

The Evolution of Human Consciousness

A Vision of Possibilities for Human Life

Franklin P. Mason

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Dedication

To the very early Christians of the Eastern Mediterranean, especially Paul; and to the holy masters of the Vedic tradition of India, especially Shankara; and to all the men and women of all times and all places who have lived the Truth.

And a special dedication to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, my teacher, from whom I learned most of the information presented in this book and without whom this book would not have been possible.

Transcending thought is infinitely more valuable than thinking.
Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1918 – 2008)

All truth passes through three stages.
First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed.
Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.
Arthur Schopenhauer (1788 – 1860)

What gets us into trouble is not what we don't know.
It's what we know for sure that just ain't so.
Mark Twain (1835 – 1910)

Some things are true whether you believe in them or not.
Seth in the movie *City of Angels* (1998)

There is one Truth that we must always keep in mind no matter what is under discussion in this book:

All of Existence is One. God is One.

All that exists is God. God is all that exists.

We might, at times, seem to deviate from that one Truth. But that is seeming only, merely to make a point.

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Preface

This book contains *information*. It does not contain knowledge or wisdom; it contains information. The information presented here has to do with the nature of Reality, the nature of Existence.

In the history of the world, at some times and places, this information has been readily available. At other times and places, it has not. Unfortunately, for many centuries in the West, this information has not been readily available. Because this information has been accessible to only a few, it has taken on an aura of the mysterious. But there is nothing mysterious about it. Recently, this information has become more and more accessible. And now is the time for this information to be readily available to all so that it can be understood and lived by everyone in the world.

The nature of Reality is often thought of as the province of religion. However, that is exactly backward. Religion is a human response to Reality.¹ The fundamental Reality of life is transcendent; it is beyond our ordinary world. The world around us and our bodies and thoughts and so on are also reality, but spelled with a lower case “r” rather than with a capital “R”. These things are transient; they have no permanent Reality. Reality transcends religion and the world.

There is an aspect of Existence that is Absolute in nature: It is eternal and unchanging. This Absolute aspect of Existence is the basis of all that we know in the everyday world. The vast majority of people on the earth today have lost touch with this aspect of Existence. Most people believe that everything is relative. This lack of the fundamental information about Existence has set the world adrift without a mooring to an unchanging reference point. The result is obvious: a world of constant struggle and strife. We need to return to a world in which information about the Absolute aspect of Existence is common information. Only then can the world be transformed such that it can fulfill its potential as a place of peace and happiness for its inhabitants.

Words cannot express Truth. Truth can only be experienced. However, words can act as pointers to Truth. It is my hope that the words in this book point to Truth for you and for the many others like you who somehow feel that there must be more to life.

I am a technical writer. A technical writer receives information from subject matter experts (SMEs), organizes and systematizes it, and then presents it in such a way that (hopefully) everyone can understand it. The SMEs for this book are the saints and sages of the past who have lived the Truth and who have shared that Truth in their writings and speeches. The presentation of the information in this book is new. The information, itself, is age-old; it is merely recast for the 21st century. All praise for this information goes to those who have lived the Truth. If I have misunderstood or misinterpreted that Truth, all blame for that goes to me.

¹ Refer, for example, to Hick, John H., *Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*, especially pp. 236 to 240.

The saints and sages have provided us with this essential and invaluable information, a pearl beyond price. It is my mission and my passion to present this information in a clear and concise manner, in a manner that anyone can understand. I feel that everyone needs to know the information in this book. I also feel that, if it is properly understood and if it is acted upon by enough people, this information can change the world.

Franklin P. Mason
Clayton, California
November 2011

P.S. “The paths are many; the goal is one.” Each person is unique. Each person follows his or her own path to the goal. No two paths are the same. The path that is outlined in this book is an idealized one that we might follow if we go through all the phases of human evolution. You might skip or combine some of the steps described here. The path you follow is yours alone.

1

The Unchanging and the Ever-Changing

We all experience in our everyday lives that everything is always changing. We never look at the same river twice. Each wave crashing on the shore is unique, different from the ones that have come before and from the ones that follow. The wood in the dining room table once stood as a tree in a forest and might someday provide fuel for a warming fire. In addition, science tells us that the atoms and molecules in everything are in constant motion, even though that might not be apparent to our perception. So we experience and understand that in the physical / material world everything is always changing.

However, can we ask the question: Is there an aspect of Existence that is unchanging? If we know that there is an aspect of Existence that is always changing, might there be another aspect that is never changing? In our experience, we know that things come in pairs of opposites: light and darkness, heat and cold, contraction and relaxation, in and out, up and down. Therefore, is it not logical to posit an aspect of Existence that is unchanging, which is complementary to the ever-changing aspect?

If there are two aspects to Existence, perhaps we can draw a diagram of Existence as is shown in Figure 1-1 on page 3. In this representation, the area above the line represents the ever-changing aspect and that below the line represents the unchanging aspect.

What would the unchanging aspect of Existence be like? We know that it cannot be a thing or a being or matter or energy. All of these things change. Therefore, it must be no thing, no being, no matter, no energy. Also, it would be eternal, without beginning or end, outside of time. And finally, it would be infinite, without boundaries, outside of space.

Do we have any experience of the concept of an unchanging aspect of Existence? A passage from the Tanach, the Hebrew Bible, provides us with an answer. Several thousand years ago the following verses were written, which are now referred to as Genesis (Bereshith) Chapter 1, verses 2 through 4:²

²Now the earth was formless and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.

³And God said: 'Let there be light'. And there was light.

⁴And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.

Genesis 1:2 describes the condition of Existence before the beginning: It is “formless and void” with “darkness on the face of the deep”.³ Both of these expressions are metaphors for

² The English translation is modified (slightly) from the Jewish Publication Society translation [1917], taken from: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0101.htm>.

³ In Hebrew, “formless and void” is *tohu wa-bohu* (תְּהוֹ וּבֹהוּ) and “the deep” is *tehom* (תְּהוֹם). (The Hebrew text is taken from Wikipedia®.)

unchanging Nothingness. Both expressions suggest an infinite, shapeless, undifferentiated, unfathomable silence of unchanging Nothingness; the limitless deep of primordial waters; the womb of Creation.

What phrases other than those in Gen 1:2 could better express the inexpressible: the unchanging aspect of Existence?

Thus, even though the unchanging aspect of Existence is not, necessarily, in our everyday experience, it is known to us intellectually through our holy books, not only the Hebrew Bible but through the holy books of all religions.⁴

A question might arise: Is this unchanging aspect of Existence to be feared or avoided? The answer is: No, just the opposite. In Genesis 1:4, the “Light,” is called “good.” And the Light becomes manifest from unchanging Nothingness. Thus, unchanging Nothingness is the Source of the Good. In addition, as we will see in later chapters, this unchanging Nothingness is the true nature of the Self. It is the I AM. Thus, the unchanging Nothingness is the Source and goal of Existence. It is to be sought after, not to be avoided.

[Note that in the Genesis account, both the “formless and void” and “the deep” preexist the “Light” (which, as we will see, is God the Creator). With the manifestation of the “Light”, the ever-changing aspect of Existence comes into being. However, preceding the manifestation of the ever-changing aspect, the unchanging aspect is already present.]

In this book, the unchanging aspect of Existence is called the “Absolute,” and the ever-changing aspect is called the “Relative.”

See the following page for Figure 1-1. A diagram of all of Existence, showing its two aspects: ever changing and unchanging

⁴ The passage under discussion here happens to be taken from the Hebrew Bible. Similar passages, however, are found in the holy works of many cultures from around the world. Refer, for example, to the following: Sproul, Barbara C., *Primal Myths: Creation Myths around the World*.

Ever Changing



Unchanging

2

The Absolute and the Relative

Existence has two aspects: an unchanging aspect and an ever-changing aspect. The unchanging aspect of Existence is unmanifest; it contains no forms. The ever-changing aspect is manifest; it contains myriad forms. The unchanging aspect of Existence exists outside of time and space. The ever-changing aspect is within time and space.

The unchanging aspect of Existence is called the *Absolute*. The ever-changing aspect is called the *Relative*.

The Absolute

The Absolute exists!

The Absolute exists. It⁵ is Existence Itself. There is no state or condition in which It does not exist. The Absolute has no consciousness. It is Pure Consciousness, Consciousness Itself. Ultimately, the Absolute is all that exists. It is the only permanent reality.

That the Absolute exists is the most important Truth. Very unfortunately, however, knowledge of this most fundamental Truth has been lost, at least in the religions of the Western world and in the mass culture.

