Normally, beating or torturing someone is wrong, because you are using superior physical strength to exert power over them. Similarly, lying is wrong, because you are using superior knowledge to control or to influence them. Physical bullies use physical strength, intellectual bullies use intellectual strength, economic bullies use economic strength, and so on. If you lie to protect someone from a physical aggressor, you are merely defending the potential victim from one force by using a different type of force, and we don't normally consider self-defence, or the defence of others, to be wrong.

When you see a clear conflict, or even when you have a gut-level doubt, go to a more general, more fundamental principle to resolve the problem.

Of course, the fundamental rules, being simple, are easy to abuse. Someone might, for instance, try to force someone else to a certain behaviour on the grounds that, "If that person really understood things, he would act differently". Or, a stronger force might pass a law, ostensibly to "protect" a weaker group, a law which restricts the weaker group's behaviour. Some of these are close calls, but, for the most part, reciprocity or the golden rule requires that we let others act as they will, even if we think that such behaviour is harmful. That is because our consciousness is ours, and theirs is theirs: we are not at a level of consciousness comparable to that of, for example, the body, which is treated as a unit and not as a collection of separate cells. If we had such

a higher level of consciousness, we could read minds and know everyone else deeply, down to knowing their dreams. But we don't, and we cannot. To claim that we know better is a lie. If we truly have compassion for others, we will be there to help when they stumble, but we will not prevent them from walking in the first place.

If you cut open a cocoon to make it easier for the butterfly to exit in the spring, the butterfly will die, because the struggle to escape his silken prison is a necessary part of gaining the strength needed to fly. Without the struggle, the butterfly will be too weak to fly, and will starve or be eaten.

As you begin to escape, yourself, from the imprisoning illusion of time, you will come to take a longer and longer view of things, and such points will become more obvious. Reincarnation is a teaching tool, whether you can see it or not: it helps give a longer view of other illusory phenomena.

### **Building Your Own Prisons**

When you act toward a goal, you usually have far more power than you imagine. Sometimes you do not achieve that goal in a single lifetime, but the steps you take will lead you there. If you choose not to accept re-incarnation, then don't, but as your consciousness expands, you will inexorably move to an identical perspective. In other words, you might not see or accept re-incarnation, but you will see the phenomenal world as if re-incarnation were true. It doesn't really matter much, whatever beliefs and interpretations you have are, themselves, illusory phenomena. You can believe them or not, but ultimately you will discard the boat once you have crossed the river, whichever boat you used.

If you live your life or lives to reach a heaven or a hell, you will eventually find the heaven or hell that you seek. Another way to say this is,

Christians will go to a Christian heaven, Buddhists will go to a Buddhist heaven, and, yes, even atheists will go to their own heavens. Be careful what you wish for, however, for you will get it! If you truly want a resurrected body or some such, you can have it, but others will find it perverse that you would want to be trapped within a body, subject to physical limitations, no matter how sublime the variant you acquire. Similarly, you may not grasp the motivations of others. That's all right, it's a big world, and the meta-heaven is a big place, with space for plenty of variety.

A Buddhist is likely to see a Christian heaven as a Buddhist hell. If you are enslaved by a desire to remain forever, then why would you not consider that slavery? A Christian might wonder why the Buddhist would want to throw out the good after having conquered the bad; after one or many lifetimes of struggle, why not kick back and hang around in a perfect body? Maybe the Christian angels in heaven first rebelled because they were utterly bored with their existences there. The truth is beyond all of these, beyond duality. You can become so far beyond our puny conceptions of God, that you will have everything but have not the slightest attachment to any of it.

Heaven and hell are instructional devices, way stations on the highway to annihilation of the mind.

## Power to the People

### Democracy

The word, *democracy*, comes from Greek, and means, roughly, “people strength” or “people power”. If you look around, you won’t find democracies. There was almost a democracy among men in ancient Athens, in Greece, for about two centuries, from 508 BCE to 322 BCE, with a few interruptions, but it didn’t include slaves or women. We may be more inclusive, but we don’t come close to the equality that Athenian men had in their democracy.

In the Athenian democracy, the people made the laws, and acted as jurors in the courts. The people acted directly, not through representatives, and thousands would assemble to make decisions. Any citizen had a right to speak in the assembly. There were officials, selected from among the people, often by lot, which was considered more fair than by election: everyone had an equal chance, and when chosen by lot, there was no campaigning or buying of votes. There were strict term limits, you had to have done military service to qualify, and after leaving major office you were audited. The penalty for cheating the people was death. It was simple, but effective.

To be fair, Athenian democracy was subject to *ochlocracy*, or “mob rule”. The citizenry could make bad decisions, which were binding, and often had bad consequences. Among the most egregious of tendencies of the Athenian people was their penchant for war: Athens repeatedly went to war against various other states, and didn’t have a knack for picking the winning side. It was the people’s fault, they couldn’t blame it on the leaders, because the people were supreme.

Unlike our system in the U.S., it lasted two centuries before Athens lost a major war and the people lost their freedom. The American system began

decaying from corruption almost as soon as it left the gate. By the time the United States reached the Civil War, or War Between the States, the only way to hold the government together was by military force.

Of course, the U.S. is much larger than Athens, but the U.S. never really tried democracy, either. It wasn't because of the size, however: the founders of the U.S. were terrified that the people would act as a mob, and act rashly and irresponsibly, so they built a kind of class system and aristocracy into the structures and procedures. Democracy in the U.S. never really had a chance. That is not to say it was tried anywhere else, either: it wasn't. But the Americans are more fond than most of speaking about the "great democracies" of the "advanced" nations, so the point needs mention.

There is a fundamental difference between democracy and a government through representatives, which is enormous in its implications but almost always ignored: the representatives, though perhaps selected by the people, are the real government. Employing someone else to repair my automobile does not make me a mechanic. Having someone else diagnose my illness or perform surgery on me, does not make me a physician. Hiring someone else to add a room to my house does not make me a carpenter, a plumber, or an electrician. Similarly, selecting someone to represent me in a government does not make me a citizen in a democracy. To think otherwise distorts, trivializes, and oversimplifies the actions and functions of governments.

To be fair, the idea of democracy, of people power, is not an absolute, yes-or-no concept. It is useful to acknowledge that there can be more democracy or less democracy, more people power or less people power. These things will be explored, below. First, however, let us consider some of the fundamental principles of government itself.

## **God and State**

If we are to give our neighbours, our fellow citizens, the same respect, love, and regard that we give ourselves, then it doesn't take much to see that the most holy form of government must be a democracy. In any other form of government, the citizens are prohibited from regarding all others equally. If a person cannot act and think as if all other citizens are his equals, then he is prohibited from following what may be the most fundamental of all ethical precepts or commandments. If God gave us the golden rule, then he intended for us to have democracies.

