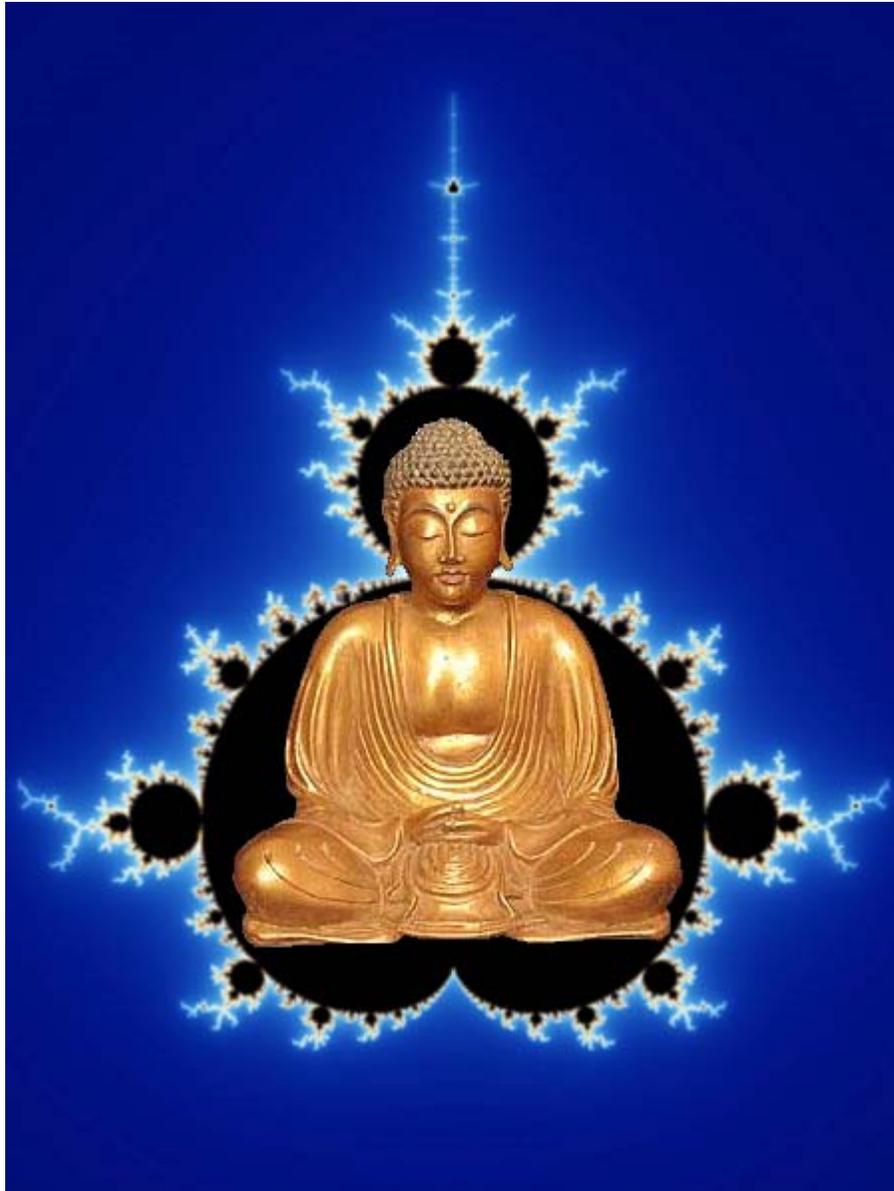


RUNNING AND RETURNING



**A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO NONDUALISM WITHIN
MYSTICAL JUDAISM**

*This essay was written and conceived by Doc Benton,
Doc Benton was conceived by Mr. and Mrs. Benton*

101

Chapter 1

Nondualism

This is an essay about a lot of things. It's definitely about certain aspects of mystical Judaism and Kabbalah, and it's also about nondualistic philosophy and the experience of nondualism. However, there's also going to be a lot of other stuff in this essay. Within you will find references to nondualism in other cultures, particularly its practice in India, and you will also find references to physics, Western poets, and, of course, a lot of my own experiences of reality. But first let's talk about nondualism!

Nondualism is simply the philosophy that all is one and that the existence of a multitude of different objects is just some sort of illusion. Sounds ridiculous and counter to experience, right? Nonetheless, we will continue, and I'll even make a distinction between what I call strong nondualism and weak nondualism. In strong nondualism, we'll assume that there is no external world the way we usually think of it. In other words, no multiplicity of objects truly exists! A multitude of objects with separation between them, which is the reality we usually perceive, is not the true reality after all according to strong nondualism. By the way, strong nondualism is the reality that I both favor and live by, but even if I am wrong, we'll see that it doesn't matter that much.

Weak nondualism, on the other hand, acknowledges the existence of a universe of separation and multiplicity, but argues, nonetheless, that our experience of that world, which is entirely perception, is itself nondual. And that's why it doesn't matter to me so

much if a physical world of multiplicity exists or not. Even if it does, we'll still argue for nondualism within the world of our perceptions.

And one more thing, this essay is going to meander a lot. Sometimes people like to explain things by going directly from point *A* to point *B*, but an alternative way to explain things is to just fill in a dot here and a dot there until suddenly an overall picture begins to emerge. That's the strategy I'm going to follow. So just try to keep up!

Chapter 2

The Relative Unreality of Reality

We usually think of and experience the world in terms of objects being out there and our real self being an awareness that is neatly tucked away somewhere within the brain. That is the view we generally have, that matter somehow creates consciousness when a brain gets sophisticated enough, and our awareness is the ghost in the machine. Thus, probably a good place to start is by realizing that many aspects of this traditional view of reality are simply wrong. For example, in 1905 Albert Einstein published his now famous theory of special relativity which showed that space and time have to bend in order for everyone to observe a constant value for the speed of light. And since speed is defined as the ratio of distance to time, it makes perfect sense that these are the quantities that have to be modified in order to preserve a constant speed for all observers. However, even though his theory of special relativity can be derived using only simple algebra, it has many important ramifications. Among them are the following:

1. Every person and every particle exist within their own unique spacetime frame of reference,
2. One person in one frame of reference can observe two events, A and B , as happening simultaneously while another person in a different spacetime frame of reference might observe A happening before B and a third person might observe B happening before A . In particular, there is no “river of time” that flows in the same manner for everyone.

A consequence for me of the second conclusion above is that time as we conceive it does not exist! In fact, our subjective experience of time seems to be the result of the manner in which our brains connect separate experiences, one to another, in a particular sequence. However, just a little cannabis can often distort time by weakening these links, thus demonstrating that different states of consciousness can result in different experiences of time. In particular, my experience of the world and time is more in terms of everything existing at once, and rather than traveling through time, we essentially move from one location of a room to another location. This, of course, is not a perfect analogy, but you may still get from it a sense of a worldview in which everything is simultaneously present like different objects in a vast depository. Thus, I've often said that the trick to time travel is to first realize that time does not exist! I was particularly gratified earlier this year as I watched the first episode of season 10 of Doctor Who that began with our Time Lord giving a lecture on how time is an illusion and, instead, all the possibilities are already simultaneously present!

And by the way, space doesn't exist either. Only the thought of space!

Chapter 3

The Quantum Unreality of Reality

If the theory of relativity is one pillar of modern physics, then quantum mechanics is the other pillar. In general, relativity is best at describing events on a cosmic scale, and quantum mechanics is best at describing events at the atomic level. However, if the results of relativity seem strange to people, then know that the conclusions of quantum physics are even weirder. In particular, physicist Julian Barbour has noted that the variable “time” may be eliminated from basic equations covering the quantum world. More precisely, time does not appear as a variable in the Wheeler-DeWitt equation which aims to unify quantum theory with relativity, and, thus, Barbour eventually came to the conclusion, like me and many others, that time does not exist.

In quantum physics, every element of matter has a dual nature as both a particle and a wave. Furthermore, when we are not observing a particle through some kind of measurement, the particle is in its wave mode where it simultaneously exists at all locations in the universe but also with a greater tendency to be found in some locations rather than others whenever we do try to measure its position. Upon trying to measure the position of a particle, reality makes that transition from wave to particle, and sure enough, we discover a location for the particle. However, quantum physics also predicts that there will always be a certain degree of uncertainty in the exact location of the particle, and, thus, a second measurement will likely find the particle at a slightly different location and, sometimes, at even a very different location. This transition from

wave to particle is known in physics as the “collapse of the wave function,” and the late, great physicist Richard Feynman once said that this is the essential mystery of all quantum physics, how reality suddenly transitions from a wave to a particle. Furthermore, quantum physics seems to require an observer, the existence of consciousness, in order for this collapse to happen. As a result, I believe that consciousness is built into the very fabric of the universe, and even though it takes a sophisticated brain to make the most of what consciousness can do, I, nonetheless, believe that basic awareness exists in the universe at all possible levels. And while this may seem like a strange idea to some, I find it even stranger to assume that a physical universe existed completely unobserved for eons until something climbed out of the slime and persevered until one day conscious awareness suddenly just popped into existence out of nowhere. Yep, that idea is far more radical to me than the assumption that basic units of consciousness are coupled with all units of matter and that over time matter combined in ways that allowed more sophisticated expressions of this basic awareness to also evolve.

There are many things that quantum physics predicts that sometimes run counter to what people believe. One of the most important is “quantum entanglement” which essentially means that once two particles have interacted, they become part of a single system. This may not seem all that revolutionary, but what it means is that if two particles that are entangled with one another suddenly find themselves on opposite sides of the universe and if you “tickle” one of them, then the other is going to instantly “feel” it. This is one of the reasons that Einstein didn’t like quantum physics, and he thought of consequences

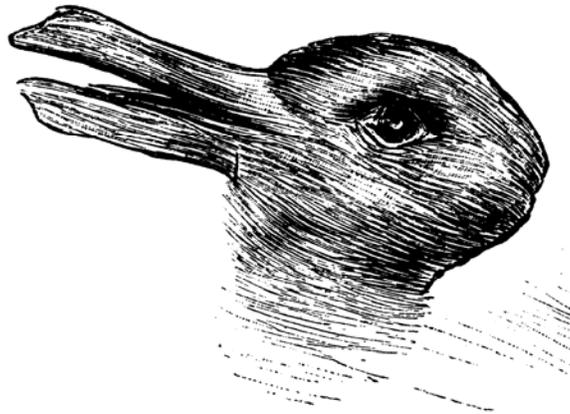
like this as representing “spooky action at a distance.” He didn’t believe it was possible. Nonetheless, several experiments have now confirmed that this is indeed the way the universe works. Particles are getting entangled all the time, and what affects one simultaneously affects the other.