How do we know that the Absolute really exists? The Absolute cannot be seen or measured or even understood by the human intellect. However, It can be experienced! In fact, throughout the ages, and in all parts of the world, people have come face to face with the Absolute, the Source and Ground of all Existence. It is this very experience that constitutes the one common thread that binds together in unity all the great religious and philosophical traditions that have existed since time began and all that will exist in the future.⁶

⁵ The English language has three (third person singular) pronouns: he, she, and it. To refer to the Absolute and the Creator easily, a pronoun needs to be assigned to each. In addition, to distinguish the two, a different pronoun needs to be assigned to each. Obviously, neither the Absolute nor the Creator has gender. However, only one can be assigned the pronoun "it," and the other needs to be assigned the pronoun "he" or "she." The Absolute is Consciousness Itself. The Absolute does not hear or see and has no likes or dislikes. Therefore, the Absolute can be referred to as "It." However, the Absolute gives rise to the Relative. Therefore, in some sense, the Absolute can be called the "Father" of the Relative. In some systems, the Absolute is referred to as "He."

The Creator is definitely not an "it." The Creator has individual consciousness. The Creator creates the universe. The Creator can hear and see and has likes and dislikes. Therefore, the Creator needs to be referred to as either "He" or "She." The Creator is the "Mother" of the universe. Therefore, the pronoun "she" seems appropriate. However, (at this time) in Western culture, the Creator is usually referred to as "He." Absolute and Creator: It and She; It and He; He and She? For this book, the pronoun assigned to the Absolute is "It," and the pronoun assigned to the Creator is "He."

⁶ For an interesting view on this topic, refer to Hick, John H., *Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*.

People who have experienced⁷ the Absolute in a profound manner are called mystics or saints. Many of these people have tried to explain the Absolute in words. That is not possible, of course. But the experience is so wonderful, they could not help but try to describe It, and to encourage us to experience It too.

The major problem that mystics of all eras have come up against in trying to express their transcendental experiences to others is that these experiences lie beyond the bounds of the rational (and even intuitional) mind on which human written and verbal communication is based. Many methods have been tried, including allegory, antinomy, poetry and mundane approximation; but all founder on the fact that transcendental experience cannot be adequately conveyed through sub-transcendental means of communication.⁸

Each of the great mystics, each of the great saints, spoke in his or her own language, his or her own restricted terminology, and the consequence is that today many regard each of these efforts to reveal the nature of reality as disparate and unrelated “philosophies” or “religions.” But the experience of the one Reality is the same for all; and in all the declarations of the many prophets, saints, and messiahs, we can hear the attempt to convey a common knowledge based on that common vision.⁹

⁷ Strictly speaking, we do not “experience” the Absolute. For an experience to occur, there must be an experienter and an object of experience. The Absolute is not an object. Therefore, it is not possible to “experience” the Absolute. However, “experience” is the best word available to express the idea.

⁸ From: www.byzant.com/Mystical/Kabbalah/Veils.aspx

⁹ Modified from Abhayanaanda, Swami, *History of Mysticism: The Unchanging Testament*, p. 386.

In every language, therefore, and in every religious and philosophical tradition, we find this one Reality called by countless different names. Here are just a few of those many names:¹⁰

Vedas (Hinduism)	Brahman
Egyptian Mystery Religion ¹¹	Nun
Genesis (Judaism)	tohu wa-bohu (formless and void)
Genesis (Judaism)	tehom (the deep)
Buddhism in India	Dharmakaya (the Body of Truth)
Buddhism in China	Hsin (Consciousness)
Buddhism in Japan	Kokoro (Consciousness)
Christianity ¹²	God <i>a se</i>
Gospel of Thomas (Christianity) ¹³	Kingdom
Taoism	Tao
Kabbalists (Judaism)	En Sof (limitless nothing)
Sufis (Islam)	Haqq or Al Haq (the Real)
Meister Eckhart (Christianity)	Gottheit (Godhead)
Paul Tillich (Christianity) ¹⁴	Ground of Being
Maharishi Mahesh Yogi ¹⁵	Being
Eckhart Tolle ¹⁶	Being

¹⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the terms in this list are taken from Abhayananda, Swami, *History of Mysticism: The Unchanging Testament*, pp. 216 and 387 and from elsewhere in that book.

¹¹ van den Dungen, Wim, *Liber Nun: On Precreation in the Pyramid Texts*:
<http://www.sofiatopia.org/maat/nun.htm>

¹² “God *a se* ... infinite self-existent being, beyond the grasp of the human mind...” from Hick, John H., *Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*, p. 237.

¹³ (Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven): Stevan Davies, Translated and Annotated by, *The Gospel of Thomas: Annotated & Explained*, p. 5

¹⁴ Tillich, Paul, *Systematic Theology, Three Volumes in One*, Vol. II, pp. 9 – 11

¹⁵ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *The Science of Being and Art of Living*, pp. 27 to 49

¹⁶ Tolle, Eckhart, *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*, p. 13

The Absolute (Brahman in the Vedic tradition of India) is beyond sensory and mental comprehension. And It cannot be described. But It can be experienced. Shankara, who experienced the Absolute perfectly, has recorded his experience as follows:

Brahman—the absolute existence, knowledge, and bliss—is real.¹⁷

... Brahman is beyond speech or thought. It is the pure, eternal consciousness. It is absolute bliss. It is incomparable and immeasurable. It is ever-free, beyond all action, boundless as the sky, indivisible and absolute.

... Brahman is beyond cause and effect. It is the reality beyond all thought. It is eternally the same, peerless, outside the range of any mental conception.

... Brahman knows no decay or death. It is the Reality without beginning and without end. It is like a vast sheet of water, shoreless and calm. . . . It is one, the eternal, forever tranquil.¹⁸

And again, in more poetic form:

... Brahman fills everything—beginningless, endless, immeasurable, unchanging, one without a second. In Brahman there is no diversity whatsoever.

Brahman is pure existence, pure consciousness, eternal bliss, beyond action, one without a second. In Brahman there is no diversity whatsoever.

Brahman is the innermost consciousness, filled full of endless bliss, infinite, omnipresent, one without a second. In Brahman there is no diversity whatsoever.

Brahman cannot be avoided, since it is everywhere. Brahman cannot be grasped, since it is transcendent. It cannot be contained, since it contains all things. It is one without a second. In Brahman there is no diversity whatsoever.

Brahman is without parts or attributes. It is subtle, absolute, taintless, one without a second. In Brahman there is no diversity whatsoever.

Brahman is indefinable, beyond the range of mind and speech, one without a second. In Brahman there is no diversity whatsoever.

Brahman is reality itself; established in its own glory; pure, absolute consciousness, having no equal, one without a second. In Brahman there is no diversity whatsoever.¹⁹

How can we describe the Absolute? What are Its attributes? The Absolute is beyond description and is without attributes. Yet we must make an attempt. The Absolute is unmanifest, unchanging, omnipresent, and transcendent (outside of time and space). The Absolute is uncreated and uncreating. (Refer to Table 2-1.)

¹⁷ Prabhavananda, Swami and Isherwood, Christopher, Translated with an introduction by, *Shankara's Crest-Jewel of Discrimination (Viveka-Chudamani)*, p. 7

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 101

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 110 - 111

Table 2-1. The two aspects of Existence: Absolute and Relative

	Unmanifest	Unchanging	Transcendent (Outside of Time and Space)	Omnipresent and Infinite	Omnipotent	Omniscient	Role in Creating*
Absolute	Yes	Yes	Yes [†]	Yes	No	No	Uncreated Not Creating
Relative							
Creator	No	No	No [‡]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Uncreated Creating
(Individual in) Creation	No	No	No	No	No	No	Created Not Creating

*Concept from: van den Dungen, Wim, Liber Nun: On Precreation in the Pyramid Texts: <http://www.sofiatopia.org/maat/nun.htm>

[†]Timelessness is in the realm of the Absolute.

[‡]Infinite time is in the realm of the Relative.

Before the Beginning

Before the beginning, the Absolute exists alone. Before the beginning, all of Existence is Nothingness.

Genesis 1:2 begins:

Now the earth was formless and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep ...

Nothingness: “formless and void”. The Absolute: “the deep”.

It Is the Nature of the Absolute to Become Manifest!

Latent within the unmanifest Absolute is its nature to become manifest.

Before the beginning, the Absolute exists alone but with the Creator inherent in the Absolute in latent form.

Genesis 1:2 continues:

... and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.

Even before the beginning, the “Spirit of God,” the Creator’s breath, is lively on the “face” of the Absolute. Thus, the Creator and, by implication, His Creation are inherent in the Absolute.

This concept is presented in slightly different form as follows:

... manifest creation, which includes men and other creatures, springs from the unmanifest, ... by virtue of *prakriti* [Nature].

... the unmanifest Being, remaining unmanifest and eternal, takes birth.

Nothing happens to the Absolute, and yet the Incarnation of the Absolute springs up, by virtue of Its own nature.²⁰

The Relative

Before the beginning, the Relative does not exist. In the beginning, the Relative becomes manifest from the Absolute. The Relative has two states: *on* (in which it exists) and *off* (in which it does not exist). The Relative remains One with the Absolute but also becomes separate from It!

The Relative is ever-changing. In the Relative, everything is always changing; *nothing ever remains the same*, not even for an instant.

The Relative is made up of countless individuals, each of whom has individual consciousness.

The Relative has two aspects: the Creator and the Creation.