Taoists, Confucians, Moslems, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, even many atheists – almost every significant religious or philosophical group – accepts the principle of reciprocity as an important tenet. However, not everyone agrees with my conclusion, described earlier, that it is not rightly our prerogative to “help” others to the extent that we restrict their own freedom of action. Some members of almost every group would prefer laws to prevent others from falling into what they consider to be sin, error, or other improper behaviour. Moreover, of course, it is often said to be done out of love, care, or concern for the target. In our current culture, the most common manifestation of this supposed desire to protect and to help others is the advocacy in come quarters of “moral” laws to restrict the ingestion of various substances, to criminalize some kinds of sexual activities and to prevent certain behaviours, such as gay marriage, which are perceived to be “against the laws of God”.

Whether or not the activities in question are against the laws of God, or not, I think that the attempts to eliminate, reduce, or control them are, themselves, contrary to what logic and God would want. Some explanation is, of course, in order.

Our culture places a premium on “families”, although this word usually is

given a somewhat parochial, narrow, and limited interpretation in this context. Among other things, we, and our laws, favour the ownership and control of children by their parents. This is perhaps somewhat for practical reasons, for if the law were to intervene into the relationships, activities, and dynamics of families, the society would likely be torn apart by the debate and the massive obligations which would subsequently devolve upon our institutions. Chattel slaves in the United States were emancipated a century and a half ago, women were granted suffrage sixty years later, but children are still waiting for liberation. (Blacks, women, and other groups still, of course, have a long way to go before equality.) There is a patchwork of laws to protect children, but not even a consensus on a theoretical framework for the same. So we accept that children are the *de facto* property of their parents or other guardians, subject to various limits in place for historical and political reasons.

Although the similarity of the parent-child relationship to that of the master-slave relationship ought to be obvious, most will recoil from the comparison. Of course, there is at least one significant difference: parents have an investment in their children which usually goes beyond mere genetics and finances, and tends to engender in the parents what is usually called love toward their offspring. Legally and practically, however, there is not much qualitative distinction.

We tolerate this situation, in part, because we assume that there is a loving relationship among parents or other guardians and their children, or, at least, a family structure is necessary if such a relationship is to develop. Parents make rules to protect and to teach their children, hopefully loving them as they love themselves. Parents, at least ideally, share their wealth and time and knowledge with their children. We hope for a relationship according to the rule of reciprocity, the golden rule.

However, when one adult person wishes to make similar judgements and decisions on behalf of other adults, then the same level of concern, sharing, love, care, and sacrifice is almost never in evidence. Person A wants to keep person B from drinking alcohol, but doesn't give a damn whatever other problems person B might have: A won't share his wealth, time, knowledge, and so on with B. The same is true for abortions, for example. If C truly were to love that unborn foetus, and were willing to care for it (him or her) with the same ferocity after it were born, then C's argument might be more convincing. Instead, it's "we'll use the government to prevent the abortion, but we can't use the government to care for it after birth". D is willing to save the souls of E and F, by preventing E and F from a homosexual union, but is not willing to sacrifice for, and share with, E and F. Without that sacrifice, D's attempt to control the behaviour of others is merely an attempt at control, and not an expression of love.

Accordingly, I see these sorts of attempts at restricting the actions of others to be hypocritical, disingenuous, and criminal. In a religious context, it is sinful. Love your neighbour first, and the caring and sharing will follow naturally. Your neighbour might eventually take you seriously and listen to your advice.

This is not the only reason that control over others ought to be limited, but I introduce this reason now as a tie-in to the reciprocity principle as a foundation for democracy. In other words, Jesus and Gautama and Mohammed and Lao Tze and the others would expect respect for others in this regard, just as they emphasized love and respect for others in ways unrelated to government. Explicit consideration of the principle is not recorded, as it would have been moot in times of kings and emperors. However, it is so simply and directly derivable from other precepts that it is difficult to imagine another conclusion. In government, the Tao, or God's will, or the Way, or the path of honest logic is,

ideally, democracy and liberty.

There are, of course, caveats. Democracy can become ochlocracy, but the problems are not the form of government; rather, they are the subversion of reason by emotion, the tendency of the majority to tyrannize minorities, moral panic, and demagoguery. These weaknesses will be discussed later. Similarly, it is possible to exercise personal freedom in such a way that others are jeopardized or harmed, so some restrictions on personal freedom are necessary for the common good. (This “common” word will be discussed, below.)

These topics will be expanded later.

## **Pragmata**

The word, *republic*, is derived from Latin *res publica*, and means “public thing” or “public matter”. There is a misunderstanding common in the United States that a republic differs from a democracy in that, a republic is managed by representatives elected by the people. What Americans call a republic is what others, including English and non-English speakers in the rest of the world, more frequently call a representative democracy. I believe the error can be traced back to a misleading paragraph in one of the Federalist Papers, but haven’t investigated it thoroughly. In any case, the word, *republic*, is ambiguous, and does not always imply elected representatives. Sometimes the representatives are not elected, sometimes they represent only a small fraction of society, and sometimes they are merely consulted and do not govern directly. Many Islamic republics, the Soviet Socialist Republics, and other republics from historical times would not be recognized as such by the average American. So I will avoid use of the word, *republic*, since it has so many meanings it is not very useful here.

The founders of the United States were mostly from the rich and powerful

classes in the colonies. They were fearful of a true democracy. As the Constitution was set up, the Congressional representatives were chosen almost entirely by male landholders (a minority of the people), and the Senators were chosen by the States themselves. The use of the word, senator, is enlightening: the senators of the Roman Republic were always members of the Roman aristocracy. Effectively, the founders wanted to keep an American aristocracy, but did not want to call it that.

Again, these words often are given different meanings convenient to the speaker and not according to any well-established definitions; in fact, often there are well-established definitions for anyone's tastes and preferences. Traditionally, an aristocracy was based on landholdings, especially in a monarchical system. During the renaissance, however, a new kind of elite, the mercantile elite developed, where the basis of wealth was commerce, rather than land. Some of the first republics governed by mercantile elites appeared at this time, in Italy. In our own time, other kinds of hierarchical structures are evolving, and the old terminologies and analyses don't work so well anymore.

The fears of the founders were based on several factors. They were openly disdainful of the mass of people, who they considered, more or less, an uneducated and often lazy rabble. They feared mob rule, or ochlocracy, feeling that most people were subject to rule by their feelings, rather than by their reason, and were hesitant to create a system where demagoguery might arise. Finally, there was simple greed: throughout all of history, there are very few instances where any person or group of persons has relinquished power in the absence of compulsion. Once the powerful are entrenched, they don't go away voluntarily. And make no mistake about it: the founders were powerful in the Colonies. They lobbied to start the revolution against the then-existing government of England, but they were not all-powerful, as they required the

support of the people to prosecute that war.

All in all, the U.S. Constitution is a remarkably good document. However, it failed to prevent the nation from falling away from its ideals. In part, this was due to a belief upon which I touched above, but which needs emphasis: no document or law will protect anyone. A document or law is merely a statement of intention. It is sometimes said that we have, or used to have, a government of laws, not a government of men. That was never true, as it depended on men (and women) to carry out and enforce those laws. The ability of people to subvert, ignore, re-interpret, selectively apply, and otherwise to corrupt the laws is limitless. The prevention of such corruption lies squarely with the people themselves, who have let that corruption take place.