Another prediction of quantum physics that has been confirmed is that the future can affect the past. In quantum physics, this is usually known as a “delayed choice experiment,” and in these experiments measurements that you make in the future can determine which path a particle traveled in the past. However, odd as the results may seem, I see these delayed choice experiments as further evidence that time as we think of it does not exist. Also, to be a little more precise about delayed choice experiments, these experiments are ones where choices made in the future cause wave functions to retroactively collapse in the past. In other words, observations you’ve made in the past aren’t going to be altered. The only thing that can be changed are those things that you didn’t observe in the past. It’s sort of like we can’t change anything that happened in the past, but we can add on to it.

In the mid-1950s, physicist Hugh Everett came up with a radical idea. In order to solve Feynman’s mystery of the collapse of the wave function, he proposed that the wave function never really collapses after all! Instead, we merely choose which of many possible parallel worlds we are going to experience. Thus, I am right now experiencing a reality where I am sitting at my computer typing, but Everett would postulate that there is simultaneously a parallel world where I have made a different choice and am watching

TV instead of writing. In Everett's reality, all possible worlds exist at once even though we have chosen to experience only one of those many possibilities.

Everett's theory of many worlds was not taken seriously when it was first presented, but now more and more physicists are open to the possibility. For example, it not only side steps having to explain the problematic collapse of the wave function, it also explains how spooky action at a distance can occur without anything of substance having to travel faster than light. Rather than having the speed of transmission violate the postulates of relativity, we are merely choosing a universe where everything automatically aligns in the proper way. For instance, consider the illusion below:



You can see this picture as either the image of duck's head or a rabbit's head, but not both at the same time. If you see it as a rabbit, then every part of the image aligns with that point of view, and likewise if you see it as a duck. With regard to quantum entanglement, that means that if I "tickle" one particle, then I have automatically chosen a version of reality in which all the other particles that are entangled with it are also

simultaneously “tickled.” Just like with seeing a rabbit’s head above, it’s all or nothing, and there is no in between and nothing traveling faster than light in order to make all the parts agree. All we are doing is simply choosing from all the multiple worlds a reality where all the entangled parts are in agreement with one another in just the right way!

Chapter 4

The Cognitive Unreality of Reality

It's not that difficult for most people to grasp that we don't see reality quite as it is, and, instead, that we each see our own version of reality constructed by our brain. Cognitive scientist Donald Hoffman has used the metaphor of the standard graphical user interface on a computer to describe the situation. Just as what really goes on inside the computer is very different from what we see on our computer screen, so is reality very different from the user interface that our brain creates. However, Professor Hoffman has taken things one step further by running computer simulations to show that beings whose brains create user-friendly interfaces for dealing with reality are much more likely to survive as a species than those that don't. Professor Hoffman also believes, like I and many others do, that consciousness creates the world rather than the world creating consciousness. His work is fascinating! You can find out more about his research by watching his many videos on YouTube or by going directly to his website to read some of his publications (<http://www.cogsci.uci.edu/~ddhoff/>).

Among his videos, I recommend his TED talk

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYp5XuGYqqY>)

and a brief talk in which he summarizes his theory of consciousness

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cijNBiopNRY>).

Chapter 5

Sometimes You Feel Like a Wave, Sometimes You Don't!

“Rabbi Eleazar said: The first man extended from the earth to the firmament, as it is said: ‘Since the day that God created man upon the earth’; but as soon as he sinned, the Holy One, blessed be He, placed His hand upon him and diminished him, for it is said: ‘Thou hast fashioned me after and before, and laid Thine hand upon me (Psalm 134:5).’”

(B. Chagigah 12a)

Just as particles of matter have a dual nature as both wave and particle, so do I believe that human beings also experience the world in sometimes a wave mode and sometimes a particle mode. When we are in our wave mode, we feel extended, just like *Adam* in the *Talmud* passage above, and we feel connected to other people and to the entire universe. In contrast, when we are in our particle mode, the separation between us and others seems stronger, and we gain a greater sense of self at the expense of losing our connection with others.

Children seem to naturally go through life in wave mode while adults often feel trapped in particle mode. My experience is that it is important to be able to easily switch from one mode to another. Thus, as a particle I am focused and have the clarity needed to do precise work, while as a wave I am free of the confines of the body and able to connect not only with others, but also higher states of awareness and planes of existence. As this

essay progresses, you will hopefully realize how to easily experience both modes of being.

Chapter 6

The Three Souls

“THE BREATH OF (NISMATH) LIFE. It has five names: nefesh, neshamah, chayah, ruach, yechidah. Nefesh is the blood: For the blood is the nefesh (life). (Deuteronomy 12:23). Ruach: this is so called because it ascends and descends: thus it is written, Who knoweth the ruach (spirit) of man whether it goeth upwards, and the ruach of the beast whether it goeth downward to the earth (Ecclesiastes. 3:21)? Neshamah is the breath; as people say, His breathing is good. Chayah (living): because all the limbs are mortal, whereas this is immortal in the body. Yechidah (unique): because all the limbs are duplicated, whereas this is unique in the body.”

(Genesis Rabbah XIV:9)

In the early rabbinic period, the ancient rabbis noted that there were five different names for the soul. In the *Zohar*, that multivolume treatise on Jewish mysticism published in the 13th century, we find a focus on just three names, *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah*. However, some later Kabbalists have added the final two, *chayah* and *yechidah*, to the *Zohar*'s list.

I like to call the *nefesh* the vital soul. It is the basic energy or life force that animates us at birth, and it predominates until puberty. The *nefesh* is, in a sense, a selfish soul. It is concerned primarily with a person's own body and needs and wants, and it is the soul level that predominates in little children. The second soul is called the *ruach*, and I think

of this as our moral soul. It emerges around puberty when we suddenly become more aware of others and develop a greater capacity for compassion and the welfare of those around us. The third level of soul mentioned in the *Zohar* is the *neshamah*. This is a level that always stays connected with and in constant communication with the *Divine*. The *Zohar* sometimes speaks of the *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah* as three different souls, but in other places it acknowledges them as simply three levels of a single soul.

In order for each of these souls to develop properly, a person must engage in righteousness. They must habitually treat others right and with compassion, and they must continually strive to live an ethical life. If one does so, then each level of development of the soul will be balanced. Most people do an adequate job of developing their *nefesh* and *ruach*, but not everyone makes it to their *neshamah*. Nonetheless, you could say that this is an important goal of life. Just as one must develop greater awareness and compassion for others once one reaches their teen years, so should a person's spiritual self mature and emerge as they get older. For me as my *neshamah* develops I feel a light in my head, and the top of my scalp gets tingly as insights pour into it from somewhere else. The great *Gaon of Vilna* called these tingling sensations at the top of one's head *neshamah sparks*. I call them the *neshamah tickle*. However, no matter what you call them, it is important to develop and make your spiritual connection as you approach your mature years.

The *chayah* that is referred to by later Kabbalists is called the *living soul*, and it is said that it is so large that it cannot be contained within the body. Instead, it surrounds the

body like an oversoul that can continually provide advice and guidance. And lastly, we have the *yechidah* which is the *unified soul*. It is the part of us that has never separated from *God*, and in a very real sense it is *God* and the mysterious force from which all creation flows.

“Similarly we find three strands of spirit which flit about and are taken up into three different worlds. The neshamah (spiritual soul) emerges and enters between the gorges of the mountains, where it is joined by the ruach (intellectual spirit). It descends then below where the nefesh (vital spirit) joins the ruach, and all three form a unity.’ R. Judah said: ‘The nefesh and the ruach are intertwined together, whereas the neshamah resides in a man’s character-an abode which cannot be discovered or located. Should a man strive towards purity of life, he is aided thereto by a holy neshamah, whereby he is purified and sanctified and attains the title of “saint”. But should he not strive for righteousness and purity of life, he is animated only by the two grades, nefesh and ruach, and is devoid of a holy neshamah. What is more, he who commences to defile himself is led further into defilement, and heavenly help is withdrawn from him. Thus each is led along the path which he chooses.’”

(Zohar I: 62a)

“‘In the night’ refer to the soul (nefesh) which has sway by night, while the words “with my spirit within me will I seek thee early” refer to the spirit (ruach) which has sway by day. “Soul “ (nefesh) and “spirit” (ruach) are not two separate grades, but one grade

with two aspects. There is still a third aspect which should dominate these two and cleave to them as they to it, and which is called “higher spirit” (neshamah).”

(Zohar I: 83a-83b)

“‘Soul’ (nefesh) is the lowest stirring, it supports and feeds the body and is closely connected with it. When it sufficiently qualifies itself, it becomes the throne on which rests the lower spirit (ruach), as it is written, “until the spirit be poured on us from on high” (Isaiah 32:15). When both have prepared themselves sufficiently, they are qualified to receive the higher spirit (neshamah), to which the lower spirit (ruach) becomes a throne, and which is undiscoverable, supreme over all. Thus there is throne resting on throne, and a throne for the highest. From observing these grades of the soul, one obtains an insight into the higher Wisdom, and it is wholly through Wisdom that in this way certain mysteries are connected together.”

(Zohar I: 83b)

Chapter 7

The Heart of the Matter

“Why was Koheleth's name so called? Because his words were uttered in public (hikahel, to assemble), as it is stated, ‘Then Solomon assembled (yakhel) the elders of Israel (I Kings VIII, 1).’”

(Ecclesiastes Rabbah I:2)

“And more so because Koheleth was wise, he also taught the people knowledge; yea, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs (Ecclesiastes 12:9).’ He pondered the words of the Torah and investigated the meaning of the words of the Torah. He made handles to the Torah.”