The Creator

In the beginning, the first manifestation of the Absolute is the Creator. The Creator is the Light of Existence. (The Absolute is the absence of light.)

When the Creator becomes manifest, the Relative comes into existence. And time and space come into existence.

²⁰ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 4, v. 6, commentary on p. 261

The Creator is the “only begotten” of the Absolute. That is, He is the only being who arises directly from the Absolute without any other agency. All other beings arise from the Absolute through the agency of the Creator. Thus, in all of the Relative, the Creator is unique. Yes, He has the highest consciousness. But it is more than that. He is first. He is begotten not created.

In addition, the Creator is the only being in the Relative who is everywhere at once, has power over everything, and knows everything that is happening at all times. (Yet, despite His exalted position, the Creator is still within time and space.)

In Figure 1-1 (on page 3), which shows the ever-changing (Relative) and non-changing (Absolute) aspects of Existence, there is a line that separates the two aspects. This line represents the “gap”²¹ between the two aspects of Existence. The gap is the abode of the Creator. He is the “ruler of the gap”. He is the bridge between the Relative and the Absolute. He is the finest²² layer of the Relative. (See Figure 2-1 on page 12.)

The Creator remains One with the Absolute and yet becomes separate from It!

The Creator is manifest, ever-changing, within time and space, omnipresent and infinite, omnipotent, and omniscient. The Creator is uncreated and creating. (Refer to Table 2-1.)

The Creation

The Creation is the universe both seen and unseen. The Creator and His Creation, together, comprise the Relative aspect of Existence.

The Creator brings the Creation into being. He did not create it from nothing. He created it from Nothingness. And the Creation remains of one Being with Nothingness. (All of Existence is still and always is of one Being with Nothingness.)

The Creation contains a myriad of forms—a myriad of individuals—from galaxies, to human beings, to bacteria. Each of these forms has one thing in common: They were all brought into being by the Creator.

Each of these individuals, reflects Pure Consciousness to the extent that it can, depending on its form and its individual consciousness. In Creation, there is a continuum of consciousness from low to high, from rock to Creator. Each piece of Creation is localized, and the consciousness of each piece seems to be disconnected from every other piece.

Each individual in the Creation remains One with the Absolute and yet becomes separate from It!

An individual within the Creation is manifest, ever-changing, within time and space, and finite. An individual within Creation is created and not creating. (Refer to Table 2-1.)

See the following page for Figure 2-1. A diagram of all of Existence, showing its two aspects: Relative (ever changing) and Absolute (unchanging). The diagram also shows the gap between the two, the finest layer of the Relative, the abode of the Creator.

²¹ There is a gap between the Absolute and the Relative. The Laws of Nature reside in the gap. Creation becomes manifest in the gap. All the ideas originate in the gap. And so on.

²² subtlest, most refined

Relative
(Ever Changing)

Abode of the Creator (Gap)

Absolute
(Unchanging)

How Can We Speak About God?

As is stated in the very beginning of this book, God is One! However, to even begin to understand the nature of Existence, to even begin to understand God, we must speak of the various aspects of God as if they were separate from one another.

God has two aspects:

- God the Absolute
- God the Creator

God the Absolute is the impersonal God. It is the transcendent aspect of God. God the Absolute is the unchanging aspect of Existence. God the Absolute is the fundamental reality of Existence, and any study of God must begin with that realization.

God the Creator is the personal God. He is the immanent aspect of God.²³ God the Creator and His creation, together, are the ever-changing aspect of Existence. He has “ears” and “eyes” and definite opinions. He is God the Father to whom we pray. He loves us as He loves Himself.

One expression of the relationship between the impersonal and personal God, by a modern day saint, is as follows:

The impersonal aspect of God is formless, supreme; it is eternal and absolute Being. It is without attributes, qualities or features, because all attributes, qualities and features belong to the relative field of life, and the impersonal God is of absolute nature. It is absolute, impersonal and attributeless, but it is the source of all relative existence. It is the fountainhead of all the different forms and phenomena of creation. All the attributes of relative existence have their source in the attributeless, absolute Being. This Absolute is of unmanifest nature; It manifests in different degrees and forms in the various strata of creation. Everything in creation is the manifestation of unmanifest, absolute, impersonal Being, the omnipresent God.²⁴

God in personal form is the supreme Being of almighty nature. ... He ... has a specific form, a specific nature, certain attributes and certain qualities.

The personal aspect of God necessarily has form, qualities, features and likes and dislikes; and, having the ability to command the entire existence of the cosmos, the process of evolution and all of creation, the personal God is Almighty.²⁵

²³ In some sense, God the Creator is also transcendent because He transcends the universe of matter and energy with which we are familiar. But in fact, He is the immanent aspect of God when compared to God the Absolute, which is truly transcendent.

²⁴ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *The Science of Being and Art of Living*, p. 272

²⁵ Ibid., p. 276

Meister Eckhart (1260 - 1326), the great German Christian scholar and mystic, called the impersonal aspect of God the “Godhead” and the personal aspect of God “God”. He describes the relationship between God and the Godhead as follow:

God and Godhead are as different from each other as heaven and earth ...
Creatures speak of God—but why do they not mention the Godhead? Because
there is only unity in the Godhead and there is nothing to talk about. God acts.
The Godhead does not. ... The difference between God and the Godhead is
the difference between action and non-action.²⁶

²⁶ Meister Eckhart as quoted in Abhayananda, Swami, *History of Mysticism: The Unchanging Testament*, p. 281.

3

Worldviews

A *worldview* is the framework of ideas and beliefs through which an individual interprets the world and interacts in it.

For the purposes of this book, there are three very broad ways that people view the world, as follows:

- Matter and energy is the ultimate Reality
- God the Creator is the ultimate Reality
- God the Absolute is the ultimate Reality

These three views of the world can be defined in slightly different terms as follows:²⁷

- A-theism: There is no god or gods. The Universe of matter and energy is all there is. Human beings are solely a result of chemical evolution.
- Theism: There is a God (God the Creator) who is beyond matter and energy who created the entire Universe including human beings
- Trans-theism: God the Creator exists, and He created the entire Universe including human beings. However, there is an aspect of Existence—Absolute Being—that transcends even God the Creator.

Again, for the purposes of this book, these three ways of viewing the world are called by the following names: (Refer to Table 3-1.)

- Material Worldview
- Religion Worldview
- Consciousness Worldview

Table 3-1. Summary of the nomenclature for the worldviews used in this book

Material Worldview	There is no God. Matter and energy is the ultimate Reality.	Atheism
Religion Worldview	God the Creator is the ultimate Reality.	Theism
Consciousness Worldview	God the Creator exists, but God the Absolute is the ultimate Reality.	Transtheism

Refer to Table 3-2. Table 3-2 has three pages. Be sure to read all three pages for a maximum understanding of the worldviews.

²⁷ The hyphens in the words “a-theism” and “trans-theism” are used here for emphasis.

**Click Here to
display Table 3-2**



Navigation Tips:

To return to the book text, in the Acrobat Reader menu bar (at the top left of the screen), choose: *Window > The Evolution of Human Consciousness*

After you have opened *Table 3-2 Worldviews Table* once, you can switch between the Table and the text at any time by using the Window menu in Acrobat Reader.

Within each of these very broad worldviews there is possible a wide spectrum of levels of understanding. For example, the simple peasant kneeling at the altar and the learned theologian might have vastly different understandings from one another. None-the-less, they both hold the same worldview, in this case the Religion Worldview. The same can be said for the wide spectrum of possible understandings in the other worldviews.

It has been said: “The truth depends upon what you believe. Belief comes first; truth comes second.” This statement *is not* true of absolute Truth, the Truth we all experience and understand, for example, after death. However, the statement *is* true for us on Earth, as we are now. For example, we cannot know what one of the authors of the Christian Bible, writing in about 80 CE, had in mind when he wrote about Jesus riding on a donkey into Jerusalem.²⁸ Did he mean that on exactly March 25th in the year 30 CE (or however the date was expressed at the time for one week before Passover) that a physical person named “Jesus” rode on a physical “donkey” into a physical city called “Jerusalem”? Or did he mean that the higher self (the “Christ” in us) needs to control the animal nature (the “donkey” in us) if we are to reach the goal of true Self Knowledge (our “Jerusalem”)?²⁹ The *fact* of what the author had in mind does not change regardless of the worldview we might hold today. However, what a person today *thinks* the author meant does change depending on that person’s worldview.

Each of the various worldviews leads the people who hold them to form certain opinions and make certain choices based on those worldviews. In Table 3-2, an attempt is made to summarize typical opinions and choices made by the people who hold the various worldviews. The material presented in the Table 3-2 is an oversimplification of those opinions and choices. It is impossible in a brief summary to do otherwise. The value of the information in the table is to allow the reader to compare typical attitudes and opinions in a variety of aspects of life to see how those attitudes change as we progress from one worldview to the next.

See the following page for Figure 3-1. A diagram of all of Existence, showing its two aspects: Relative (ever changing) and Absolute (unchanging). The diagram also shows the aspects of Existence that are acknowledged by people who hold the various worldviews.