The powerful and our leaders, also, however, have lied, mis-led, concealed, killed, tortured, trashed, stolen, and committed malfeasance, misfeasance, and nonfeasance. Not for the sake of revenge or punishment, but rather for the sake of correction, how is the blame to be apportioned? Going back to the beginning, I noted that we live as if on the planes of mirrors, where the outside is reflected within, and vice versa. The interior portions of our minds correspond to the exteriors, the difference is merely a matter of perspective. In that context, we all share equally in the failures.

(Note, by the way, that nothing about the interior-exterior mappings precludes, in the exterior world, what might be viewed as adverse consequences for bad actors.)

We need a course correction here. We need to renew our acquaintance with our inner worlds, at the same time re-arranging the outer worlds to repair the systemic causes as well as the damage. In religious terms, we need to find God again – not the gods of dead institutions and transient phenomena, but the true God beyond characterization, and to love our fellow beings on this planet

and beyond.

As a start, the grip of the illusions, which are the attachments of the mind, must be broken.

### **Blinded in the Dark**

It matters not whether it is a direct democracy or a representative democracy or some other form of -ocracy, those who have no knowledge of what is going on, cannot be in control. We cannot perform a task ourselves, without skills, facts, information, and observation, nor can we correctly choose a representative without knowledge beforehand, or without supervision and checking his work while he does his job.

When we employ someone, it is almost universally acknowledged that the employer has the right to supervise the employee. Your boss can come to your place of work and watch you do your tasks, he can check your work, he can give you specific instructions. However, when we employ a representative to a congress or legislature, we know hardly anything about the candidates except what marketing specialists want us to know, and, once the fellow is hired, he's off to the statehouse or to Congress or the white house, and it's an extraordinary event when he'll even answer a letter personally.

Supposedly, the press acts as a monitor on the activities of our officials and of those in their offices, and reports to us when something is amiss. In practice, it doesn't work: what a reporter considers to be acceptable may not be what all members of the public consider to be acceptable, the press is subject to its own limitations and biases, and the press doesn't have ubiquitous and continual access to the government in any case. In fact, most of the government is practically as invisible to the press as it is to the people.

The solution is simple: unlock and open the doors of the government, of

both officials and employees, and let the people in to observe what transpires within. They all work for us, don't they? As their ultimate bosses and supervisors, we ought to be able to observe them at work, and to check the quality of what they produce.

The technical objections are easily met. After all, various organs of the the government itself already have in place equipment for the surveillance of the people, and this infrastructure no doubt already monitors much of the government itself. Local, state, and federal agencies already have embarked on programs to install cameras and microphones by the millions to watch the people, so an extension of these programs to observe government offices already has a foundation. Phone and network traffic interception is, by now, a well understood technology. Dissemination of the images, sound, and data traffic on the internet is highly feasible. There are no serious technical obstacles to realization of such a system. The cost would not be trivial, although this action to defend the country from an inner threat would be much cheaper than what we spend already to defend from purported external threats.

Yes, the wrong actions, unjustified actions, and non-actions of our government officials and employees are threats. They cost enormous sums of money, weaken our nation, divide our people, and break the overt laws which ought to bind us together. As to how we prosecute the wrongdoers, slackers, and *ultra vires* actors, I'll get to that below.

The greatest threats, whether physical, intellectual, psychological, or spiritual, are from those closest to us. When a homicide detective goes to investigate a murder, he or she knows that the killer usually is someone close to the victim: a partner, family member, or acquaintance. Similarly, more of us are killed, directly or indirectly, by our own government than by other governments. Even in overt military conflict, as we have now, the so-called enemy kills fewer

of our troops than the number who suicide, and I lay responsibility for the suicides at the feet of our own government and military as well as at the feet of society as a whole which has lied to the troops in the first place. Those in the government steal more from us than strangers steal: the United States government, including the out-of-control departments and branches invisible to us, is the largest criminal and terrorist organization in recorded history.

How can this be? you might ask. Consider a stereotypical criminal organization, such as a classical crime syndicate or gang. Almost everyone in the group is supporting staff, only a few pull the triggers. Even in the military, in times of open combat, most of the killing is done by a few. So it is not surprising that the rest of them aren't seen as dangerous except through association. Logistics, legal support, sales, finance, accounting, maintenance, manufacturing, and other personnel are far more numerous than hit-men or wet workers. When there is crime in the government, it is often in corners or pockets hidden from view. It is sometimes legal, sometimes not: morality often does not correlate to law. Just as one percent of people hold about half the wealth, about one percent of government employees commit about half the moral transgressions. So most are fine, but it's not most that bother me.

As for the majority who might object to surveillance of all to catch a few, my answer is: You didn't step forward to turn in the others, or the system as it is just doesn't work. You are protected from review, which allows a few to commit crimes. Why should you be protected when the rest of us aren't? You are a member of a somewhat privileged class, that needs to change, for it foster an arrogant attitude even among many who don't commit overtly wrongful acts. If you don't want to work for the government, then go somewhere else.

The classic example of complicity is in law enforcement. Most cops are good cops, except that they have more loyalty to other cops than they have to

the people they serve. They will remain silent when they see wrong by the few who are overtly responsible, and they will resist efforts to be subject to review by the public they serve. By their misplaced loyalty, by their inaction, they lose the right to operate independently, even when they have done no other wrong. Remember, the good Samaritan took action when the other two passers-by did nothing. This is a case of inaction being evil by itself.

Certainly there are things which should be kept secret: some military secrets, the extent of our spying on true enemies, and so on. This is not a problem to me. What is problematic is the secrecy which, in most cases, is not warranted. Most of us with ties to the security industry either knew or suspected that some in the government were eavesdropping and intercepting and monitoring U.S. citizens long before it was “leaked” to the public, and if some spy or foreign government official was too stupid to have figured it out beforehand, he probably wasn’t much of a threat, anyway, and won’t be any more dangerous now that he knows. There was no need for the secrecy to protect our national security, it was there to protect the incomes and careers of those involved. Make no mistake: only a tiny fraction of what happens has yet been made public.

Unwarranted secrecy destroys a chance to approach democracy, and ought to be made a serious crime, with sharp teeth and no way to hide.

If the above sounds ridiculous, then it shows how far our ordinary, everyday existence has departed from democracy. It was not meant to be ridiculous or satirical. It is logically sound. There are reasons beyond the above to be concerned about the dangers of public officers and employees; I will cover more of them, below. Meanwhile, the only reason the above suggestion sounds absurd is that you have never much thought about it before. Consider it, and after a while you might find it practical and reasonable.