(Song of Songs Rabbah I:8)

In the enduring *King James* translation of the *Bible*, the speaker in *Ecclesiastes* is referred to as “*the Preacher*,” and in many other standard English translations of the *Bible* (*Amplified Bible*, *New International Version*, *New Living Translation*, *American Standard Version*) one finds the speaker referred to as either “*the Preacher*” or “*the Teacher*.” However, in the original Hebrew and in many translations by Jewish groups, the narrator is referred to simply as *Kohelet*. The word *Kohelet* is derived from the Hebrew root *koof-hey-lamed* meaning “*to assemble*,” and commentators suggest that this refers to either the act of assembling wisdom or to the act of meeting with an assembly in order to teach. Furthermore, in the Hebrew, *Kohelet* is generally used as a name, but in

Ecclesiastes 12:8 it is also written as *HaKohelet* (*the Kohelet*) which is more suggestive of a title. Hence, *Kohelet* is “*the assembler*” who put together wisdom and disseminated it to the people, and he made “handles” for the *Torah* so that it would be easy for the people to grasp.

“He has also put a world/eternity/enigma/assembler into their hearts so that man cannot comprehend what God has done from beginning to end.”

(Ecclesiastes 3:11)

The Hebrew word for *world* or *eternity* in this passage is spelled unusually (*ayin-lamed-mem*) without the usual letter *vav*. As a result, its spelling is identical to a word meaning to *hide* or *conceal*. Additionally, the *gematria* (numerical value) of this unusually spelled word for “*world*” is 140 which is the same as that of *hikahel* (*hey-kuf-hey-lamed*), another spelling for the verb “*to assemble*,” from which the appellation *Kohelet* is derived. Thus, from the multiple interpretations we can give here for *ayin-lamed-mem* we can conclude that there is something very mysterious and unknowable within our heart or at the heart of our being that assembles this perceived reality for us. The heart of our being assembles time and space, the world we know, for us, and the process is a great mystery. This is important. Remember this!

Chapter 8

Running and Returning

“1.4: Ten declarations of constraint, ten and not nine, ten and not eleven. Understand with wisdom, and be wise with understanding. Examine with them and explore with them, and stand each word and thing on its wellspring, and return the Assembler to its base.

1.6: Ten declarations of constraint. Observed like a flash in a mirror, their purpose has no end. And the words and things of IT are in them, running and returning, and to ITS utterances they rush like a whirlwind, and before ITS throne they bow.

1:7 Ten declarations of constraint. Their end is contained in their beginning, and their beginning in their end. As a flame connected with a burning coal, the Master is unified, and there is not a second. And before the One, what is there to count?

1:8 Ten declarations of constraint. Restrain your mouth from speaking and your heart from thinking, and if your mouth runs to words or your heart to reflections, return them to their place. Thus, it is said, “And the living beings (chayot) ran and returned (Ezekiel 1:14),” and upon this word a covenant was cut.”

(Sefer Yetzirah)

The above quotations come from the *Sefer Yetzirah* which is usually rendered as either the *Book of Creation* or the *Book of Formation*. Given my comments in the previous

chapter, I also like to call this work the *Book of the Assembler* because, among other things, it describes how we assemble our reality. It is the oldest existing book on Jewish mysticism, and while the true believer will claim that it was written by *Abraham*, the grammatical structure of the text suggests that it was actually written during the early rabbinic period between the years 200 and 300 of the common era.

The verses chosen above outline, in particular, an ancient method of meditation that is very much like Buddhist mindfulness and particular nondualistic forms of inquiry developed in India in the 20th century. In a nutshell, this is what the verses instruct us to do:

1. Use both sides of your brain to examine perception, and rather than letting the perceiver get caught up in what is being perceived, center the perceiver or *assembler* at its source, the wellspring of awareness.
2. On the one hand, awareness always seems to be running and returning. It runs to the objects of perception and then it returns to that which does the observing.
3. But on the other hand, the observer and the observed are not really separate from one another. They are not two things, they are one thing. Just like the burning coal and the attached flame appear to be two but they are really one since one does not appear without the other. Thus, there really is no division between the observed and that which does the observing. Any separation we impose between the two is really just an illusion, a false conclusion of the mind. Or as one of my philosophy professors used to ask, “At that place where objects are known, are there any objects?”

4. And finally, the *Sefer Yetzirah* presents a simple, yet ultimately very effective, meditation technique. Instead of letting awareness focus on the object of perception (returning) as we usually do, we simply quiet our mind and focus instead on that which is doing the perceiving (returning). That is all!

The above method is deceptively simple! Typically, we have a sense that objects are seen, objects are known, but that which does the seeing and knowing is itself unknowable in the usual sense. It is an enigma. It has neither shape nor form nor any other measureable property. It is simply the “knowing” part of us into which each perception seems to disappear. However, instead of focusing awareness on the *known* as we usually do, the trick is to let each perception lead us back to the *knower*. And when I practice this technique, these are the results:

1. As my awareness becomes centered at its wellspring, it becomes detached from the objects of perception. Just as in a dream where we later recognize that all the objects were created by consciousness and disappeared into consciousness, so do both pleasure and pain appear as ephemeral objects formed from consciousness with neither being the true self.
2. As this detachment continues, I begin to sense a higher state of consciousness developing. An intense spiritual joy emerges and my heart and my cranium feel filled with a spiritual light. This, for me, is the deeper meaning of the following verse from *Psalms 104:2*, “*Who covers Himself with light as with a garment.*”
3. As lofty as this light is, it is, nonetheless, still an observed object. It just appears closer in oneness and unity with the *source* than the typical object of our

perception. Thus, I keep reminding myself to go even further, to continue focusing on that place into which all perceptions flow, that place which is unknowable and indescribable and which exists beyond such concepts as even existence and nonexistence. This ultimate is for me the hidden meaning of *Psalm 18:12*, “*He made darkness His secret place.*”

This is a technique or mode of perception that I engage in throughout my regular day. Just as a movie is composed of a series of still photos, so does my perception seem to rapidly alternate between objects and Oneness. It is like, “I am seeing an object and now I’m merged with Oneness, and now I’m seeing one object and then another and now I’m emerged in Oneness again.” My usual perception of duality is constantly punctuated with moments of nonduality, and that makes all the difference. And at a higher level, I realize that there is no “running and returning,” there is no duality. It is all consciousness all the time, and we never leave the fundamental awareness. It is a radically different way of perceiving the world, but one which distinguishes between he who knows and he who doesn’t know, if you know what I mean.

Chapter 9

Stillness Speaks

There are various references to a stillness that speaks sprinkled throughout Judaism.

Probably the most familiar reference is that found in *Kings 19:11-12*:

“And he said, Go out, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.”

(I Kings 19:11-12)

There is also a very mystical reference in the *Talmud* to the word *hashmal* that appears in *Ezekiel 1:27* and that is usually translated in the *Bible* as “amber” or “electrum.” In the *Talmud*, however, the rabbis note that *hashmal* seems to be a contraction of two words, one meaning to speak and the other meaning to be silent. Hence, some scholars today translate it as the “speaking silence.”

“What does the word Hashmal mean?-Rab Judah said: Living creatures speaking fire. In a Baraitha (rabbinic teaching) it is taught: Hashmal means, At times they are silent, at times they speak.”

The idea of a speaking silence or a deep spiritual silence is not unique to Judaism, and, in fact, it is at the core of contemporary nondualist philosophy that can be found in India and other places. A very good Internet resource for nondualism is the website *Stillness Speak* (www.stillnessspeaks.com). According to this source, the three giants of nondualism in India in the 20th century were Ramana Maharshi, Nisargadatta Maharaj, and Sri Atmananda. The famous folklorist Joseph Campbell once described his meeting with Sri Atmananda as the highlight of his journey to India. However, of these three, Sri Atmananda is the one most difficult to find information on as the English translations of his teachings are now out of print. Fortunately, though, I have copies of his writings from when they were in print, and his son, Padmanabha Menon who succeeded his father as guru, was my teacher in nondualism when I was much younger. Thus, I got exposed to the “real stuff.” Of course, understanding sometimes comes many, many years later.

I remember being at a question and answer session that Padmanabha Menon was holding one evening in Austin, Texas, several decades ago. There was a lull in the questions, and I suddenly became aware of a very deep and profound silence and stillness. It was a very spiritual stillness that went far beyond the experience of ecstasy and ecstatic states, and as I pondered it I realized that Padmanabha Menon was both the center and source of this stillness. It was at that point that I truly realized that his way of observing the world was radically different from mine and everyone else I knew. It also showed me what the state I was striving for felt like, though as I say, getting there may take people like me a lifetime.

One of the techniques that Sri Atmananda and his son described was to let every single perception take you back to the *source* of consciousness. Quite often, we let things go in the other direction, and we let awareness identify with whatever it is observing whether it be joy or anger or something else. However, instead of identifying so strongly with the object of perception, if you begin to examine the object and try and follow it to the moment when it disappears into awareness, then you will begin to detach from identification with the object and you begin to center awareness back at its *source*. And strong emotions can even be your best teachers as you strive to master this technique, so look upon them as opportunities. The result for me, as described in Chapter 8, is that I begin to feel my being and my cranium become filled with a joyous spiritual light. This, however, is not the final goal. It is only closer to the final goal. You have to continue to let even those subtle objects of light and joy also point you back to and disappear into the *source*. And as I've indicated previously, at one level you experience a sharp separation between the objects of perception and the perceiver of those objects. At another level, the objects begin to automatically lead you back to pure consciousness itself. And at the highest level, you experience no difference between pure consciousness and the objects consciousness perceives. It is similar to a dream where you might easily understand that all the objects of the dream are just manifestations of consciousness. Additionally, concepts such as individual consciousness residing only within you or being no bigger than the size of your brain, they, too, eventually disappear into an awareness that is neither big nor small nor existent nor nonexistent. And if you object and say, "Yes, but the fact that you always come back to the perception of residing within your own

particular body is proof that it is your consciousness and not someone else's," then to that I say, "Returning continually to this body? Well, not always!"

Chapter 10

Revisiting the Particle and the Wave

As mentioned earlier, just as atomic particles have both a particle and a wave mode, so do we. When I am strongly in my particle mode, I not only have a strong sense of my own boundaries, I am also observing objects that appear to have well-defined boundaries. However, as I move into wave mode the boundaries become fuzzier and fuzzier. In wave mode, it is no longer clear where you end and another begins. In wave mode, two people can share the same thoughts and the same awareness. In wave mode, you can realize that the unknowable awareness in you is indistinguishable from the unknowable awareness in everyone else. There is only one awareness! In wave mode, you can travel to anywhere in the past, present, or future, though from our perspective we often call our journeys to the past memories and our journeys to the future simply that which we are creating. However, not only can you talk with yourself in the past, you can also make different decisions and see where they will lead. In wave mode, you can both send and receive messages in dreams, hug others far away, commune with the departed, surround others with a blessing, and sometimes appear as an apparition. There's no limit to what can be done in wave mode! However, what is it like to be 100% in wave mode? In this mode, all objects would be gone. In this mode, even the concept of an object or an observer would be gone. In this mode, even the wave that you may now be picturing in your head will be gone. The wave mode at its maximum is beyond existence and nonexistence, it's beyond all concepts of full or empty, large or small. For lack of a better term, we call it

pure awareness, but we could also call it the unknowable *God* just so long as we don't attribute any characteristics to that *God*. In Jewish mysticism it is *ein sof*, infinity.