²⁸ Refer to Matt 21:1 through 21:9 (also Mark 11:1 through 11:10).

²⁹ Rumi, the 13th century Persian poet and Sufi mystic put it this way: “Jesus on the lean donkey, / this is an emblem of how the rational intellect / should control the animal-soul. / Let your spirit / be strong like Jesus. / If that part becomes weak, / then the worn-out donkey becomes a dragon.” From the poem *Jesus on the Lean Donkey* in Barks, Coleman and Moyne, John, Translators and Editors, *This Longing: Poetry, Teaching Stories, and Letters of Rumi*, p.65.

Material Worldview:
Acknowledge
the surface value
of the Relative

Religion Worldview:
Acknowledge
the full range
of the Relative

Consciousness
Worldview:
Acknowledge
the full range
of Existence--
Relative & Absolute

Relative

Gap

Absolute

4

The Seven States of Consciousness

There are two aspects to Existence: the Absolute (unchanging and formless) and the Relative (constantly changing forms). Ultimately, the Absolute is all there is. However, for the vast majority of humans, the Relative also exists.

We humans are in one of several states of consciousness.³⁰ In these various states, we experience either one, both, or neither of the aspects of Existence. Refer to Table 4-1.

Table 4-1. States of Consciousness

State of Consciousness	Awareness of Relative Existence	Awareness of Absolute Existence
1. Waking	Yes	No
2. Dreaming	Sort of	No
3. Sleeping	No	No
4. Transcendental Consciousness (TC)	No	Yes
5. Cosmic Consciousness (CC)	Yes	Yes
6. God Consciousness (GC)	Yes, including, the finest aspects of Relative Existence	Yes
7. Unity Consciousness (UC)	Yes and yes, and the Relative and Absolute are One	

Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping

The ordinary states of human consciousness are Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping (W/D/S). In general, each of us experiences these three states of consciousness in any given 24-hour period.

In the ordinary states of consciousness, we do not know who we truly are. We believe that we are our bodies, our thoughts, our roles in life (son, daughter, husband, wife, father, mother, doctor, lawyer, Indian chief), a member of our community (ethnic group, religion, nation), what we own, and so on. In these ordinary states of consciousness, what happens in our everyday lives is of paramount importance to us. We have very little, if any, larger perspective. In these states of consciousness, we lose ourselves in what happens, losing ourselves in the mind and/or in the world.

³⁰ The names given here for the states of consciousness come from the Transcendental Meditation® system. Traditional Sanskrit terms for the states of consciousness—such as *Savikalpa Samadhi* and *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*—are used in different ways by different authors / teachers. Therefore, it is, perhaps, best to use English language terms, accompanied by detailed descriptions, to denote the various states of consciousness.

In the Waking state of consciousness, we experience thoughts, a constant stream of thoughts, and we engage in speech and in action. We also experience the ever-changing aspect of Creation, the sights and sounds of the surface level of the world around us.

In the Dreaming state, again we experience thoughts. In this case, however, rather than the “real world” we experience images that we create with our own minds. These images might relate to our desires or to stresses we have experienced during our waking hours.

In the Sleeping state, we experience nothing. We have no thoughts, and we have no experience of the world, either real or imagined.

Description of Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping States of Consciousness:

In the Waking state of consciousness, all three levels [of the mind] are active and [are] being used. The Conscious mind is obviously being used. The Unconscious mind is also processing, though typically out of view, much like the active microprocessor of a computer The Subconscious is also active, in that its data is available when needed, much like the data on the hard disk of a computer

In the Dreaming state of consciousness, the level we call Conscious functioning has receded back into the field of mind from which it arose. Only the Unconscious processing is still there, along with the storage source of the Subconscious. The impressions from the Subconscious stir and become part of the dream process that is going on in the Unconscious level of mind.

In the Deep Sleep state of consciousness, both the Conscious and Unconscious levels have receded back into the field of mind from which they arose, where memories are stored. Only the Subconscious level is still active. At this Subconscious level the memories are in a formless form, and there are therefore no pictures or images as in the dream state. Rather, this is the level that gives birth to those images. At this level there is also no playing out of thoughts and actions [as in the waking] state either.³¹

Transcendental Consciousness

The fourth state of consciousness is Transcendental Consciousness (TC). In this state, we experience *only* the Absolute, only Being, only Consciousness Itself. In this state, we experience the Self³² as It truly is: Being. When we are in Transcendental Consciousness, the Relative does not exist for us. When we are in this state, neither thoughts nor forms nor time nor space exists. Only the Absolute exists. In TC, we are fully conscious but without an object of consciousness. In this state of consciousness, “I AM” is the only reality.

When we are in Transcendental Consciousness, our metabolic rate is nil. The physical body (the nervous system³³) is completely at rest, yet the consciousness is awake. Our mind is not functioning; it is not active. But awareness is clear. This clarity of awareness is Pure Consciousness.

³¹ Quoted from: www.swamij.com.

³² Refer to the topic “Self” and “Non-Self” in the Seven States of Consciousness on page 26.

³³ For the purposes of this book, the nervous system is all aspects of the human body from the gross to the subtle.

When we go from Transcendental Consciousness to, for example, Waking consciousness, we do not know how long we were in Transcendental Consciousness. When we are in TC, time is meaningless. For the outside world, a second or a year might have passed. No matter how much time has elapsed, for the person who was in TC, it seems like only an instant.

When a person experiences the Self as the Absolute and the Relative does not exist in any shape or form, that person is in Transcendental Consciousness.

Description of Transcendental Consciousness:

[In Transcendental Consciousness] there is nothing but the Self alone. The nature of the Self is pure consciousness, cosmic intelligence, cosmic existence, cosmic life, eternal Being, absolute bliss. It is transcendent, ever the same, imperishable. It is 'smaller than the smallest'. It is the silence. The word "Self" expresses the inexpressible transcendental Truth of life. The mind, coming to this field, loses its individuality and gains its true nature as pure Being.³⁴

The faculty of experience becomes extinct when the mind loses its individuality. The state of Being knows no knowing; it is a state that transcends all knowing or experiencing.³⁵

[In Transcendental Consciousness], the metabolism of the body is reduced to a minimum and the entire nervous system gains a state of restful alertness. This is the physical condition corresponding to the state of Being. In this state, the mental and physical levels of the individual life come to the level of the cosmic life of omnipresent Being—the individual mind is held by cosmic intelligence and individual physical existence sustained by cosmic existence - they become Its instrument and begin to respond to the cosmic need.³⁶

[In Transcendental Consciousness], the mind is free from all modes of the relative order and thus gains its most purified state. . . . At the same time the whole nervous system gains a state of restful alertness. In this state the body becomes a living instrument tuned to the divine nature. This is the most purified state of the body.

As for the purification of the spirit, or self, the pure state of the spirit is Being, which is unbounded universal pure consciousness. When, through the practice of meditation, the mind reaches this consciousness, the individual spirit bound by time, space and causation, finds its unbounded cosmic nature.³⁷

³⁴ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 6, v. 18, commentary on p. 419

³⁵ Ibid., ch. 6, v. 27, commentary on p. 437

³⁶ Ibid., ch. 5, v. 11, commentary on p. 346

³⁷ Ibid., ch. 6, v. 12, commentary on p. 407

Cosmic Consciousness

The fifth state of consciousness is Cosmic Consciousness (CC). In this state, we experience the Self as Absolute Existence *simultaneous* with experiencing the body and the world as Relative Existence. In Cosmic Consciousness, we experience the Self and the world as distinct realities, completely separate from one another. In CC, we experience a complete duality: the Self and other than the Self (non-Self). In CC, the true Self is a witnessing Presence³⁸ (the I AM) that witnesses our bodies, our thoughts, and our activities and witnesses the events of the world.³⁹

Cosmic Consciousness is the first state of consciousness in which someone can be called “Enlightened.” This is the first state in which a person knows the true nature of the Self (as the unchanging Absolute) and can simultaneously operate in the ever-changing Relative world. For example, in CC a person can witness his or her body sleeping, with the true Self (the I AM) remaining awake and witnessing the sleeping body.

A person in Cosmic Consciousness no longer has personal human free will! A person in CC operates under divine will, with all activity given over to God.⁴⁰ Once we have attained the state of Cosmic Consciousness, every thought we have and action we perform is in complete accord with natural law. Every thought and action supports every aspect of nature in all ways, one hundred percent. In Cosmic Consciousness, all of our actions are in the flow of Nature. All action that we take is right action. In addition, all of our needs are fulfilled when the need arises.

In CC, the Self is established in Being. The non-Self is the Relative perceived at the surface value. In CC our senses are not sufficiently refined to perceive the finer values of Creation.

When a person experiences the Self as the Absolute and simultaneously experiences the world of thoughts, forms, time, and space as separate from the Self, that person is in Cosmic Consciousness.