## **Service to Our Fellow Citizens**

Even with appropriate openness and monitoring and surveillance of our government officials and employees, we still will not have the knowledge we need to govern effectively as citizens in a democracy, or even to select our representatives. A second kind of knowledge is required: that which comes from the experience of participation in public institutions. Just as watching a football game doesn't make you an athlete, watching a debate doesn't make you a knowledgeable citizen. It takes more than passive participation to acquire the knowledge which comes only from active personal experience in public life. Such experience must come not only from activities in the decision making process, but also from participation in the implementation of policy, and in the judicial function.

In other words, without experience in the three functions of legislation, execution, and judicial operations, how can a citizen correctly help to decide the course of the nation?

The three arms of the government – or however many arms it might have in the future – ought to be organized and operate in such a way that citizen participation is fundamental to them.

Think, for instance, about the judicial system, which gives a minor role to citizens as jurors. We consider jurors as essential, but a lot of that is because there is a need for jurors to satisfy legal requirements, so we go out and tell people how important they are because we want to recruit them. Yes, there are a few who consider jurors important, but the respect is limited. In fact, they are considerably more important than most people realize, but their power has been eroded over time by those who do not trust them to do what is expected. In other words, we can't count on those jurors to do what we want. Being unable to count on them is exactly the point. In past times, jurors were far more powerful

than they are now, and one of the reasons that many don't want to perform jury duty is that much of that power has been taken from them, and people resent being called in to serve a role in what is largely a scripted, predictable affair. I will discuss juries, also, later in this book.

Juries were not always the only role given to ordinary citizens. In the past, citizens were also expected to serve on the militia. The militia is not necessarily what you think it might be. The role of the militia is almost completely destroyed in our current system, and that, too, will be covered later.

Although most Americans have never really seen a town meeting, and usually consider such things to be quaint reminders of less sophisticated times, the town meeting is another example of a role for citizens that once was considered serious and important. Even when they are still held, in some places, many town meetings now have lost the power that they once had.

Just as the professional, paid military and law enforcement has supplanted the militia, and judges have taken over many former functions of juries, other organizations have pushed out community projects in both ordinary and emergency situations. Just about the only community role citizens now have in the executive branch is as volunteer firefighters. In the past, the citizens, or members of the community, frequently – sometimes more, sometimes less – took on tasks now performed by paid workers or contracted out to businesses. If you try to help at a fire now, or when there is a flood, you'll likely to be turned away, rather than welcomed. While it is true that some of that work is especially dangerous to the inexperienced, the exclusion of ordinary people has reached extreme levels. If a person is willing to die in battle to help some rich people get richer by stealing foreign oil or minerals, that volunteer is lauded. If, on the other hand, he wants to help fight a wildfire which threatens his own or a neighbour's home or land, he is often sent away.

People, ordinary people, are no longer welcome in government, unless they do exactly as they are told and leave the “good” roles to so-called “experts” and “professionals”. It’s not your government, any more. Go away.

Is this a democracy? No way: you are a subject, a serf, just as surely as if the leaders were given titles. Even outside of the government, the main criminal organization in this and in most other countries, the only way for many people to live and eat and care for their families is to become a vassal of some corporation: their masters aren’t even real people, they are artificial beings created to insulate the capitalists from the laws the rest of us must follow.

### **Corporations, to Die For**

In school textbooks, corporations are praised as mechanisms to build great industry, to accelerate economic growth, and to make life better for us all. It is even suggested that we can pitch in with our savings, and share in the benefits even more by investing alongside the rich and powerful.

A few thousand years ago, there were moral strictures against hitching two dissimilar animals together to pull the same plough. The reason is simple and obvious: the weaker one, if useful at all, would get the worst of the deal, so it wasn’t considered fair, even in ages where animals were deemed important only to the extent that they might serve us humans. Thus it is when hitching your own carcass to the ploughs of the strong and wealthy: you’ll get the worst of it.

In fact, the whole idea of corporations is a sham and a fraud. That doesn’t mean you ought to run out a dissolve all of the ones you have, or even that you should sell all of your stock. Sometimes, there are reasons to take measures you don’t find much fun. I, myself, for example, have operated businesses as corporations, but I think of it as self defense, in the same way that I often carry a

gun but would rather it would not be necessary. As long as other people carry guns, then it's sometimes better to carry one yourself. As a practical matter, it might be hard to get rid of the guns we have: not everyone will agree, and many of the most dangerous and least peaceful, including those in the government, wouldn't go along with the idea. On the other hand, corporations could be eliminated by changing the laws. A gun can be concealed, but a corporation is by definition a creation of the state: there are, no doubt, some concealed corporations created by Congress and even by the executive branch, but, if we demolish this oppressive, criminal secrecy and corporations, too, there will be no such thing as a corporation which can be hidden. They won't exist in the first place.

In times past, when a business venture was too large for one person, several got together and created partnerships. The law sees partnerships as, ultimately, some number of people, that number always being greater than one. When a partnership is sued in court, it is the partners who are sued. When it commits a crime, it is actually the partners or maybe the employees who commit the crime. People can go to jail when partnerships commit crimes, as the partners are considered responsible for the actions of the partnership. Now, this can be more complicated, but that's the basic idea.

Let's move forward to the sixteenth century or so. The idea of corporations didn't spring up suddenly, as Athena came full-born, mature, and armed, from the head of Zeus, but, as I pointed out before, a lot happened around the year 1500, there was a lot of change going on, and the time was ripe for the idea of corporations to begin to expand and mature. People rapidly realized that there was a lot of wealth to be acquired by enslaving the natives of the new world, Africa, and now-accessible parts of Asia, and by stealing their property. However, making loot took investment. If you were a king, you

probably didn't have enough, yourself, because you had been suckered into fighting a lot of expensive wars and you had turned over much of your gold to the financial elite. So you made a deal with the devil, so to speak, and you as monarch created a new person with the stroke of a pen. This new person was a corporation. You were cut in on the action, and the wealthy who participated could go about raping, pillaging, and plundering, without ordinary legal consequences. They could even lose all of the money in the process, and the creditors from whom they borrowed (they wouldn't be stupid enough to lose their own money, not every time) would be out of luck. Instead of saying, "the dog ate my homework", they were able to say, "the corporation did it". Unlike the dog, however, the corporation was theirs and did whatever they told it to do. They were in charge. It was like being able to hire a hit man or a thief, but not be liable yourself in case the employee were to be found out.

Legally, a corporation is deemed to be a separate person. When you sue a partnership for breaking a contract or burying toxic waste in your backyard, you file an action against the partners, because the partnership isn't a legal person. When the same things happen with a partnership, you sue the corporation itself, and it can turn around and counter-sue against you. In many if not most such lawsuits, the names of the owners, who ultimately control the actions of the corporation, are never even mentioned in the trial.