So once again, we have these two modes, particle and wave, and at one level they appear completely separate from one another. However, at a higher level, they appear inextricably linked, like two sides of the same coin. And at the highest level we come to the realization that they are really the same thing, the observer and the observed are the same and there never really is any separation of pure awareness into parts.

“We have been taught that all this differentiation of the Divine Personality is from our side and relative to our knowledge, and that, above, all is one, all is set in one balance, unvarying and eternal, as it is written: “I the Lord change not” (Malachi 3: 6).”

(Zohar II:176a)

Chapter 11

Sex, Drugs, and Rock-&-Roll!

I came of age in the late sixties and early seventies when anti-war protests and drugs were a right of passage from high school into adulthood. And now looking back after several years I can definitely say that not all legal drugs are good for you and not all illegal drugs are bad for you. For example, the government considers peyote to be “bad” unless you are Native American and using it as part of a religious ceremony. Then it suddenly becomes “good.” Likewise, legal opioid drugs are automatically “good” unless you take an overdose of opioid medication and die. At that point, even the manufacturer has to acknowledge the result as “bad.” The worst and most dangerous drug in my opinion, however, is alcohol. Statistics show that it’s been responsible for millions of deaths. Nonetheless, history also shows us that prohibition is even worse. In my case, and maybe because I have a small drop of Choctaw ancestry in me, my body doesn’t seem to process alcohol well at all. Remember that previously I talked about the three levels of the soul, *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah* with the *neshamah* being the part of us that creates a bridge between us and the *Divine*. Well, when I drink alcohol, that bridge comes falling down, and I don’t like that. I’d rather be drunk on the *Divine* than on tequila. However, on the other hand, the hops in non-alcoholic beer can be very medicinal.

Aside from legal alcohol, the worst thing may be the risk that is taken when using street drugs because these days you don’t know what they’ve been adulterated with. For instance, psilocybin mushrooms, according to a global drug use survey, may be the safest

drug around when measured by the number of visits made to an emergency room, and this mushroom seems to almost always result in very positive mystical experiences that can be life changing. Nonetheless, if you are given either the wrong kind of mushroom or a magic mushroom that has been contaminated with another drug, then you may die. As it says in *Proverbs 6:28*, “*Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be scorched?*” Along these same lines, I have a certain degree of mistrust of artificial hallucinogens such as LSD. However, it is possible that the bad trips reported in the sixties may have primarily been the result of impurities in a product that was produced in someone’s garage. I can’t say that I’ve ever heard of such bad trips occurring in a clinical setting.

Probably, the most vilified drug of modern times is cannabis, also known as marijuana. For decades, the federal government has produced false and twisted information about this herb. The truth as I see it, however, is that cannabis is a medicine that people use for recreation while alcohol is a poison that people use for recreation. Granted that alcohol in small doses has been shown to be medicinal for many people, but still, in large doses it can be very toxic. Meanwhile, the result of cannabis in large doses is generally that you will sleep for several more hours and then wake up refreshed. For teenagers who do not have a medical problem that requires it, I would not recommend cannabis use at all. Even though some of the research on the relationship between cannabis use and IQ has been debunked by me and others, the teenage years are a time when one should be honing one’s intellectual skills, not a time for sedating one’s brain. However, I do think that a little cannabis use in one’s early twenties can be very useful. It can show you that there are other ways of being and perceiving that are just as valid as your habitual one, and it

can greatly enhance those experiences of intimacy that are at their most intense during youth. And as one gets older, the medical applications of cannabis for coping with chronic pain and the limitations of old age become more and more important. All in all, no one dies from an overdose of cannabis, and it is probably one of the safest mind altering substances around, far safer than alcohol or tobacco. Also, even if it were legalized, probably less than 15% of the adult population would use it regularly. This estimate is based upon the 2014 National Survey of Drug Use and Health that shows that, in spite of its availability, only about 8.4% of Americans 12 or older used cannabis during the past month. Many people just aren't drawn to it! Thus, I strongly suspect that the social benefits of legalization of cannabis would far outweigh the social costs. Nonetheless, cannabis, like just about anything, can be abused, and while it can contribute to a more balanced life, that doesn't necessarily mean that more is better. As songwriter Michael Peter Smith once wrote, "Life gets pretty zippy when you quit doing weed!"



Michael Peter Smith does "Zippy" Gainesville FL
May 2010

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ggXBi2RAWI>

Still, I believe that cannabis can be helpful to a certain extent to those seeking a higher wisdom. It relieves physical pain and distractions, it can help one detach from traumas that may be too difficult to deal with otherwise, and, like peyote, it also has a history of being used as a religious sacrament by groups such as the Rastafari. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if the physiology of enlightenment, from the standpoint of physical reality, doesn't involve the body's own endocannabinoid system to some extent. Sometimes you need a "chill pill."

The bottom line, though, is that regardless of what state of consciousness you are in, regardless of whether you are drunk or stoned or have had your perception altered by medication, you can still practice "running and returning." You can still situate yourself at the center of consciousness and let every perception point you back to your true nature because no matter what is happening in the world of perception, the unperceived perceiver is beyond all that. It is not affected by that, and so the spiritual practice may be continued.

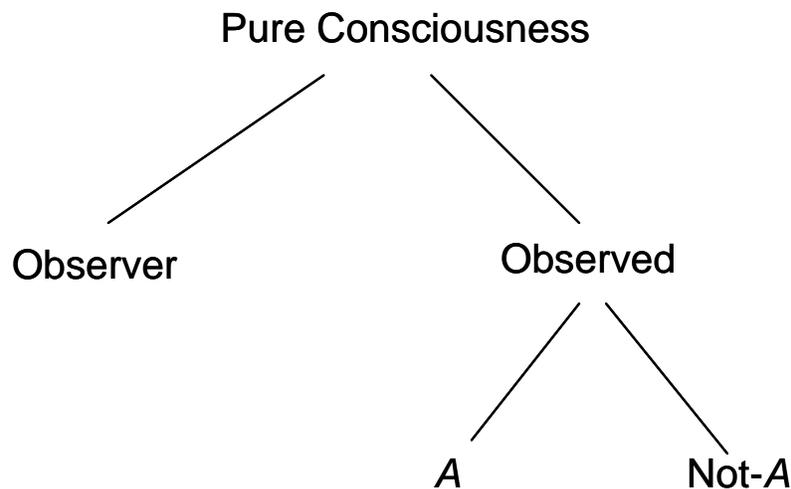
Chapter 12

A River Leaves Eden

“And a river went out from Eden to water the garden, and from there it was divided, and became four rivers.”

(Genesis 2:10)

This passage from the beginning of *Genesis* has great significance in mystical Judaism where *Eden* is a symbol for the source of creation. When looked at from a nondual point of view, we can describe the “four rivers” as follows. To create the perceived world, we must first make a separation between the observer and the observed. These are the first two rivers. However, we must also make a distinction in our field of perception between the object we are looking at and everything else, between *A* and not-*A*, because otherwise we would only be looking at a field of undifferentiated nothingness. It is this second separation that creates the next two rivers in order to give us four in total. We can diagram the situation as below:



Chapter 13

Hillel and the Zohar

In the *Talmud* a man challenges *Hillel* to explain the *Torah* to him while he stands on one leg. *Hillel's* response is very telling:

“What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah. The rest is just commentary. Now go and learn the commentary!”

(B. Shabbat 31a)

The amazing implication of this passage is that the entire *Torah* is really primarily about ethics and how we treat other people. Whether you eat pork or not is not the main point of the text. People are what really matter, and speaking from my own experience I must say that a good code of ethics is very important. Even if reality is an “illusion” and different from what we think it is, there is no point in it being a bad trip. We still have to work to make the world a better place, and we should strive to treat each other with honesty, kindness, and dignity. And if we develop good ethics, then each level of our soul, as it develops, will be an example of balance and beauty. That is what we should strive for. Along these same lines, the *Talmud* also tells us that in the afterlife the first question we will be asked is, “Were you honest in business?” I think there are some people out there who are going to be in real trouble over that one!

“Raba said, When man is led in for Judgment he is asked, ‘Were you honest in business, did you fix times for learning, did you engage in procreation, did you hope for salvation, did you engage in the dialectics of wisdom, did you understand one thing from another?’”
(B. Shabbat 31a)

In the *Zohar*, we also find a summary of what the ultimate goal of Jewish mysticism is:

“This is the sum of the whole mystery of the Faith, of the whole Torah, of all that is above and below, of the Written and Oral Torah, all together forming one unity.”
(Zohar II:161b)

The passage that this excerpt from the *Zohar* comes from refers specifically to two names of *God*. One is the name that is never pronounced but is spelled *yud-hey-vav-hey*. This is the name that represents that which is beyond creation and perception and neither exists nor does not exist. The other *God* name is *Elohim* which represents not only the *God* that we give characteristics and attributes to, but also the entirety of creation. And the final pronouncement is that there is no separation between these or any other thing. All is always one unity, or as the Buddhists say, “Nirvana is Samsara, and Samsara is Nirvana!”

My experience is that we are always striving for this unity, and every pleasurable experience we seek is an attempt to attain this unity. However, ultimately we realize that the real unity is within, not without, and then we no longer need an external stimulus to achieve this unity. Nonetheless, while along the journey, external objects can help. For

instance, the experience of love of any sort is the easiest gate into oneness. Also, in the Native American world, certain objects such as an eagle feather or a buffalo skull are known for the reflection of the sacred that they contain. And in Judaism, it is traditional to recite the *Shema*, the words written below, at the beginning and end of every day.

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom, forever and ever.”

In Hebrew, the first line is comprised of six words and the second line is also comprised of six words. Thus, the *Zohar* says that when reciting the first line, we should focus on unifying six directions in the spiritual world, and when reciting the second line, we should focus on unifying all six directions in the physical world. Again, it’s all about unity!