Description of Cosmic Consciousness:

First, this state of life [Cosmic Consciousness] is not maintained on the basis of thinking or feeling: it is lived naturally on the level of Being. Secondly, the Self in this state has separated Itself so completely from the field of activity that, even when the mind entertains thoughts, the Self remains completely free from the process of thinking.⁴¹

When Cosmic Consciousness has been gained ... body, mind, intellect, and senses remain the instrument of the divine will, irrespective of their mode of activity. In this state the main motivating force of their activity is the divine will, the almighty cosmic intelligence, responsible for the creation and evolution of the entire cosmos. Just as everything in nature responds to the

³⁸ The term “witnessing Presence” is taken from Tolle, Eckhart, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life’s Purpose*, 78.

³⁹ When we are in CC, we find that what we previously identified with as our “self”—for example, our bodies and thoughts—are actually a part of the non-Self.

⁴⁰ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 5, v. 11, commentary on p. 346 and ch. 6, v. 14, commentary on p. 411

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, ch. 6, v. 25, commentary on p. 434

need of the cosmic purpose, so man's body, mind, intellect, and senses, brought to the level of cosmic intelligence, respond to the need of cosmic life.⁴²

[In CC] pure consciousness is ... naturally maintained in spite of engagement in activity. In this state, the duality of life becomes a living reality—the two aspects of life, Self and non-Self, Absolute and Relative, become separated, and the Self is living as pure Being unallied with anything.⁴³

God Consciousness

The sixth state of consciousness is God Consciousness (GC). In this state, we continue to experience the Self as Absolute Existence and all else (non-Self) as Relative Existence. However, we now experience the finer and finest aspects of Relative Existence⁴⁴ (including God the Creator). Thus, God Consciousness is glorified Cosmic Consciousness.

The transition from CC to GC involves the development of the senses. Growth within GC involves devotion to God the Creator. These two processes combine to allow the full experience of God Consciousness.⁴⁵

In God Consciousness, our senses are fully refined, and we can perceive all layers of Creation, from the grossest to the finest. All of Creation is fascinating to us and we love everything and everyone. All of Creation displays God's glory, and we revel in that glory.

As the senses develop, we experience finer and finer aspects of Relative Existence. The finest aspect of the Relative is God the Creator.

... when a man's consciousness has grown to cosmic status [in CC], the supreme level of creation becomes his normal field of interest. God [the Creator], the manifested Being on the supreme level of creation, begins to draw him to Himself; he begins to rise to God-consciousness. Remaining in the world of his fellow men, he begins to live in the world of God.⁴⁶

In fully developed God Consciousness, we are perfectly devoted to God the Creator. Our entire being—heart, mind, and body—all we do and all we are is devoted to God. We live and breathe God the Creator.

When we are in God Consciousness, we can literally “see” (and “converse with”) God the Creator! It is only when we are in GC that we can truly know God the Creator and be devoted to Him and worship Him. It is only in GC that a true love of God the Creator can develop. In this state, there is truly a lover (you) and a beloved (God the Creator). Note, however, that the strict duality of Self and non-Self remains. The non-Self is just a lot richer than it was before.

⁴² Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 5, v. 11, commentary on p. 346

⁴³ Ibid., ch. 5, v. 11, commentary on p. 347

⁴⁴ Existence can be divided into three spheres: gross, subtle, and transcendent. The gross and subtle aspects are in the Relative and the transcendent is the Absolute. The gross aspect of creation is the one we experience every day. The finer and finest layers of creation are in the subtle sphere of creation, which has been called “Numinous creation”. Some passages that might be suggestive of the subtle aspect of the Relative are as follows: Bhagavad-Gita, Chapter 11; Hebrew Bible, Isaiah 6:1 to 6:3; Christian Bible, Revelation 4:1 to 4:8.

⁴⁵ For a thorough discussion of this concept, refer to the topics **Transition from Cosmic Consciousness to God Consciousness** (on page 51) and **Transition from God Consciousness to Unity Consciousness** (on page 53).

⁴⁶ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 6, v. 31, commentary on p. 446

At the culmination of God Consciousness, all the “doing” is done. The physical body is fully purified, and the heart and mind are fully developed.

When a person experiences the Self as the Absolute and simultaneously experiences the finest aspect of the Relative (that is, directly experiences God the Creator), that person is in God Consciousness.

Description of GC:

When a man has gained ... oneness of vision ..., when the fullness of Being overflows through the mind into the fields of perception, when spiritual Unity prevails even on the level of the senses, when the oneness of God overtakes life, then is that state attained where perception of anything whatsoever is perception of the Being made manifest. Then his consciousness finds a direct relationship with the Lord, with Being made manifest, who becomes a living Reality for him on that supremely divine level of consciousness. Then he and his Lord are not lost to one another. ...

This direct relationship of man with God is first established on the level of Being and then comes to be on the level of feeling; from there it enters the field of thinking and then finds its way on to the sensory level of experience. God thus overtakes all the levels of man's life. Man lives in the sanctuary of God. His life is in love, in bliss, in wisdom, in God-consciousness. He lives in the realm of universal existence. He moves on earth and he lives in the land of God, in the divine ground of Being far above human vision and far beyond human thought. ...

... [The] full development of the capacities of heart and mind enables a man to understand and live the divine Being. The relationship that exists between the unmanifested Absolute and the manifested Being unfolds itself. The personal God comes to be experienced on the sensory level. He becomes the living Reality of daily life. Every object in creation reflects the light of God in terms of one's own Self. ...

... It is given to [many an ardent seeker of Truth, to many an ardent devotee of God] to enjoy the love of the Almighty and the protection that He offers. This is their good fortune; they share their life with God. The oneness that they live from moment to moment is the Union of the oneness of the Absolute, the oneness of eternal life in the multiplicity of creation - the great oneness symbolized in the Divine made manifest, the almighty personal God. ...

... The sense of worship [devotion, dedication, dependence and surrender] holds the devotee to his God; it expresses a personal relationship. What is impersonal and universal from the point of view of ordinary human consciousness becomes intimate and personal in this state of consciousness; for it is at the level of harmony between the unmanifested Absolute and the manifested Being, the Lord of all creation. ...

When the individual consciousness has developed into cosmic consciousness, then this state of fullness of divine consciousness develops into God-consciousness. It is in this established state of God-consciousness that the

Lord is worshipped 'abiding in all beings'. Every thought is then a flower at the feet of God, every word a prayer and every action an offering to Him.⁴⁷

Unity Consciousness

The seventh state of consciousness is Unity Consciousness (UC). In this state, we experience Absolute Existence and Relative Existence as One, and we are that One. All of Existence is complete Unity.

In Unity Consciousness, we are fully Enlightened. Unity Consciousness is the highest state of human consciousness. In this state of consciousness, we experience the ultimate Truth.

In UC, the distinction between the Absolute and the Relative ends. The Self is established in Being and what was the non-Self is also established in Being. Both the Self and the "non-Self" are perceived as the direct experience that ALL—Absolute, Creator, and Creation—is the Absolute. The Absolute is all there is, and I AM THAT.

What was once separate from the Self, the Relative, is now One with the Self. However, the Relative remains manifest. It does not become unmanifest when we enter Unity Consciousness. In addition, in UC, the physical body remains manifest as a reflector of the Absolute. The perfectly pure nervous system can be a perfect mirror of Pure Consciousness.

The famous expression from the Vedic (Indian) tradition “I am That, thou art That, all this is That” is a very concise and complete expression of our reality in Unity Consciousness.

When a person experiences both the Absolute and the Relative as the Self, that person is in Unity Consciousness.

*Description of Unity Consciousness:*⁴⁸

[In the state of God Consciousness,] the formality of worship is a pleasure which overtakes the devotee's heart and his whole being, which gives meaning to his life and glorifies it on all levels; but the joy of such devotion is the joy of Union at a distance. As the Union grows more complete, the link of worship, of adoration and devotion, finds fulfillment in its own extinction, leaving worshipper and worshipped together in perfect oneness, in the oneness of absolute Unity [in the state of Unity Consciousness]. Then he and his God are one in himself. Then himself has become Himself; his vision is in terms of Himself, his pleasure and pain are in terms of Himself.

[In GC,] the Unity of the devotee with God [reaches] such fullness that his life is the life of God. Everywhere and in everything he lives God. He sees everything in terms of God. This exalted state of Union with God becomes yet more glorious [when, in UC] the difference between the devotee and God, which was alive in [GC], is found no more. His Union with God, which was of an order that still permitted worship of Him, has become a Union of much

⁴⁷ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 6, v. 30 to 31, commentary on pp. 443 to 447

⁴⁸ Maharishi Mahesh Yogi wrote his translation and commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gita* from 1961 to 1966. However, Maharishi did not formally introduce the term “Unity Consciousness” to his followers until 1967, after the manuscript was complete. Therefore, the term “Unity Consciousness”, as such, does not appear in the book. In retrospect, however, it is clear that, in the book, he frequently refers to Unity Consciousness, just using other terms.

greater intensity. Now his God is one with himself; the supreme divine Unity prevails in him. In his individuality, the eternal glory of the Divine shines brightly and in such fullness that It exists not only on the level of his Being but is infused into his feeling, his thinking, his vision, his whole field of experience. His vision, which before was coloured by his devotion to the Lord, now stands clear in terms of his own Self, permeated by his own eternal Being; in that Being the glory of God resides, sustaining It and maintaining the eternal freedom that His beloved devotee has gained in Him.