Now, of course, it wasn't this simple, especially at first. If an officer of a corporation were to hire someone to bump someone else off, and pay him from the corporate coffers, the defense that the killer was an employee of the corporation wouldn't carry much weight in court, and the officer stood a good chance of getting the gallows. However, when things weren't so straightforward, there might be a corpse to account for, but the court would give some deference to the corporation, especially since it was operating with a royal charter. Fast

forward a couple of centuries, and corporations routinely kill lots of people, knowingly, using hazardous working conditions, toxic chemicals, defective products, and so on. Because the corporation is there to punish symbolically, the individuals now rarely are held accountable. The courts have even gone so far as to say that “money” is the “blood” of a corporation, so taking a corporation’s money is equivalent to physically punishing a flesh-and-blood human being.

What the schoolbooks say is, corporations are necessary because partnerships cannot raise the large sums of money needed for modern industry. The reason is supposedly that a stockholder’s liability is limited to his investment: if a corporation cannot pay its bills, then the worst that will happen to a stockholder will be the loss of his stock. Creditors cannot go after a stockholder’s other possessions. Actually, he’s not likely even to lose his stock, and I’ll explore that. The textbooks neglect to mention that loans with limitations on recovery are common: a typical home mortgage, for example, limits the lender to recovering only the home in case of default. There is no legal reason that the financial recovery of an investor could not be limited to a partners’ share in a partnership.

The true reason for the existence of corporations isn’t about raising capital, although they are certainly good for that. Corporations allow people to act irresponsibly, immorally, and what would otherwise be illegally, without concern for the consequences.

Along with this license to lie, cheat, steal, kill, rape, and plunder, comes anonymity. The confidentiality of stockholders is built into the laws of many states. This has long been put to use by the wealthy and powerful. For example, the CIA has purchased movie studios, to alter films for propaganda purposes, while keeping their control secret. A century ago, wealthy businessmen would often secretly own the banks of their competitors, to learn their secrets and

sometimes to call loans unexpectedly and thereby drive their competitors out of business. Would you feel different about a film if you knew it was made by the government? Would you like to trust your money and your secrets to your ruthless enemies? What you don't know, can, indeed, hurt you.

In past times in our culture, there were debtors' prisons. Mostly we eliminated them, although now they are making a comeback. (You can't send a corporation to prison!) What we have now is bankruptcy. When there is no hope of paying your bills, now, instead of losing everything and being thrown into jail, you give up all that you have except for certain things you are allowed to keep, and the debts are wiped out. Once again, it can be more complicated than this, but that's the basic idea. Corporations however, get a special deal. While they don't have a list of things they can keep, the stockholders who are the owners get to keep the corporation itself, along with unvalued intangible assets.

Often, the most valuable part of a firm or business is not the factories, warehouses, shops, machinery, or other physical assets owned and operated by that firm. The most valuable parts often are the reputation of the firm, and the habituation of customers to purchase from it. It is not extraordinary for a corporation to announce bankruptcy, and afterwards the customers continue to shop at its stores, go to its web sites, and fly its aircraft. When the dust has settled, the physical assets have been sold off and leased back from their purchasers, the employees are working with lower wages and fewer benefits, and some creditors have been paid back less than they bargained for. The owners still control the business, and the stock may even be worth more than it was before the bankruptcy petition was filed. It may not matter at all to the customers, and the lenders and vendors accept such things as a cost of doing business: they weren't forced to loan money to the corporation, and wouldn't be doing it if they weren't making a profit. For the employees, however, it's a

different matter. If you build machinery, and don't own a factory yourself, you must go to work for someone who owns a factory. If you repair widgets, and don't own a shop or garage yourself, you have to work for someone who owns one. In a capitalist society, the capitalists benefit, and the rest of us take what we can get.

In other words, corporate bankruptcy is a rich man's way to avoid debts without losing his business. The rest of society picks up the tab.

Meanwhile, we give human rights to corporations, which are artificial persons that have no ability to think, feel, or know right from wrong. Just as the government is only a symbol of a collection of agreements, so with corporations. Although, by law, corporations are artificial persons, just as personhood is implied to governments, in fact all of the activities and decisions of these bodies are by people. Neither governments nor corporations ever do, say, or decide anything: the decisions are by people acting under the special protection of corporate law. Some of the human rights given to corporations make good sense, if we are to have corporations in the first place. For example, without the right of due process, a corporation and a human would not be on equal footing in legal disputes. However, the right of free speech, for example, gives those behind corporations a power not given to ordinary, mortal humans: they can make expensive propaganda campaigns in elections or other public forums anonymously. When a corporation discloses that it financed a campaign, that tells us little or nothing about the people behind that decision. When a human makes a similar disclosure, we know exactly who did it.

Corporations have more powers and immunities than flesh-and-blood humans in other ways. For one, they are, or can be, immortal. Over time, they can gain assets, market share, and influence which we mere humans cannot. In this way, they perpetuate and amplify the influence of the families or other

groups which control them. If you pass your business or farm or other assets to your children, the transfer might be taxed or regulated. A perpetual corporation can hold an asset indefinitely, on the other hand, across generations, with control transferred from generation to generation with little scrutiny or hindrance from government control.

Corporations have more freedom to choose where they live, by which state or national government they are regulated. A corporation can choose to be a citizen of one state or country, but do most of its business in another. You can't do that as a human. Corporations can pick up house and move to a different location, even to a different country, with little restriction. The corporation is said to be re-domiciled into its new home. If you don't like the way you're treated, maybe just because you don't like the tax breaks you're getting, then just go somewhere else.

Anonymity can be made even more powerful by the device of one corporation owning another. The owned corporation can, in turn, hold stock in yet a third corporation, and so on. That can't be done with humans: we probably know who owns a chattel slave, but we don't necessarily know who owns a corporation.

Corporations also allow persons to evade responsibility for their actions in another important way: they can transfer their profits, in the form of dividends or contract payments to those who control them, putting those funds outside the reach of claimants. Suppose, for example, that Mr X buys a factory to make widgets, and makes a big profit. He buys a yacht. After a few years, his workers get cancer from the chemicals they were exposed to on the job, and they sue him. They win, and they take his yacht to cover their medical bills.

Now, suppose Mr X starts Y Corporation which does the same thing, except that, after making its profit, it pays that profit to Mr X, who uses the

money to buy his yacht. The workers sue Y Corporation and win. This time, they get nothing, because Y Corporation no longer has any assets, it has paid them out to Mr X. The landscape is dotted with toxic waste dumps and closed factories, the only remaining assets of corporations who have distributed their assets and thus made their profits untouchable to claimants.

Certainly, this can happen without corporations. Mr X might have squandered the profits, lost them in a divorce, or died and left them to his children. However, the wealthy tend to invest their money, not to pay it out to others, so it is less likely to happen when real human beings are held responsible for their actions.

Corporations also allow their owners to shift income for more favourable tax treatment. The income of a corporation is taxed to the corporation, not to its owners. The stockholders pay no taxes on the corporate income until the corporation pays dividends. In practice, large corporations pay far less in taxes than the basic tax rates would imply, the difference due to favourable tax treatment under the law, plus the ability to recognize the income as belonging to other corporations in jurisdictions which are not taxed at all or so much. The equivalent action for a flesh-and-blood person would be to avoid paying taxes on investments or savings until the taxpayer were to decide to spend the money. Of course, this tactic is available ordinarily to natural persons only for highly regulated retirement accounts.