“The third precept is to acknowledge that there is a God, all-powerful and ruler of the universe, and to make due proclamation of his unity every day, as extending in the six supernal directions, and to unify them all through the six words contained in the Shema Israel, and in reciting these to devote oneself wholly to God. The word Ehad (One) therefore must be dwelt on to the length of six words. This is implied in the passage, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place: that is, let the grades beneath the heaven be unified in it so as to form one whole, perfect in all the six directions. ... After forming this union on high it is necessary to repeat the process for the lower world through all its multiplicity in the six lower directions. This is expressed in

the verse we recite after the Shema, viz. “Blessed-be the-name-of the-glory-of His-Kingdom for-ever and-ever”, which contains another six words expressive of the unity.”

(Zohar I:12a)

Chapter 14

You Gotta Have Heart!

In his talks and discussions, the great 20th century sage of nondualism known as Ramana Maharshi described a spiritual heart that resides on the right side of the chest opposite the physical heart, and he saw this spiritual heart as the *source* of the consciousness that is found in the brain. He also found some scriptural references from his culture to support his insight, and there are others that have had that same insight while many more may have not.

For me, I, too, have that insight. I sense my true self to be in that heart, that place I would automatically point to whenever someone asks me to point to myself. To me, there is a center of activity within the brain, but the spiritual heart on the right side of my chest is felt by me to be the battery for it all. Now whether you sense this or not, it doesn't really matter because it's still just a perception. Some of us may be programmed to sense it that way, but when we merge all thoughts and objects with perception, everything goes away. Thus, whether you sense this or not, it doesn't really matter. Nonetheless, there does seem to be a related passage in the *Zohar* that is pertinent to this issue:

“In them hath he set a tent for the sun’ (Psalm 19:5), because the holy Sun is as a tabernacle of all those supreme grades, and is as a light which has taken into itself all the hidden lights and the whole current of their extension, whereby Faith is manifested in the whole world. To grasp the Sun is equivalent to grasping all grades, because the Sun is a

“tent” including all and absorbing all, and He in turn lights up all the shining colors below.”

(Zohar II:137a)

In this text, the Sun is a symbol for both consciousness and the heart. This passage may allude to the exact same spiritual heart that Ramana Maharshi perceived, but even if it doesn't, it alludes to something else that is very important. Namely, that all things come from, return to, and are contained in consciousness, and it is not necessary to leave the world behind and become a hermit. All that is required is to recognize the true nature of things while still engaged with the world.

Also, when it comes to a spiritual heart, don't forget our discussion in Chapter 7 of this passage from *Ecclesiastes*.

“He has also put a world/eternity/enigma/assembler into their hearts so that man cannot comprehend what God has done from beginning to end.”

(Ecclesiastes 3:11)

Chapter 15

Dream a Little Dream

When we awake from a dream, it is not difficult for us to accept the premise that all the objects of our dream were created by consciousness, that they are made of consciousness, and that they disappear back into consciousness. That's not hard at all, and when we realize that, then it may be easier for us to accept that so-called physical reality is also just made of consciousness.

For me, the physical world is just another dream. It differs from our usual nightly dreams in only two respects. First, it is a dream that we want to be fairly stable, and so we create and accept rules of transformation that allow the dream to change only through effort applied in certain ways. We might call these rules of transformation our laws of physics, and they add stability to the dream by preventing things from happening willy-nilly as in a nightly dream. The second way in which the reality dream differs is that it is a shared dream. Since we can never completely abandon our wave nature, we are always entangled with others, and that causes physical reality to be much more of a shared dream than our usual nightly journeys. Consequently, our aspirations for this world are sometimes overridden by the majority of dreamers.

As I've mentioned before, the notion that consciousness creates matter is much more plausible to me than the other way around. This is also the point of the view in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, the oldest extant book on Jewish mysticism. In that work, the world is created

through the agency of the three mother letters, the Hebrew letters *aleph*, *mem*, and *shin*. These letters, in turn, represent air, water, and fire which are symbols for spirit, the observer, and the observed. They also represent the separation of undifferentiated reality into two opposites and an interaction between them, and that is how the perceived world is created.

“Three mothers aleph-mem-shin, a great and wondrous secret, covered and sealed with six rings, and out of them air, water, fire, and from them originated fathers (yud-hey-vav), and from fathers, consequences.”

(Sefer Yetzirah 3:2)

Chapter 16

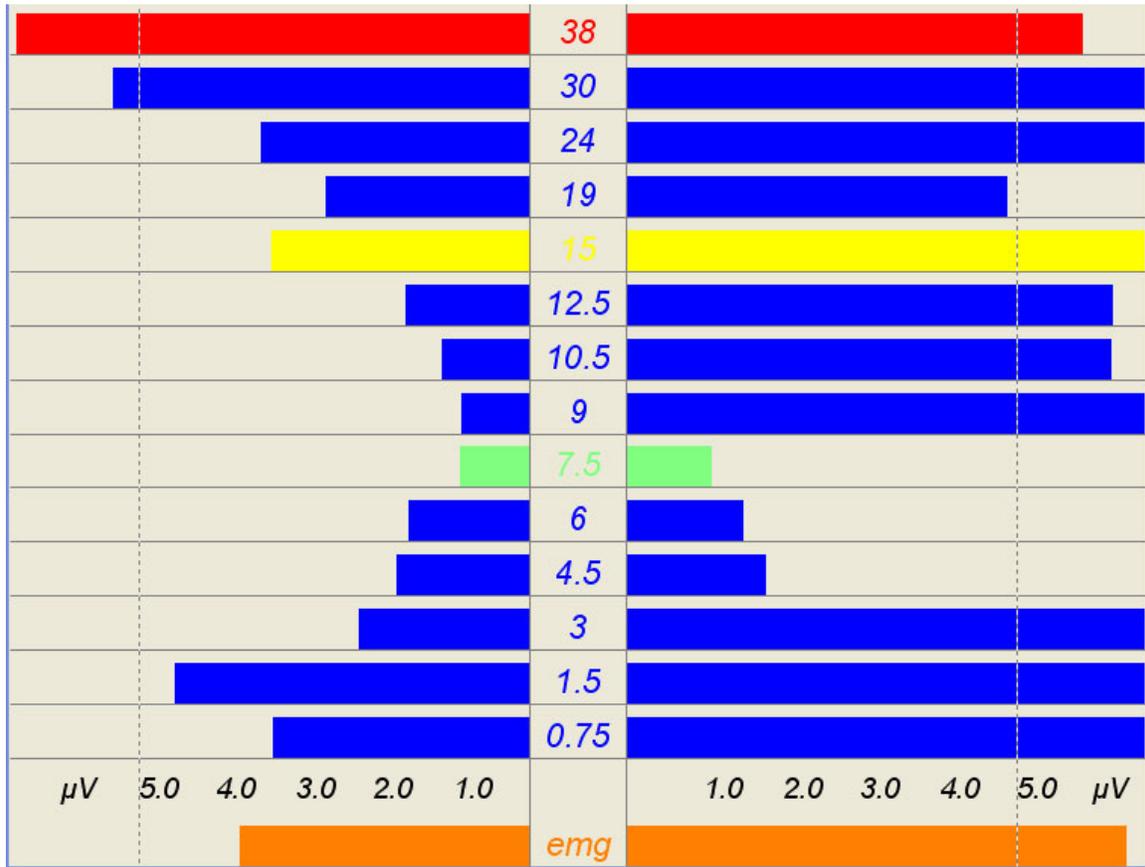
Nondualism for Nondualists

Some teachers of nondualism have taught that we see only one perception at a time, and I agree with this. Even though we often think in terms of seeing several objects at once, nevertheless, it is always one complete perception, one complete nugget of information. However, one point that always bothered me about this doctrine was that if there is only one ultimate consciousness and if we perceive only one frame of perception at a time, then how come we are all seeing different things? This used to perplex me until I realized that, as Einstein noted, we all reside within our own spacetime framework. Thus, my awareness and the awareness of the person down the hall are never really perceiving at the same time, as we normally understand time. Instead, we are each seeing a unique perception as we reside in unique frameworks of spacetime reference, and thus, there is no contradiction.

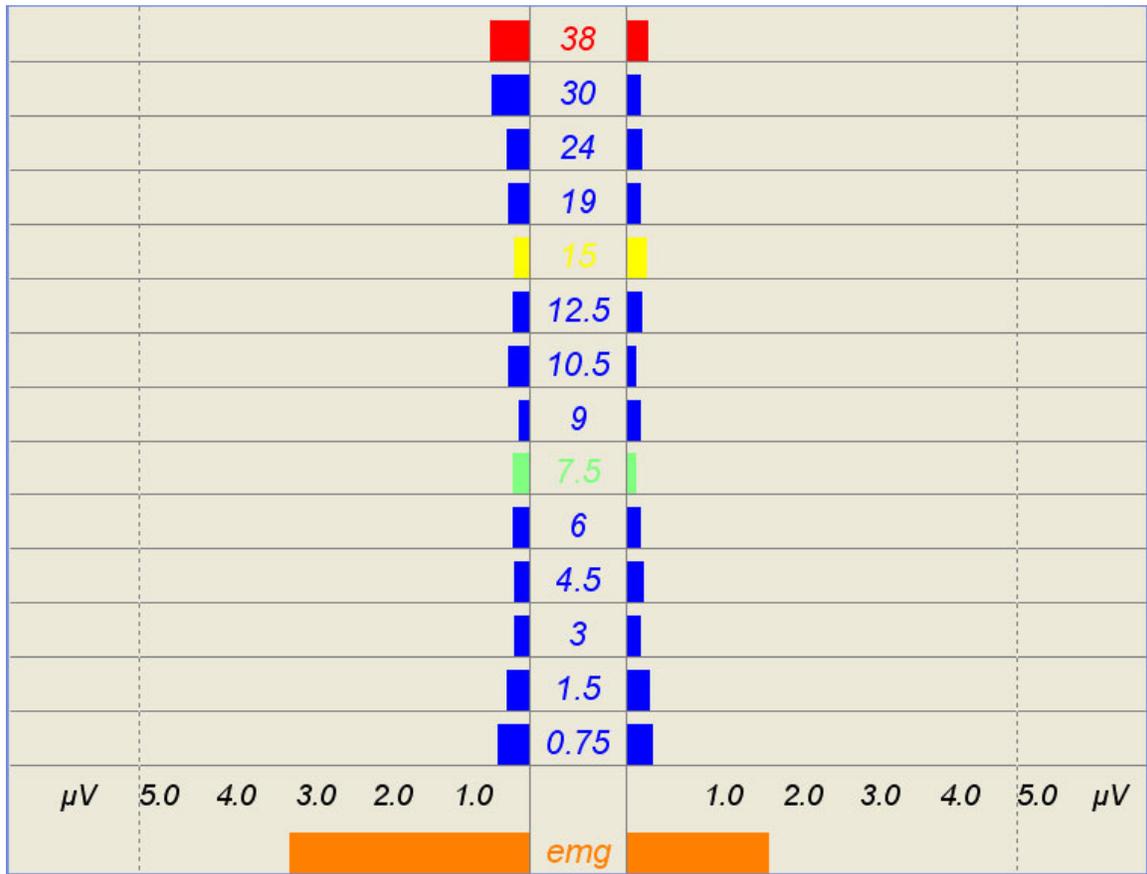
Chapter 17

This Is Your Brain on Nondualism!