In that perfect liberation he leads the life of fullness and abundance. His vision is such that it quite naturally holds alike all things in the likeness of his own Self, because he himself and the vision that he has are the expression of the Self.

[The very] height of realization ... is to realize the supreme oneness of life in terms of one's own Self. No diversity of life is able to detract from this state of supreme Unity. One who has reached It is the supporter of all and everything, for he is life eternal. He bridges the gulf between the relative and the Absolute. The eternal Absolute is in him at the level of the perishable phenomenal world. He lives to give meaning to the paean of the Upanishads: "purnamadah purnamidam" - "That Absolute is full, this Relative is full." One who lives this supreme Reality in his daily life is [in a state of] perfection; there is no level of Union higher than this that he has gained. He stands established on the ultimate level of consciousness.⁴⁹

“Self” and “Non-Self” in the Seven States of Consciousness

There are two aspects of human experience and understanding: in the ordinary states of consciousness (W/D/S) these two aspects can be expressed as the (lower case) “self” and the “non-self”. In the higher states of consciousness (TC, CC, GC, and UC), they can be expressed as the (upper case) “Self” and the “non-Self”.

When we experience only the Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping states of consciousness we identify the self (the “I”) with the ego and with our bodies, thoughts, and actions. In fact, the true nature of the Self is the Absolute. Thus, when we experience only W/D/S, we are said to be in the *state of ignorance*. The state of ignorance means that we are ignorant of the true nature of the Self as the Absolute. In W/D/S, we identify the non-self as everything except what we consider to be the self.

In Transcendental Consciousness, we experience only the Self, only the Absolute. In TC, for us there is no non-Self.

In Cosmic Consciousness, we experience the Self as the Absolute simultaneous with experiencing the world as the non-Self. The world remains as it was. However, what we used to consider to be the “self”—our body, mind, and actions—we now find is a part of the non-Self.

⁴⁹ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 6, v. 32, commentary on pp. 447 to 449. For another beautiful expression of Unity Consciousness, refer to the poem “Samadhi” in Yogananda, Paramahansa, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, pp. 153 to 154. (A longer version of this poem appears in the book *Whispers from Eternity*, 1949 edition.)

In God Consciousness, we also experience the Self as the Absolute simultaneous with experiencing the world as the non-Self. Now, however, the non-Self includes all the glories of Relative Existence (including God the Creator).

In Unity Consciousness, we continue to experience the Self as the Absolute. However, we now experience that what we used to consider to be the non-Self is also the Self. We now know that the Self and the “non-Self” are One.

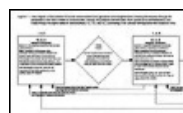
The concept of self and non-self and Self and non-Self is discussed in greater detail later in this book.

5

The Evolution of Human Consciousness

Human consciousness evolves through a series of states (or stages) and undergoes a series of transitions (or transformations) between those states. Figure 5-1 presents a flow diagram of the evolution of human consciousness. It shows the states through which human consciousness evolves, and it shows the transitions between the states.

**Click Here to
display Figure 5-1.**



To return to the book text, in the Acrobat Reader menu bar (at the top left of the screen), choose: *Window > The Evolution of Human Consciousness*.

You can return to *Figure 5-1 Flow Diagram* at any time by using the *Window* menu in Acrobat Reader.

The flow diagram presented in Figure 5-1 is the heart of this book. It is the key to understanding the information presented in this book. The flow diagram has four areas: Areas A through D. Area A is the principal area of the diagram. It shows the stages and transitions that make up the evolution of human consciousness. Area B shows the “fixed” worldviews. This area indicates that we can go out of the flow of evolution by having our beliefs become fixed and rigid. Area C shows the many ways that we can backslide (revert to a worse condition). Finally, Area D shows our progression from illusory “unity” to true Unity. Each of these areas is discussed in detail in this chapter. Area designations are mentioned in the text, when appropriate, for easy reference to the flow diagram.

In Figure 5-1, the stages are represented by squares, and the transitions are represented by diamonds.⁵⁰ The stages are as follows:⁵¹

- Material Worldview (in W/D/S)
- Religion Worldview (in W/D/S)
- Consciousness Worldview (in W/D/S)
- TC (Transcendental Consciousness)
- CC (Cosmic Consciousness)
- GC (God Consciousness)
- UC (Unity Consciousness)

⁵⁰ The numbers in the diagram refer to states of consciousness: 1 is Waking; 2 is Dreaming; 3 is Sleeping; 4 is TC; 5 is CC; 6 is GC; and 7 is UC.

⁵¹ The flow diagram presents an idealized progression in the evolution of human consciousness. However, it is not necessary for each person to take every step. For example, some people might skip the Religion Worldview and go directly from the Material Worldview to the Consciousness Worldview. Refer to **Appendix C: Short-Cutting the Ordinary Route to Entering the Path** on page 79.

The first three stages in the evolution of human consciousness are not distinct states of consciousness; they are worldviews. In all three of these worldviews, we experience the Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping (W/D/S) states of consciousness. Therefore, in the transitions between the first three stages, we experience a change in our level of awareness, not in our level of consciousness. The changes we experience between the worldviews seem quite great at the time, but they are all grounded by the same three states of consciousness.

The last four stages in the evolution of human consciousness are distinct states of consciousness. Therefore, the transitions between them are much more dramatic than the transitions between the worldviews.

There are five transitions⁵² between the stages. Each transition in the evolution of human consciousness involves three phases:

- Individual action phase, in which we perform action to become prepared for the transition
- Ready phase, in which our preparation is complete
- God's grace phase, in which God the Creator allows (causes) the transition to occur

For each transition:

- Individual action phase: Our individual action is all important. Without it, we would never be ready.
- Ready phase: We have done all we can do. However, we do not know, nor can we know, when we are ready. Therefore, we continue our individual action.
- God's grace phase: God's grace is all important. Without it, the transition would never occur.

The entire process of the evolution of human consciousness involves these three phases of development. (In Figure 5-1, the diamonds representing the transitions are divided into two halves with a line in between them. The top half represents our individual action, the bottom half represents God's grace, and the line between them represents the ready phase.)

One caveat: When we are in the Material Worldview or the Religion Worldview, we are *not consciously aware* that we are performing individual action *to progress in our evolution*. We become consciously aware of the value of individual action for evolution only in the Consciousness Worldview and beyond.

Each of the stages and transitions in the evolution of human consciousness is discussed in detail in the topics that follow. For the sake of intellectual clarity, the states and transitions in the evolution of human consciousness are separated from one another in this discussion. In fact, however, the individual action phase for the upcoming transition begins immediately after we enter a particular stage. Being *in* one state of evolution while we are *progressing* toward the next state is, for example, just like being *in* high school while we are *progressing* toward graduation (which is the transition to the next stage of life).

The panorama of the evolution of human consciousness begins at the material level, with the Material Worldview in W/D/S. It ends with the ultimate goal of human life—total Enlightenment,⁵³ total Self realization—in Unity Consciousness.

⁵² Refer to the Glossary topic **transitions** for a more thorough discussion.

⁵³ "Enlightenment" is the realization that the true nature of the Self is the Absolute (CC and GC), and ultimately, that the true nature of everything in the Relative is also the Absolute (UC).

Material Worldview (in W/D/S)

People who hold the Material Worldview believe that the physical universe (composed of matter and energy) is the ultimate reality. These people experience the three ordinary states of consciousness: Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping (W/D/S). (The square representing the Material Worldview is designated “A1” in Figure 5-1.)

People who hold the Material Worldview are atheists. The word “atheism” means “without a belief in the existence of a god or gods”.⁵⁴ Atheists are not necessarily against God; in fact the vast majority is not.⁵⁵ They merely have no concept of or concern with a god of any sort. They are just so busy leading their lives that, in some cases, they have no time or energy for such thoughts, and in other cases, they currently have no interest or attraction for these ideas.

The Material Worldview—as is true of the other worldviews and even of the higher states of consciousness—is neither good nor bad. It is merely a stage in the evolution of human consciousness. Similarly, atheism is neither positive nor negative. It, too, is a step along the way.

For people who hold the Material Worldview, the self is identified with the ego, body, thoughts, and actions. And the non-self is everything else in the physical universe.⁵⁶

People who experience only the ordinary states of consciousness (W/D/S), including those who hold the Material Worldview, have many impurities in the physical body (the nervous system). These impurities prevent them from fully reflecting Pure Consciousness. The Path to Enlightenment is in no small measure the gradual removal of these impurities from the physical body.

Ordinary human life, with the Material Worldview, can be quite pleasing, especially in the USA and Western Europe where the standard of living is so high. All of our material needs are more than met. In addition, many of us have very pleasant home lives with our birth family and later in a family of our own. It is like we are puppies with our mother in a litter of brothers and sisters, all warm and fuzzy, without a care in the world. We have a sense of unity with those around us—our family, our friends, our coworkers—all one big happy family.