When the owners or stockholders eventually take out some of the money, they can do this by selling off shares of stock. In the United States, the income thus taken from the corporation isn't subject to the income tax we ordinary wage earners pay; it is subject, instead, to *capital gains tax*, which is lighter than the income tax, and in some years has been non-existent. If it is too burdensome for the wealthy to pay taxes, they also have the option of borrowing against

their stock when they require new yachts or aircraft: the money loaned isn't taxable at all, and various other devices may allow them to avoid paying any tax whatsoever on the extracted corporate profits, even at a later time.

A fair tax situation would close the loopholes and other special devices, and would subject all income, even capital gains, to the same tax. A fair tax also would tax shareholders when the corporation earned the money, the same as us humans, without a delay until the dividends were paid out.

These same principles apply more or less to other kinds of artificial persons, such as trusts and so limited liability companies. Nothing, however, prevents simple partnerships from performing the same role as corporations. There is no real, compelling need for corporations to exist. They exist so that the owners can get away with crimes and torts and breaches that ordinary humans could not so easily commit.

### **Shooting from a Tower**

Imagine a tower in a park, the park crowded with people. If someone were to take a gun to the top of the tower and use it to kill a few people, we would consider that action to be murder. We would still call it murder, even if he shot aimlessly, without trying to hit anyone, if the bullets happened to hit human targets.

If several people went up into the tower, and fired off shots at random, and someone were killed, we would deem it murder by all of them, even if we didn't know which gunman hit the victim. The legal theory is that all of the shooters should have known that their action was likely to cause harm.

This is similar to the scenario which occurs when people or other creatures are exposed to many toxic chemicals. It is possible to calculate the number of deaths which will occur from such exposures, and to assign a level of

confidence to the result of that calculation. For instance, we might calculate that, with a 99% level of confidence, 17 people will contract cancer from a certain exposure. The calculations allow trade-offs between confidence and results, so that we can speak with more confidence regarding lower numbers of cancers. The result of these kinds of calculations, when applied to mortality outcomes, are called *statistical deaths*.

The point is this: This is well-established science. There is no strict definition of the phrase, “beyond a reasonable doubt”, needed to obtain a conviction, but we can calculate statistical deaths to arbitrary levels of confidence. If the gunmen in the tower will likely be prosecuted for murder, why aren’t those who expose others to carcinogens or other toxic substances?

Some parts of the explanation are understandable: most prosecutors, lawyers, judges, or politicians, don’t have enough scientific background to wrap their heads around this. (It’s not that complicated, though, as I have shown. This says, not that these people are stupid, but rather that they simply don’t want to go there.) Furthermore – and this is another topic – the wealthy and powerful responsible for decisions resulting in exposure tend to be immune from the same levels of “justice” that apply to the rest of us.

As it relates to the foregoing topic, however, part of the explanation is our tendency, both in law and in daily practice, to say, “Y Corporation” did it, rather than to say, “Mr X, who was responsible at Y Corporation”, did it. People make these decisions, both in corporations and in governments, not the corporations or governments themselves. Even if there were some kind of board vote at the corporation, and the decision had been made by majority rule, if directors A, B, and C voted for the murder, while directors D and E voted against, then A, B, and C ought to be held morally and legally responsible for the killings.

I have already shown that those who own and work in corporations

should be personally responsible for their actions. The same issue also relates to governments: When are those in government personally responsible for their actions? The law says, at least in our culture, which may not be true in other legal systems, that government officials and employees are not generally liable for their actions, except where the government has condescended to make them so. The principle is called *sovereign immunity*, and it descends from the power of the king, who was sovereign. As with other concepts, such as that of executive privilege, those who hold power and office so-called democracies, have arrogantly assumed they have the same special rights once held by the king.

This is simply logically inconsistent with the principle of reciprocity, or golden rule. If you have a power, then, by the rule, I also should have the same power. We might join together to use that power, as is done in a democracy, but the power of the group derives from the power of the individual. There can be no power held by an organization, group, body, corporation, or government, which exceeds the power of its individual members, without violating, if you will, the laws of God.

Much of what is sometimes called mob rule, ochlocracy, or the tyranny of the majority, is created by the arrogation to itself by the government of powers which are not given to each and every one of the people. Without such powers, even when those in the government are held personally responsible for their actions, there still may be abuses, but the potential is reduced.

## **Pressure Points**

### **Precision Wind**

Hurricanes can be fierce storms, but many properly designed and built structures can survive them handily. The storm can pass directly over the house or other building, without doing serious damage. Suppose, however, the full force of the storm were directed against a small area of the structure: it would be much more difficult to prevent destruction. That is why tornadoes are typically more damaging than hurricanes: although the total energy of a tornado is much smaller than that of a hurricane, it is focused into a smaller area. Although it is possible to resist a tornado, it's much more difficult than resisting a hurricane. When a hurricane comes, absent flooding, people typically go for sturdy buildings to wait out the weather. When a tornado is on the way, there aren't so many places to hide.

The difference is based on the extent to which the energy or force is concentrated in a small or large area.

The degree to which energy or force is focused can be important, but the point to which it is directed may also be critical. The martial arts include knowledge of pressure points, where opponents are most vulnerable; on a larger scale, "divide and conquer" is a common military tactic. Knowing your opponent's weaknesses is an essential part of tactics and strategy. Those who control governments, weaken the people by systematic and sometimes by unintentional division of actual and potential opponents, fracturing threatening social and economic phenomena by applying force against fault lines and weak points. In commerce, knowledge can have value far beyond the value of the goods and services exchanged. Even the diamond, a crystal of extraordinary

hardness, can be cloven easily if force is applied at the correct points.

The selective application of force can also be used to build and to heal. A brick wall is built one block at a time: the bricks are placed into the correct positions with available strength. One does not hurl an entire pallet of blocks at once against a foundation and expect it to form a wall. Acupressure and acupuncture are healing arts. Music is learned by rehearsing the weakest skills, as athletic capability is enhanced by selective exercise – against pressure and force – to acquire needed strength and agility.

Whether in a destructive or constructive context, derivation of the maximal benefit from available force, which may include proper modulation of the force, is based on knowledge. Data, knowledge, information, awareness, and similar factors are not only force multipliers, they can be forces themselves.

Incorrect knowledge can be worse than no knowledge. In destructive contexts, disinformation, deceit, lies, propaganda, and similar tools are used to overcome enemies, to control citizens and other populations, and to weaken opponents generally. These are to a great extent anti-knowledge weapons, depriving an adversary of knowledge which might be useful against you. Just as there is physical bullying, there is also intellectual bullying.