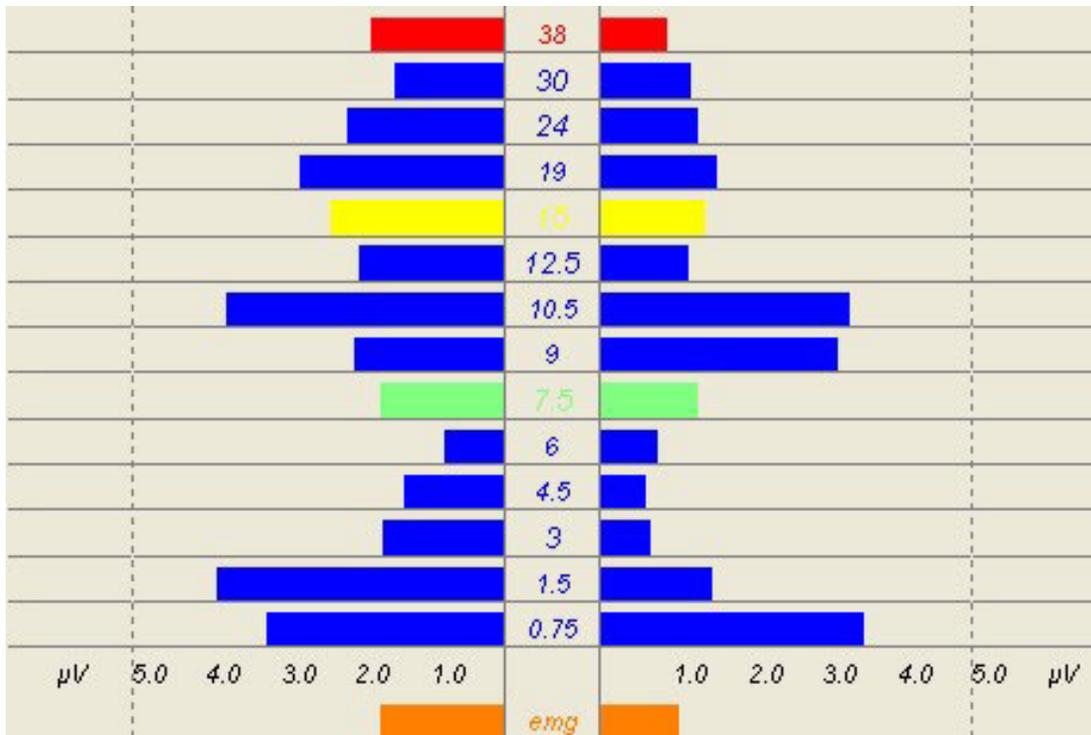
Several years ago, I purchased a small EEG machine so that I could better understand what is going on in my brain during certain states of consciousness. In the images that follow, the usual squiggly lines of an EEG printout are translated into bar graphs representing the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Furthermore, the bars at the top represent faster brainwave frequencies while those at the bottom represent slower brainwaves, and the length of each bar corresponds to the amplitude of the wave. Here are some typical snapshots of my brain.



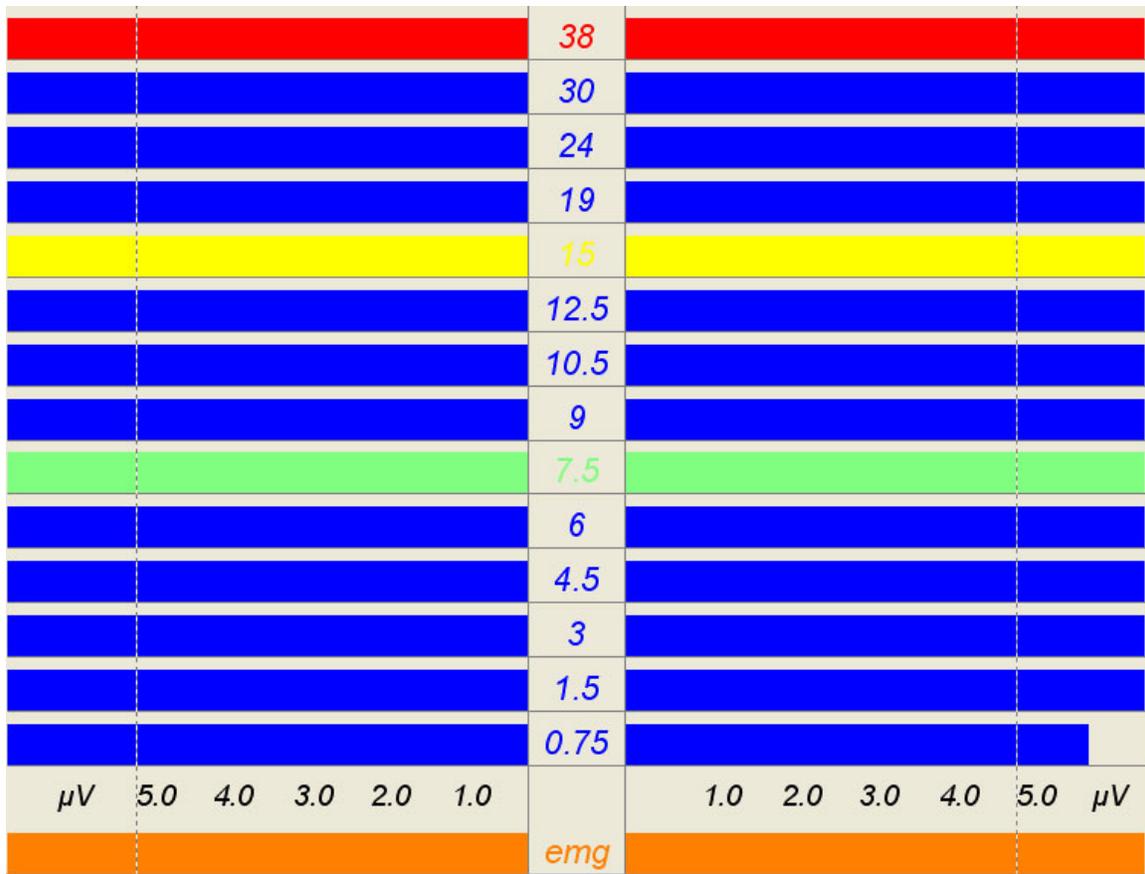
This first picture is a snapshot of what my brain looks like when I am thinking intently about something. Usually, in this state there will be some selected brainwave frequencies that are engaged with strong amplitude and others that aren't.



And at the opposite end of the spectrum, this is my brain when I am simply observing the world with very little thought or interpretation going on. I am just being, and my brainwaves all have very small amplitudes.



And next, this is fairly typical of the symmetrical brainwave pattern found in people engaged in meditation. In this pattern, we see enhanced activity in both the alpha and the delta ranges.



And finally, this is what happens to my brain when I disappear into oneness with everything. The amplitudes of my brainwaves just go off the chart at all frequencies. Sometimes this happens in just the right hemisphere of my brain, and sometimes it happens in both hemispheres as in the picture above. Either way, I disappear, and this can be brought on either by traditional meditation, an “*aha*” moment when solving a difficult problem, or by the method of “running and returning” that I’ve described in this writing. And this is also what my usual day is like in terms of brainwaves now, moments of more typical cognition that are frequently punctuated by these moments of oneness with everything. And that’s what nondualism looks like to me!

Chapter 18

Now that I'm Enlightened, What Do I Do?

When I was young, it seemed like the goal was to become enlightened, withdraw from the world, and just sit on a mountain top meditating all day. However, in mystical Judaism this is not the ultimate goal. Instead, the consensus is that one should come back into this world. As long as one is still living in the world there is still an obligation to help people and to help make the world a better place, what in Judaism we call *tikkun olam* or repairing the world, and to also engage in creative pursuits for the benefit of all. That's what this world is about, and this lesson is illustrated by the following story from the *Zohar*:

“Once there was a man who dwelt among the mountains and was a complete stranger to the ways of townsfolk. He sowed wheat, but knew no better than to consume it in its natural condition. One day he went down into a city, and there a loaf of good bread was placed before him. He asked what it was, and was informed that it was bread and was meant to eat. He ate it and liked it. “What is it made of?” he said. They told him “Wheat”. Later, he was given fine cake kneaded in oil. He tasted it, and again asked: “And this, of what is it made?” The same reply was made as before: “Of wheat”. Finally, he was treated to some royal confectionery, flavored with oil and honey. Once more he asked his question, and obtained the same reply. Then he said: “In sooth, I have all these at my command, because I eat the essential constituent of all, namely wheat.” Thus, through his untutored taste he remained a stranger to all these delicious flavors, and

their enjoyment was lost to him. Even so it is with those who stop short at the general principles of knowledge because they are ignorant of the delights which may be derived from the further investigation and application of those principles.’”

(Zohar II:176a-176b)

To have experienced nondualism does not mean that you stop all your other activities in the world. You are still meant to be a positive and creative part of the dream that you are participating in. You simply engage in creation from a much more enlightened perspective. That is all. Furthermore, we could also derive this lesson from the following *Zoharic* bit of advice regarding *Solomon*:

“When a man has penetrated into the mystery of Wisdom and perfected himself therein, then Solomon tells him to “build his house” (Prov. 24:27)”

(Zohar I:141b)

Once you have found wisdom, continue to create.

And finally, just to demonstrate the universality of this experience of nonduality, here are a few quotes from hither and yon. Enjoy!