With the Material Worldview, we just go about what we call “living:” eating, sleeping, working, having a family, engaging in activities that test our personal power and our emotions, and so on. We are members of various groupings and organizations—birth family, marriage family, race, political party, nation—that give us a feeling of belonging. Often we separate ourselves from “the others” who do not belong to our groups. In addition, we feel antagonistic⁵⁷ to people in other groups because it helps to give us a sense of “who we are.”

⁵⁴ The word “disbelief” is used in some definitions of “atheism”. “Disbelief” gives a negative feeling to the word “atheism”. The word “atheism” does not imply anything negative. It simply means that, for whatever reason or lack of reason, a person does not believe in a god.

⁵⁵ Some people who are called atheists are actually “anti-theists” or, perhaps more appropriately, anti-religionists”. That is, they are against theism as it is currently practiced in many theistic religions. Anti-theism is discussed in the topic **Fixed Material Worldview** (on page 64).

⁵⁶ In fact, the “everything else” that one in ordinary states of consciousness experiences is only the surface level of the Relative sphere of Existence. The more subtle levels contain undreamed of realms of reality.

⁵⁷ Refer to Tolle, Eckhart, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life’s Purpose*.

I am Tom Smith; my father is Bob Smith. I work for a great company, and I earn a good salary. My wife and I have two wonderful children. I am a white Republican who is damn proud to be an American.

With the Material Worldview, that is who you think you are. But, of course, that has *nothing at all* to do with who *YOU* really are!

With the Material Worldview, a person has neither the experience nor the understanding to know that there is more to life. Ignorance is bliss, or not, as the case may be. (Recall that when we experience only the Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping states of consciousness, we are said to be in the state of ignorance. The state of ignorance means that we are ignorant of the true nature of the Self as the Absolute.)

People who lead an ordinary human life range from the lowest forms of human life to among the highest forms of ordinary human life. The lowest forms of human life are obvious to all and require no examples. The highest forms of ordinary human life include highly moral, highly intelligent, highly successful people. For example, in his book *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins (who is obviously a very highly evolved human being) writes “You can be an atheist who is happy, balanced, moral, and intellectually fulfilled.”⁵⁸

That statement is true, for a while, but only for a while. Because it leaves out *the most fundamental human need*: spiritual fulfillment.

Transition from the Material Worldview to the Religion Worldview

The transition from the Material Worldview to the Religion Worldview has three phases, as follows:

- Individual action phase
- Ready phase
- God’s grace phase

(The diamond representing this transition is designated “A2” in Figure 5-1.)

Individual Action Phase

The individual action that we perform while we are in the Material Worldview moving toward the Religion Worldview is *seeking greater happiness*. It is the nature of human beings to seek fields of greater happiness. Seeking greater happiness is, perhaps, the most important driving force for all human action.⁵⁹ The field of greatest happiness, and the Source of all happiness, is the Absolute. We are inextricable drawn toward the Absolute. It is in that way that God the Creator constantly draws us to Him.

However, when we are in the Material Worldview, we do not know anything about that. When we are in this worldview, we seek greater happiness in the *Relative* sphere of Existence.

When we are in the Material Worldview, what is it that we do that we believe will bring us greater happiness?

⁵⁸ Dawkins, Richard, *The God Delusion*, p. 1.

⁵⁹ For example, in the American Declaration of Independence, the “pursuit of happiness” is listed (along with life and liberty) as one the inalienable rights of human beings.

... attractive appearance, fad diets, popularity, friends, physical development, intellectual development, sex and more sex, sugar, caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, love, marriage, spouse, children, house, cars, job, money, investing, wealth accumulation, getting ahead, politics, power, shopping, television, movies, music, dancing, entertainment, restaurants, team sports, exciting sporting events, extreme sports, dangerous activities, military training and combat, gambling, exciting activities, outdoor activities, hobbies, pets, travel, international travel, volunteering, games, online social networking, online games ...⁶⁰

The problem is that, whereas some or all of these things might bring us happiness for a while, necessarily, they must eventually end. Thus, we find that nothing in the Relative gives us *lasting* happiness.

Ready Phase

The fact that there is no lasting happiness in the Relative leads us to disappointment and frustration with life.⁶¹ It leads us to dissatisfaction with the current situation. It leads us to a yearning for something more. In addition, something deep inside gives us the conviction that there must *be* something more.

This deep conviction, but without any answers, opens us up and makes us ready, makes us receptive to experience *the more*. “Now what?” “I give up!” “There must be something more, but what is it?”

God’s Grace Phase

Then, God the Creator gives us His grace. In the transition from the Material Worldview to the Religion Worldview, God’s grace manifests itself as an *experience*. God the Creator⁶² reveals Himself to us in some unmistakable way.

No human being who experiences and understands only the ordinary states of consciousness—Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping—can *choose* to have an experience of God the Creator. In fact, before we have such an experience, we are ignorant of His existence! Therefore, it is only through God the Creator’s grace that we are able to experience Him.

The grace of God the Creator is always with us from the time of our creation until we reach Unity Consciousness. However, as our consciousness evolves, there are several times when the grace of God the Creator is *absolutely necessary*: God’s grace is *required* for each and every transition in the evolution of human consciousness.

The transition from the Material Worldview to the Religion Worldview is the first such transition. During this transition, God allows us to experience one or more of the following, world-changing revelations:

⁶⁰ Any of these activities, many of which are perfectly reasonable, can turn into a mania or even an addiction, which is all we can think about or talk about. For example, alcoholic, shopaholic, sexaholic, workaholic, 24/7 religion talk radio, 24/7 political talk radio, 24/7 sports talk radio, compulsive gambling, can’t wait to get back to the battlefield, can’t wait to go on my next trip, and so on.

⁶¹ Strangely, if we feel satisfied with ourselves and with our lives, if we enjoy our family and friends and home and job and so on, then we might stop seeking. Thus, *dissatisfaction* is actually a blessing!

⁶² God the Creator, the Personal God. (The Impersonal God cannot bestow “grace”.) Refer to the topic **How Can We Speak About God?** (on page 13).

- God the Creator exists.
- God the Creator loves us.
- God the Creator's love for us is unconditional and infinite.

The fact that we are allowed such incredible revelations is a demonstration of God the Creator's love for us.

The specific experience that God the Creator gives us is different for each person. Often the experience comes when we hit bottom, either emotionally or physically. However, that is not necessary. The experience can come at any time.

Once God the Creator gives us an experience that calls us to Him, we cannot help but want to return the love that He has shown us. We cannot help but want to be closer to God the Creator. After the experience of God the Creator's love, the meaning of life changes, and what is important to us changes. The experience and the changes it brings are the *beginning* of spiritual fulfillment.

It is interesting to note that people with highly developed *emotions* tend to be drawn to the personal God—God the Creator—rather than directly to the impersonal God—God the Absolute. Love is the most powerful emotion. The Source of love is God the Absolute; the One who expresses love most fully is God the Creator. People with highly developed emotions are drawn to the Source of love—God the Absolute—*through* the One who expresses love most fully—God the Creator.

The question of God's grace is addressed by Alister E. McGrath as follows:⁶³

... humanity is addicted to sensory experience and the desire for possession, and is unable to break free from their lure. Humanity may discern its true goal, but lacks the capability to burst the bonds of its present situation. The issue ... is that of grace – the divine supplementation of human capacities to discern and to act. If we cannot escape from our addiction to this sensory world, how can we attain the transcendent, unless we are assisted to do so? Might the transcendent that lures us to itself also provide the necessary enablement to achieve that goal?

The two steps of progress are experience and understanding. God the Creator provides the experience. Often people seek the understanding from the holy books of one or more of the world's great religions. The holy books provide understanding and guidance. Generally, people who experience God's grace, turn to the holy book of the religion in which they were raised or of the predominant religion of their society. Thus, the experience of God's grace often leads people to join a religion.

Religion Worldview (in W/D/S)

People who hold the Religion Worldview believe that God the Creator is the ultimate reality. These people experience the three ordinary states of consciousness: Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping. (The square representing the Religion Worldview is designated "A3" in Figure 5-1.)

⁶³ McGrath, Alister E., *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology*, p. 65

People who hold the Religion Worldview are theists, generally, monotheists. The word “theism” means “with a belief in the existence of a god or gods”.

The Religion Worldview—as is true of the other worldviews and even of the higher states of consciousness—is neither good nor bad. It is merely a stage in the evolution of human consciousness. Similarly, theism is neither positive nor negative. It, too, is a step along the way.

For people who hold the Religion Worldview, the self is identified with the ego, body, thoughts, and actions. And the non-self is everything else in the universe including God the Creator.

As is mentioned before, the experience of God's grace and love often leads people to join a religion. Joining a religion has two positive aspects. First, it reinforces and verifies our experience of God's love for us. Second, it provides us with a community of like-minded believers who have also experienced God's grace and love. The people in that community and their experiences further reinforce and verify our experience.