The prevailing culture sees “unjustified” physical battery as wrong and unlawful, but seems oblivious to most cases of intellectual battery. Even in the dominant establishment, entrenched religions, deceit and treachery are taught as good things: Jacob deceived his father Isaac to take his brother Esau’s inheritance, and Jacob is seen as a patriarch, a figure to be emulated, and a prophet, in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Later, he was known as Israel, and now has a well-known if not always well-liked political namesake. We all know that politicians, lawyers, judges, and others of their ilk – the ones to whom we give power and control – elevate dishonesty and intellectual violence to laudable

activities, to objects of near-reverence, yet we pretend to value sincerity and truth. Deception is such a fundamental part of our culture, that we can't even honestly admit how much we crave it.

Regarding Esau and Jacob: Previously, Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for food, when Esau was hungry, and therefore Jacob considered it to be his right, justifying the deception. What happened to Jesus' advice to feed the hungry? Following in Cain's footsteps, Jacob did not consider himself to be his own brother's keeper. We are thus taught to take advantage of our brethren, our sisters, and our neighbours, in their times and moments of chronic or acute weakness. So we consider it part of our own birthrights, the right to be predators even against our families and our own species.

### **Combinations & Collaborations**

Concentrated power beats diffuse power. To counter this, weaker individuals or entities often combine or collaborate to overcome stronger ones, or to defend themselves more effectively against their predations. Thus workers sometimes form trade unions to oppose the strength of large employers, or citizens unite to fight oppressive or unresponsive governments. The laudability of such alliances is highly subjective: if you're on one side, it's a good idea, but it's a bad idea from the other side. Standing back, however, the mechanism itself is a natural consequence of personal freedom, and by itself has little direct moral weight.

Not all collective action involves significant aspects of adversarial relationships. For instance, a group of people might get together to further their own interests independent of anyone else, to create a self-help system, or to provide a place for them to meet like-minded people or to socialize. In the context of an adversarial relationship, though, the battle between one side and

the other often spreads to related arenas, and one side will attempt to subvert, damage, or impair the other side's alliances. We're accustomed to this, and we think it acceptable or at least normal. In our culture, however, the wrongful is normal.

We are taught, from infancy to school to work to illusory retirement, by parents, teachers, disinformation and entertainment operations (pseudo-news and indoctrination), lawyers and other politicians, and various kinds of acquisitors, that there is a "right" and a "wrong" and that the system is mostly "right" so we just have to fix it, working within the system. "Our" system is better than "their" system, for any definition of their. When other viewpoints are discussed, it is brevity so extreme as to constitute dishonesty.

Take, for example, the idea of communism, which terrified those in power who were able to wade through the implications of Karl Marx's *Capital*. It is a dense and long volume, actually three or four volumes, almost dreary in the effort required to absorb it. Marx is viewed as a father of communism, but his book isn't about communism, it's about the evolution of capitalism. Marx saw capitalism as an improvement on previous arrangements such as feudalism and slavery. However, capitalism has inherent weaknesses, and will collapse eventually. He saw things as going from bad to worse, until the working people, the proletariat, will eventually reject ruined capitalism. Then, the evolution from feudalism to capitalism will result in a new structure, communism, which will become stateless. (The stateless attribute makes sense when you know that Marx saw the intimate relationship between the type of government and the prevailing economic system.)

To say that Marx's work is about revolutions and communism is more or less like saying that the Bible is about Armageddon and the post-apocalyptic universal order. They might as well advocate skipping years of medical school to

begin surgery immediately, or foregoing the study of engineering to more quickly jump into nuclear power plant construction.

The arguments being complex and requiring actual effort, almost everyone skips them. Marx argued that the collapse of communism was *inevitable*. That's right, he thought it would happen one way or another, no matter what was done, so we might as well prepare for it. The prevailing reaction among most of the rest of the world was, instead, (1) ignore the reasoning about the causes, and (2) avoid communism. That's rather like saying to someone who has fallen off a cliff, to avoid hitting the bottom. A more sensible approach would have been to analyze Marx's arguments, to decide if they made sense, and, if so, to seek a way to repair or adjust the system so that collapse wouldn't be inevitable.

Instead, people believe absurdities. Paranoia regarding "communist" governments was rampant for decades. Marx thought that a communist society wouldn't have a government, yet people declared the Soviets and the Chinese to be communist. A little mistake is understandable, but the Soviets jumbo-sized the state, making it bigger and more controlling than ever before. Maybe wolves in sheep's garments, perhaps someone took a wrong turn on the way to utopia, but you're not going to avoid the impending sudden loss of downward momentum at the bottom of the fall by failing to understand what you're up against.

I'm not arguing that Marx was correct. Marx had a clue, but he needed a few more clues. However, he was right enough that his predictions have been somewhat accurate so far. It's too soon to tell if he was right about the collapse of capitalism, but we're whistling to ourselves on the way down.

Our world views and society and technology are often founded on absurd fantasies, such stateless super-states and omnipotent creator-gods who aren't

responsible for created evil. Among these unrealistic notions are oversimplified and inaccurate models of political and economic reality, including the beliefs that we live in a “democracy” and that our material well-being flows from a relatively “free market”. The fraudulent nature of what passes for democracy has been considered above, but the idea of markets needs some elaboration. The greater part of economics will be covered in a future chapter, but markets underpin both theory and practice.

### **Bullies in the Agora**

In a market, there is buying and selling. The idea behind a free market is that there is no external control, either in the prices, quantities, qualities, or related rules of engagement. Supposedly, in our society and economy, we have a free markets, or markets which are mostly free. A little impingement by controls to enforce some concepts of fair play is considered necessary by almost everyone, so no market is entirely free. For instance, forcing someone at gunpoint to buy or sell at a certain price is considered bad form, so the *gendarmierie* exercise some measure of control from the outside. The prevailing wisdom is that free markets are good for everyone in that resources are efficiently allocated, and we are, as a whole, better off, than we would be with centralized planning or other controlling mechanisms. (Words such as “efficient” are terms of art, precisely defined, but the intuitive meaning is more or less correct here.)

From logical arguments using market theory, we know that market efficiency is dependent on transparency, which requires that information about transaction be publicly available. In other words, if A and B engage in a transaction T, then every other market participant C, D, E, and so on, will know the details of T, including the price and quantity. With transparency, both

buyers and sellers behave differently from the way they would otherwise, and prices may be lower or higher. Without transparency, not only do some traders fare differently from others under the same circumstances, getting larger or smaller pieces of the pie, the inefficiency makes the entire pie smaller. Because markets are an essential part of our society, we are all worse off for lack of transparency. When someone keeps private the details of a transaction, he or she is stealing from the community.

We have an idealized conception of a market something like this: Buyers go into a bazaar, where there are rug sellers. The rug sellers and the buyers are mostly strangers to one another. They haggle over the prices of the rugs, comparing rug against rug, seller against seller, buyer against buyer, and price against price. From this open, competitive mechanism, the customers get better rugs for better prices, and the best rug makers garner the greatest profits. Customers who are willing to pay more, acquire better goods. Sellers with better or more innovative products, make more money.