“I hear the train'd soprano (what work with hers is this?)

The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,

It wrenches such ardors from me I did not know I possess'd them,

*It sails me, I dab with bare feet, they are lick'd by the indolent waves,
I am cut by bitter and angry hail, I lose my breath,
Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled in fakes of death,
At length let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,
And that we call Being."*

(Song of Myself by Walt Whitman)

"... a kind of waking trance, I have frequently had, quite up from my boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name two or three times to myself, silently, till all at once, as it were out of the instensity of consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being; and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only true life ... I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words?"

(from a letter of Tennyson to Mr. R. P. Blood)

"The Brahmins who do not know the truth vainly recite the Vedas. With earth and water and kusha-grass they make preparations, and seated at home they kindle fire, and from the senseless offerings that they make, they burn their eyes with the pungent smoke. In lordly garb with one staff or three, they think themselves wise with their brahminical lore.

Vainly is the world enslaved by their vanity. They do not know that the dharma is the same as non-dharma.”

(Saraha’s Treasury of Songs)

“The tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal Name. The unnamable is the eternally real. Naming is the origin of all particular things. Free from desire, you realize the mystery. Caught in desire, you see only the manifestations. Yet mystery and manifestations arise from the same source. This source is called darkness. Darkness within darkness. The gateway to all understanding.”

(The Tao Te Ching of Lao Tzu)



APPENDIX I

Time Travel the Doc Benton Way!

As I frequently say, the secret to time travel is to first realize that time doesn't exist. After that, it's pretty easy to do one way or another. So for example, if time does not exist, then we have to think of everything as existing at once like furniture in one large room, and we just move from one piece of furniture to another. Now suppose that this is the case, but that all we can see are three lights (a first, a second, and a third), and that each lightbulb can emit either a red, a blue, or a green light. In this case, there would be 27 different possible objects of perception in our reality since we have a choice among 3 colors for the first light, 3 for the second, and 3 for the third, and $3 \times 3 \times 3 = 27$. Also, we could represent each object of perception by 3-tuples such as *(red, red, red)* or *(green, blue, green)*. Now suppose that we start with the perception of *(red, red, red)*, move on to *(green, blue, green)*, and then go back to *(red, red, red)*. In this case, we could say that we have traveled from *(green, blue, green)* back to the past, to *(red, red, red)*. Now, however, let's suppose that our third perception is not *(red, red, red)*, but instead *(red, red, green)*. In this situation we could say that we have partially traveled back to the past since the first two lights are red again and only the third light is different. This illustrates how to time travel if everything exists at once! To travel 100% back to some point in the seventies, I would have to shift to that perception where everything is completely identical to the way it was previously perceived. However, if all I do is recreate the lava lamp I had back then, then I have only done a partial time travel to the past. And partial time travels are really better since the truth is that not everything you

experienced in the past was all that great. It's better, thus, to just stick with the best and disregard the rest!

There are two ways to time travel, physically and mentally. Of these, physically is often harder because it requires more effort to change the physical world from one state to another, and even though I consider physical reality to be a dream, I also believe that we have designed it to be a stable dream. That means that we all signed a license agreement before we were born stating that we would abide by Newton's laws of motion, conservation laws, and other such things that only let us change the world in certain ways and with effort. Nonetheless, relativity and quantum physics do allow us a lot of leeway when it comes to tweaking the physical dream. But again, regarding physical reality, that "license agreement" means that it's going to be much more difficult to do a full time travel back to the past. Nonetheless, the type of partial time travel described above is much easier and often well worth the effort. Thus, enjoy again those things you enjoyed in the past!

Mental time travel, in contrast to physical time travel, is much easier since there are no constraints involved. All that is required is a sharp focus. And through mental time travel you can do near 100% recreations of the past, you can communicate with yourself in the past, and you can even make different decisions in order to see what they might lead to. Also, keep in mind that quantum physics allows us to retroactively cause wave functions to collapse in the past, what physicists call delayed choice experiments. When

operating under those rules, that means essentially that we don't delete anything from the past, but we can add to it through the decisions we make today.

All travel is through the ever present spacetime, and we can go forward as well as backwards with regard to our perception of time. We often think of our time travels to the future as our dreams and aspirations, and we gradually let those unfold into physical reality. And as with travels to the past, we can explore where different choices about the future might lead us.

A particular way in which we travel to the future is by literally creating new worlds through insights. For example, every time we have an epiphany or new insight, an “aha” moment, we literally change our reality and produce a new heaven and earth. This process is discussed in the following passage from the *Zohar*.

“How greatly is it incumbent on a man to study the Torah day and night! For the Holy One, blessed be He, is attentive to the voice of those who occupy themselves with the Torah, and through each fresh discovery made by them in the Torah a new heaven is created. Our teachers have told us that at the moment when a man expounds something new in the Torah, his utterance ascends before the Holy One, blessed be He, and He takes it up and kisses it and crowns it with seventy crowns of graven and inscribed letters. When a new idea is formulated in the field of the esoteric wisdom, it ascends and rests on the head of the The Righteous One, The Life of the Universe, and then it flies off and traverses seventy thousand worlds until it ascends to the 'Ancient of Days'. And inasmuch

as all the words of the 'Ancient of Days' are words of wisdom comprising sublime and hidden mysteries, that hidden word of wisdom that was discovered here when it ascends is joined to the words of the 'Ancient of Days', and becomes an integral part of them, and enters into the eighteen mystical worlds, concerning which we read 'No eye hath seen beside thee, O God' (Isaiah 64:3). From thence they issue and fly to and fro, until finally arriving, perfected and completed, before the 'Ancient of Days'. At that moment the 'Ancient of Days' savors that word of wisdom, and finds satisfaction therein above all else. He takes that word and crowns it with three hundred and seventy thousand crowns, and it flies up and down until it is made into a sky. And so each word of wisdom is made into a sky which presents itself fully formed before the 'Ancient of Days', who calls them 'new heavens', that is, heavens created out of the mystic ideas of the sublime wisdom. As for the other new expositions of the Torah, they present themselves before the Holy One, blessed be He, and ascend and become 'earths of the living', then they descend and become absorbed into one earth, whereby a new earth emerges through that new discovery in the Torah. This is implied in the verse, 'For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I am making, rise up before me, etc.' (Isaiah 64:22). It is not written 'I have made', but 'I am making', signifying continual creation out of the new ideas discovered in the Torah."

(Zohar I:4b-5a)

So, enhance your understanding of reality by being a time traveler, and create new and greater worlds by bringing all the pieces of the puzzle together until that moment of “aha” suddenly transforms the separate trees into a forest and a *World Tree of Oneness!*

APPENDIX II

Native American Jews

I have both Jewish ancestry and some Native American ancestry, and I've met quite a few people who are also Native American Jews. However, that's not what this appendix is really about. That's just something I thought I would mention. Instead, what I want to discuss now is that, even in a nondualistic reality, there are, nonetheless, various perceptions that can bring us closer to the truth. And this is where we will touch on both Jewish beliefs and Native American practices and a few other things as well.

In Native American ceremonies these days it is quite common to use cedar and sage for ritual purification. The process is known in English as "smudging," and to smudge yourself you can either waft the aromatic smoke over and around you as if you were taking a shower in it, or another person with a fan can direct the smoke around your body. What I find interesting, though, is that these same plants may have been used for ritual purification in ancient Judaism. For example, just consider this passage from *Numbers*:

"And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer."

(Numbers 19:6)

Scholars tend to concur that the plant that we call hyssop today is not the same plant that is referred to in the *Bible*. Instead, the term hyssop is felt to refer to other aromatic plants

such as either thyme or marjoram or sage. Clearly, I have a preference for sage since I am very familiar with how cedar and sage are used in Native American rituals. But regardless of the plant used, you can be sure that its aroma altered one's state of consciousness and that the resulting state was more conducive to experiencing things like nondualism

Also, in the Native American world, eagle feathers and buffalo skulls are prized for their spiritual presence. This can be very difficult to explain if you have not experienced it, but the reality is that these objects can evoke and put one in touch with a profound stillness. Why this is so and why other objects such as owl feathers produce the same visceral nausea in me as eating bacon now does, well, I can't really say. As people in the Native American world would say, eagle feathers and buffalo skulls contain "medicine" that other objects don't. And that's about all we can say. It just has to be experienced. Nonetheless, the point is that once again there are things in the so-called perceived world that can be used to bring you closer to the realization of nonduality. And it's not just Jewish or Native objects that can do this. For example, in my backyard there is a rectangular patio built out of pavers such that the ratio of the long side to the short side is the golden ratio, approximately 1.618034, which is considered the most pleasing ratio to gaze upon. And sitting in the rectangle also alters one's consciousness in a pleasant and favorable way. Hence, there are many tools that can be used to help bring you closer to nonduality.

Years ago I had a roommate who was a full blood Kiowa medicine man, and he taught me how to read the coals and listen to the thunder, and it's not as hard as one might think. For instance, you probably already do it at a liminal level. Thus, you probably already make a distinction between a warm, nurturing fire and an angry fire. And when you do so, you are hearing what the fire is telling you. However, if you stare into a fire or look into coals more intently, then you can begin to receive other messages that may be of help. You may, for example, suddenly get impressions about your personal future or even where the world is headed. And you can do the same sort of thing with thunder. The next time there is a lightning storm, listen to the din from a safe shelter. Sometimes, the thunder is comforting and other times it may be telling you that something very chaotic is just around the corner. You just need to pay attention to the message as you listen!

If you think that these things weren't also done in ancient Judaism, then think again. Didn't *God* speak to *Moses* from a burning bush, and isn't *God's* voice often depicted as thunder? Ancient Judaism is much more like Native American religions than its modern counterpart, and by studying Native American rituals I believe we can also arrive at a deeper understanding of early Judaism. Just consider the following quotes:

“And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.”

(Exodus 3:2-4)

“And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.”

(I Kings 19:11-12)

“The voice of your thunder was in the whirlwind; the lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook.”

(Psalm 77:19)

“You called in trouble, and I saved you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder.”

(Psalm 81:8)

“At your rebuke they fled; at the voice of your thunder they hurried away.”

(Psalm 104:7)

Do you have an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like him?”

(Job 40:9)

“R. Huna said: When thunder goes forth in its full force, no creature can understand it. It is not written, none understands, but ‘who can understand?’ The intelligent know His hints and His thoughts. Said R. Huna: If you cannot comprehend the essential nature of thunder, can you comprehend the essence of the world?”

(Genesis Rabbah XII:1)

APPENDIX III

Riders on the Storm

Mathematics tells us that there is something unknowable about the totality of all things, and this is something that was discovered in the early days of set theory. In mathematics, we usually think of a set as a well-defined collection of some sort, and originally it was assumed that we could call anything a collection. But along the way, some surprising things were discovered. For example, in mathematics we often have to deal with infinite collections such as the set of counting numbers, $\{1,2,3,\dots\}$, or the set of even counting numbers, $\{2,4,6,\dots\}$. Both of these sets contain an infinite number of elements, and eventually some one will ask if that means that the two sets are the same size. At first, it's not quite clear how to answer this question. For instance, part of us wants to say that the sets are the same size because, after all, they're both infinite! But on the other hand, someone may point out that the set of counting numbers contains everything in the set of even counting numbers plus more, and so, therefore, it must be larger. Eventually, Georg Cantor, the creator of set theory, realized that the proper way to compare the relative sizes of two sets was in terms of the kinds of correspondences one might establish between the two sets. For example, we can establish a one-to-one correspondence between the counting numbers and the even counting numbers by associating each counting number n with the number $2n$. Thus, in this correspondence, we can pair the elements between the two sets as follows:

$$\begin{array}{l}
1 \rightarrow 2 \\
2 \rightarrow 4 \\
3 \rightarrow 6 \\
\vdots \\
n \rightarrow 2n
\end{array}$$

As you can see, every number from the set of counting numbers will be paired by this correspondence with one and only one number from the set of even counting numbers and vice-versa, and this is why we call it a one-to-one correspondence. The bottom line now is that if we can find a rule that establishes a one-to-one correspondence between the elements of one set and another set, then we say that the two sets have the same size. Otherwise, one of the sets is bigger than the other. In this case, the one-to-one correspondence rule we have established shows that the set of counting numbers is exactly the same size as the set of even counting numbers. However, this turns out not to be the case with all infinite sets. Thus, it can be shown that the set of real numbers, the set of all numbers corresponding to points on the number line, represents an infinity that is larger than that of the set of counting numbers. Consequently, in mathematics we can have infinities of different sizes. Furthermore, it can be shown that if you take any set, finite or infinite, then the set of all subsets of that set is always larger than the original set. For example, if we consider the set $\{a,b\}$, then this is a 2-element set, but the set of all subsets of this one contains 4 elements, $\{\emptyset, \{a\}, \{b\}, \{a,b\}\}$, where \emptyset represents the empty or null set (the set with no elements).

Now the fun begins. Suppose we consider the set of everything. Then this certainly has to be the biggest possible set out there since, by definition, it contains everything whether

a physical object, a mental thought, or some other type of manifestation. However, we know from theorems in set theory that if we consider the set of all subsets of this set, then the result is something bigger, an even larger infinity. But how is this possible? How can something possibly be bigger than everything? Well, clearly this is not possible, and this conundrum is known as *Cantor's Paradox*. For better or worse, the mathematics profession's solution to this puzzle was to limit the idea of what we are allowed to call a set. In mathematics, we are generous enough to allow most of the infinite collections we like to work with to be called sets, but we draw the line with things that lead to paradoxes like the collection of all sets. Thus, we think of the collection of all sets as a collection of sorts, but at the same time we can't be too specific about it without being drawn into paradoxes. Of course, you can rightfully ask why can't I talk about this if, indeed, I just did? Well, when I was young, most mathematics professors would just sidestep this issue and claim that we are now just venturing into philosophy and away from mathematics. Still, the bottom line is that there is always going to be something unknowable and indefinable about the totality of all things and certainly *God*, by definition, must contain this totality. Hence, *God*, too, is unknowable and indefinable. The ancient Jewish sages seem to have understood this, and in *Genesis Rabbah*, the great rabbinical commentary on *Genesis*, we find an astute statement by the *Talmudic* sage *Rav Huna*, that we can only ever see the parts of *God* and never the whole.

“Rav Huna said: Whatever things you see are but parts of the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He, as it says, 'Lo, these are but parts of His ways.' (Job 26:14)”

(Genesis Rabbah XII:1)

Now let us return to our image of reality as simultaneously both a wave and a particle and also the notion of simultaneous time. If we consider the fact that at the moment of the Big Bang that everything was somewhat neatly intertwined like a tiny ball of yarn, then we can conclude, as Einstein did, that everything in this universe is automatically entangled with everything else at the quantum level. This means that there is a single quantum wave function that governs everything! However, at the same time, this quantum wave function is, in essence, too large to be comprehended in any way. Thus, we can only speak about it in paradoxical terms, such as saying that it is both existent and nonexistent. Also, even though we have concluded that time does not really exist, we are still constrained by language to talk in terms of one thing happening after another. Get used to being limited!

So now, we think in terms of this big wave function that contains everything and is unknowable. Furthermore, there really is no passage of time, everything is already there all at once, and the wave function really never collapses. Instead, it just appears to collapse as we focus on one perception and then another. However, the uncollapsed wave function is always there as the unknowable observer, and there is no separation between the observer and the observed. We are always the uncollapsed wave function. Nonetheless, in terms of this perceptual illusion, this indefinable observer appears to observe me doing one thing, and then it observes me doing something else. In this context, the observer is observing an object called “me,” and there is a very high probability that the next object of perception will contain this same “me.” However, it is also possible, particularly if you utilize your power of will, that the next perception

instead of incorporating “me” might instead incorporate “you.” In other words, the observer within me is the same observer within you, and what we call “me” and “you” are just programs within our brains. The natural thing is to always have the experience of “me” as my perceptions change, but it is entirely possible to switch to the observer of “you.” And this is exactly the sort of thing that happens in the movie “Being John Malkovich.” This can be done, and we all do it to some extent. We all from time to time look at the world through another person’s eyes, because if we didn’t, then we would never experience empathy. But if you learn how to do this consciously, then don’t start messing around with another person’s decision making process, with their free will. That’s only going to lead to big trouble!

APPENDIX IV

How Do I Nondual Thee? Let Me Count the Ways!

“And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and he said, Thus shall you say to the people of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.”

(Exodus 3:14)

As many will recall, in *Exodus* the prophet *Moses* asks *God* what *His* name is, and *God* responds simply with *I AM*. Interestingly, this is also the instruction that the 20th century sage Nisargadatta Maharaj was given by his master. More specifically, no matter what happens, Nisargadatta was told to just focus on “I am.” What I find fascinating about this is that this is a thought that instructs you to focus on the source of thought, and if we break it down further, we could say that it instructs you first to focus on “I,” your sense of self, and then go beyond the manufactured sense of who you are to the level of just being. The end result is the same as that of “running and returning.” The focus is once again upon the wellspring of consciousness. We could also argue that the same instruction was given to *Abraham* in *Genesis 12:1*.

“And the Lord had said to Abram, Go from your country, and from your family, and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.”

(Genesis 12:1)

A much deeper meaning to this passage is discovered when we examine the original Hebrew wording. In this instance, the phrase which is usually translated as “go” is *lech lecha* in the Hebrew, and this expression uses a reflexive form of the verb “to go.” In other words, what it really says is *go to yourself*.

“Therefore it is written lech lecha (literally, ‘go to yourself’), to give light to yourself and to all that shall follow thee from now onwards.”

(Zohar I:78b)

The reality is that many people in many different cultures have discovered paths to the true Self, and all these paths lead to the same end. Below, in no particular order, are my favorite paths.

1. *I AM* – No matter what happens, focus on *I AM*, and you can do this as a two step process. If you are observing something, then first remind yourself who is doing the observing. And second, remind yourself that the “I” you give a name and characteristics to is not the real “I.” It is just another perception, and behind it stands the real “I,” the source of being, the *AM*.
2. *Running and returning* – Every time your awareness runs after objects, it also seems to return that object of perception back to awareness. Hence, every perception points back to the observer, and, thus, you can develop the habit of letting every perception

immediately return you to that center where all knowing takes place.

3. *There is no separation between the observer and the observed* – We usually make a separation between these two things, but that separation is a fallacy just as, for example, one characteristic of a fire such as “flame” is never present without all the other characteristics being there, such as “heat.” In this case, we observe an object, but where is the separation between the object and its observer? The knowing of the object takes place in consciousness, and if you still want to believe in an objective reality apart from consciousness, then be my guest! However, you should also acknowledge that everything we know and everything we experience takes place in consciousness, and the only thing we know for certain from experience that exists is consciousness. Thus, let yourself be aware that every perception you have is composed of consciousness and is not apart from it. It is like when you awake from a dream and realize that all the objects of the dream were just different manifestations of consciousness. When you realize that the observer and the observed are the same, then even *running and returning* will no longer exist for you.

4. *Go to yourself!* – Once you have found your true Self, the true center of your being, simply go to it all the time. And if anything distracts you, then let even the perception of that distraction point you back to your Self! In that way, even strong emotions and feelings can be your best teachers. When you can feel pain and still let that pain take you back to who you really are, then you have arrived!

5. *There is no space and time!* – There is no time, there is only the thought of time.

Similarly, there is no space, only the thought of space. All things exist at once in one dimensionless point without extension. In terms of quantum physics we might say that there is a single wave function that contains the infinity of all possibilities, and that we simply focus on one possibility at a time, and we give that possibility a location in time and space. From our perspective, time and space are a framework that we navigate in, and as we give rise to specific possibilities, so are others doing the same. But from a higher perspective, the wave function never collapses at all. All infinite possibilities still exist, and nothing changes. And from the highest perspective, there is no wave function to speak of and there is no dimensionless point to speak of. We can only speak in such terms once we are already immersed in duality. But once duality goes away, so do these various ways of characterizing it.

6. *Everything you see is a shadow, and most shadows lack substance* – Go through your day with the thought that all that you see is but a shadow without substance. It is like the light on your TV screen which you mistake for something else even though it is only light. On the one hand, most shadows lack substance, but if a shadow is a reflection of something more eternal, then we will think of it as having substance because it brings you closer to that ultimate truth. Thus, love, compassion, honesty, and happiness are all shadows with substance. They all reflect the higher truth. But on the other hand, greed, hate, and dishonesty are all shadows that are completely lacking in substance. Recognize them for what they are and move on. Also, the real happiness is within you, not the object that triggers it!