The more likely reality is something like this: Most of the rug dealers didn't make it to the market: their designs were stolen, their employees poached, and their machinery was sabotaged by other rug makers. Those in the government, paid by some of the rug dealers, has made it too expensive for many of the other rug sellers to operate. Prices are higher, much of the increase going to pay off lawyers in maelstrom of inter-merchant litigation. The lawsuits keep many creative and innovative designs off the market. A few have left the business entirely, after harassment by mysterious and not-so-mysterious forces, their families attacked, their factories and homes occasionally burned down. Merchants employ espionage, information purchases, and theft to learn weaknesses of buyers, taking advantage of the personal knowledge when deals are made. Disinformation campaigns by some manufacturers and sellers keep

buyers ignorant of important aspects of rug quality, so the buyers cannot effectively compare one rug to another, reducing the incentives for manufacturers and designers to make better rugs. With differences in quality masked, better rugs seem the same as poorer rugs to buyers, so price takes on more importance as a determinant of which products gain market share. The overall quality of product continues to deteriorate. The government becomes even more involved, blocks solutions, and makes the situation even worse.

The idealized portion of the phenomena is a small part of the whole, and ignoring the rest is to ignore most of the important parts.

Later, I will discuss other aspects of economic things, but now I want to draw attention to the informational perspective. As was already said, the lack of information within a market makes it less efficient, and costs society as a whole. Some participants, the ones with less knowledge, are penalized even more for the opacity. In a one-on-one trading context, the party with the best knowledge has an advantage over the other, which, when employed, is intellectual violence in the same way that beating up a physically weaker person is corporal violence. The enormous amount of “market intelligence” gathered by firms enables them to make higher profits – equivalent to taking by force a greater share of customers’ assets – through differential pricing, selective availability, variable terms, and other means. In other words, what you can buy in a market, for what price and under what conditions, is not the same as is available to someone else. As long as we think of markets as those typified by brick-and-mortar retail stores, this won’t be obvious, because that kind of market is atypical, and the complexity of the entire system is hidden from the customer in such settings.

We sometimes think of dynamic pricing as a product of the digital age, but it has been around a lot longer. Merchants have a long history of changing their asking prices and other terms, based on the strengths and weaknesses of

potential buyers. Nowadays, the process has become automated, but is at heart the same activity that took place from the beginning of civilization. Computers, while they can be used for good, can also be used for cyber-theft, however that sin is designated. Automation enables scaling the process, concentration of force, more precise metrics, and aggregation of profits.

In a culture where sin and abuse are taken to be normal, use of specialized knowledge is seen as just another asset, tactic, or strategy to be employed in competitive situations. There is a lie that all forms of competition result in better products and lower prices, and the short illustration above that so-called free markets are often akin to battlefields should make it clear that some tactics worsen the results. At times, the competition is not about the product itself, but rather about underhanded tactics. (Indeed, the use of military metaphors in commerce is common.) Furthermore, there is a difference between knowing that a certain number of people have a greater need for a product than do others, and using that fact against them to extract higher prices. Finally, all of society pays a price and is otherwise involved. The price paid by society may not be visible in individual transactions, and may even be obscured in entire markets, but it appears in the aggregate. The involvement of society does not end with the transaction itself: within every transaction, tainted or not, lie potential burdens (along with benefits) to society such as needs for of legal, health care, welfare, police, educational, regulatory, and other common institutions supported by society as a whole. Finally, the goods traded are not shipped off through a worm-hole to some other galaxy, they remain in existence to be traded again: hiding the details of a transaction is in this regard akin to hiding information through off-shore entities and other similar mechanisms, in that the proper control of a sovereign society over matters affecting its own interests is evaded.

(Even if the goods were removed to another universe, would society be affected by their absence?)

Unlike the old agora, where not only rugs but also most other kinds of merchandise were traded, our modern markets are pervasive in physical and temporal scope. We are never far from advertising, offers, and solicitations: the idealized market comes to us, continually. Many of the more complex and shady parts, however, remain hidden. We cannot understand, or effectively and efficiently participate in, a process when we are unaware of its complexity. Indeed, the biggest determinants even of only the money prices we pay (ignoring the non-monetary costs which might even be greater) are often outside our view. The entertainment-propaganda shows masquerading as “news” won’t tell you about those hidden mechanisms, because they – the media conglomerates which dominate audio, video, print, and electronic entertainment and propaganda – belong to the same owners who control the market participants who prefer to remain anonymous.

The old agora was the birthplace of democracy in European culture. The people met there not only to buy and sell and trade merchandise, but also to buy and sell and trade public benefits and obligations, which constituted the government. The analogies between the economic market and the political market are strong: there is even a great deal of overlap when government policy requires public or individual purpose or sale of economic goods. The government is another merchant, the one which pretends to arrogate to itself the monopoly of physical violence in the agora. (Yes, another lie. Moreover, the existence of economic, intellectual, and other forms of violence isn’t even recognized by the government, except for the very narrowly defined crime of fraud.) The consummation of a deal in the economic agora resulted in a contract, a kind of agreement with specific attributes to make it enforceable by

the government. Political deals result in laws, ordinances, codes, and their resulting execution. The verbal form of a commercial contract corresponds to the codification of laws, statutes, court and other political agreements. (Yes, the courts are political, we merely pretend that they are not.) In both cases, the words are statements of intention: one party (buyer, seller, people, or state) will do or refrain from doing a thing, another party will do or refrain from doing another thing, and so on.

Just as transactional secrecy is inimical to the efficiency of free commercial markets, it is also inimical to the efficiency of free political markets. When the players do not know what is being bargained towards and away, how can they participate effectively in a democracy?

When a commercial contract is violated, the theory is that the parties have an appeal to the civil government, usually to the judicial system. However, when a political contract is violated, where do the people go? To the same people who violated the political contract? In the U.S. system, we supposedly have a separation of powers, to isolate a supposedly unbiased judiciary from the other branches of the government. However, not only is the route to effective hearing of grievances strewn with roadblocks, the pathways to an ultimate appeal to the people themselves – which would exist if this were a democracy, have been paved over and sold to private institutions, which have fenced them in and posted “no trespassing” signs. The jury system has been gutted; direct initiative, referendum, and recall are crippled, and, in many places including the Federal arena, are non-existent; the separated powers, the branches of the government, aren’t separated after all; and, due to government secrecy, the people are likely never to know either the facts of the case or even the existence of the controversy itself.

## **Missing Pieces**

[TBS]

## **To Be Continued**

### **A Work in Process**

This book is a work in process. It is incomplete, and subject to change, but the drafts, such as this one, are being distributed for review and to invite comment.

More chapters to follow, at intervals probably irregular.

## **REVISION HISTORY**

2013.09.21: Fourth Working Draught

added chapters: Destinations: Nowhere; Power to the People; Pressure Points; minor changes elsewhere

2013.03.27: Third Working Draught

added chapters: Maps Phantasmic, Convergence; minor changes elsewhere

## **INDEX**

[to be supplied]