People in the Religion Worldview often feel that they have a personal relationship with God the Creator. This relationship is genuine and is very important and valuable in their lives. At this stage of development, however, God the Creator is just an image⁶⁴ of or vague idea of the true Creator, Who is unimaginably great and Who is experienced fully only in God Consciousness.

People who hold the Religion Worldview have great compassion for other people in earlier stages of development. They encourage these people to develop further by introducing them to the concepts of their religion. This is useful as far as it goes: It encourages people who are without an appreciation of God the Creator to seek a greater understanding of life. However, often these well-meaning efforts fall short because the understanding of those who offer the encouragement is limited. Therefore, the aid that they are able to give is insufficient to be of lasting value.

Ideally, people who hold the Religion Worldview have an open mind to further development for themselves. They are always looking for new ideas that go beyond their current beliefs that will enhance their understanding of the world. Sometimes, however, people who hold this worldview feel that their religion contains all the answers and that they have reached the goal of human life. In fact, people who hold the Religion Worldview have hardly even entered the Path. This is a danger for those who hold this worldview. For more on this idea, refer to the topic **Fixed Worldviews** (on page 64).

Transition from the Religion Worldview to the Consciousness Worldview

The transition from the Religion Worldview to the Consciousness Worldview has three phases, as follows:

- Individual action phase
- Ready phase
- God's grace phase

⁶⁴ Refer, for example, to Pagels, Elaine H., *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis*, 114 ff.

(The diamond representing this transition is designated “A4” in Figure 5-1.)

Individual Action Phase

The individual action that we perform while we are in the Religion Worldview moving toward the Consciousness Worldview is *seeking greater closeness to God the Creator*. (In the Religion Worldview, this is the activity that gives us the greatest sense of happiness.)

In the Religion Worldview we identify the “I” (the “I” inside, what we consider to be the self) with the small “s” self, the ego. So, at this stage of our evolution, any relationship we have with God the Creator must be on that basis.⁶⁵

When we are in the Religion Worldview, what is it that we do that we believe will bring us closer to God?

... reading my holy book, believing with all my heart that the words in my holy book are directly from God, praying, attending church,⁶⁶ listening to the sermons, meeting in small discussion groups, sharing my beliefs with others, donating time and money, reading the history of my religion, believing in the teachings of the saints and prophets of my religion, conforming to the moral code set down by my holy book, having faith in the afterlife, reading books on prayer and healing and so on, going from church to church seeking the best pastor⁶⁷ and the perfect environment for nearness to God ...

The problem is that, whereas some or all of these activities might give us a temporary feeling of being closer to God, none of them can achieve the intimate closeness that we seek.

The Religion Worldview is the second step along the Path, and there are many steps after this one. Thus, at this stage, no matter what we do to feel closer to God, our efforts must fail. It is God Himself Who is drawing us beyond this early stage of development. Therefore, all our efforts must ultimately result in the hollow feeling that we have not succeeded in becoming sufficiently close to God to satisfy our thirst.

Ready Phase

The fact that, at this stage, there is no satisfying relationship with God leads us to disappointment and frustration. It leads us to dissatisfaction with the current situation. It leads us to a yearning for something more. In addition, something deep inside gives us the conviction that there must *be* something more.

This deep conviction, but without any answers, opens us up and makes us ready, makes us receptive to experience what is next. “There must be something more, my God, but what is it?” “Please show me; I surrender to Your will.”

⁶⁵ Later, when we are in God Consciousness and the Self is established in Being, we have an infinitely more profound relationship with God the Creator.

⁶⁶ Temple, stupa, synagogue, church, mosque, and so on

⁶⁷ Brahmin, monk, rabbi, pastor/priest, mullah, and so on

God's Grace Phase

Then, God the Creator gives us His grace. He gives us an experience⁶⁸ that goes way beyond any that we ever have had before. He gives us an experience of higher states of consciousness (an experience of the Absolute).

Whether we know it or not, we are all on the Path to Enlightenment (realization of the true nature of the Self). The ordinary life is one step along that Path. It is not the first step, nor is it the last. We entered the Path a very long time ago, and everything we do is a further step along the way. The question is will we become aware that we are on the Path, or will we remain ignorant of it? Eventually, each of us receives a call from God the Creator. And God's call is an invitation to become aware that we are on the Path and to make a commitment to the Path.

So, the goal of human life is Enlightenment. The first step to achieving a goal is to know that the goal exists. However as a human being, who experiences and understands only the ordinary states of consciousness (W/D/S), how are we to know that the higher states of consciousness even exist? Somehow, we must *experience* for ourselves, at least briefly, some indication that higher states really do exist. And we must *understand* that experience intellectually to realize its significance in our lives. Unfortunately, no one can choose to have an experience of higher states of consciousness. So, how then is such an experience possible? And once we have an experience of higher states, how are we to understand, a priori, its meaning?

It is only through the grace of God the Creator that we are able to have an experience of higher states. As was discussed before, God's grace is always with us from the time of our creation until we reach Unity Consciousness. However, on the Path to higher states of consciousness, there are several times when the grace of God is *absolutely necessary*. The first time is to give us the experience of God's love. The second time, which is the subject of current topic, is to call us to a conscious commitment to the Path.

And what of understanding, once we have a potentially life-changing experience? We need some new information about the experience from a person (for example, a teacher) or from a book or from some other source that will enable us to understand the experience.

What kind of God-given experience can set us on the Path to higher states of consciousness? Almost any significant spiritual experience *can* (but not necessarily *will*) call us to the Path.⁶⁹ For example, any of the following experiences, albeit how briefly or how preliminarily, can put us on the Path:

- An experience of the Absolute, in which we *know* by direct experience that "I am conscious but there is no thought or object to be conscious of". Or more succinctly "I AM". This experience is similar to that in Transcendental Consciousness, in which we experience only the Absolute, only Being, only Consciousness Itself.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ For some of us, the "experience" can be something as simple as reading a book (or hearing a lecture or having a conversation with a friend) with which we resonate intellectually / emotionally / spiritually and that profoundly affects us. This experience, too, is an expression of God's grace.

⁶⁹ Refer, for example, to James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: a Study in Human Nature*.

⁷⁰ In this book, "the Absolute", "Being", "Consciousness Itself", and other such terms are used synonymously.

- An experience of the Self as separate from the world, in which we *know* by direct experience that “I AM, and I perceive the activity of the world. But I am totally separate from and merely witnessing the world’s activity”. This experience is similar to that in Cosmic Consciousness, in which we experience the Self as Absolute Existence simultaneously with experiencing the body and the world as Relative Existence.
- An experience of God the Creator, in which we *know* by direct experience that “God loves me completely and I am devoted completely to God.” In addition, we experience total bliss and have a greatly heightened perception of objects in the world. This experience is similar to that in God Consciousness, in which we experience the Self as Absolute Existence and we experience the finest aspects of Relative Existence.
- An experience of the Unity of all Creation, in which we *know* by direct experience that “I am everything and that everything is me.” Again, we experience total bliss. This experience is similar to that in Unity Consciousness, in which we experience Absolute Existence and Relative Existence as One.

All of these experiences involve a direct experience of the Absolute. In the previous transition—that from the Material Worldview to the Religion Worldview—the experience involved God the Creator. This current transition involves an experience of God the Absolute.

It is interesting to note that people with highly developed *intellects* (rather than emotions) tend to be drawn directly to the impersonal God—God the Absolute—rather than to the personal God—God the Creator.

Once God gives us an experience that calls us to the Path, we cannot help but want to return to that experience or other similar experiences. We cannot help but want to be closer to God. After an experience of higher states of consciousness, the meaning of life changes and what is important changes.

One of the most important aspects of the transition into the Consciousness Worldview is that it creates a deep and profound *longing*. Once we have experienced unity with God in any form, we want to return to that experience.

Consciousness Worldview (in W/D/S)

People who hold the Consciousness Worldview believe that God the Absolute is the ultimate Reality. They also believe that the true nature of their Self is that Reality. They believe that God the Creator exists and is the ultimate *being* in the Relative. However, they believe that God the Absolute is the ultimate Reality. These people experience the three ordinary states of consciousness: Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping. (The square representing the Consciousness Worldview is designated “A5” in Figure 5-1.)

People who hold the Consciousness worldview are transtheists. The word “transtheism” means “belief in the existence of an impersonal God (God the Absolute) viewed as the Source of the Relative aspect of Existence, That altogether transcends the Relative aspect of Existence; and That has no manifestation of any kind”.⁷¹

The Consciousness worldview—as is true of the other worldviews and even of the higher states of consciousness—is neither good nor bad. It is merely a stage in the evolution of

⁷¹ Refer to **Appendix A: Theism and Transtheism** (on page 73) for a more complete definition of “transtheism”.

human consciousness. Similarly, transtheism is neither positive nor negative. It, too, is a step along the way.

For people who hold the Consciousness Worldview, the self is identified with the ego, body, thoughts, and actions. And the non-self is everything else in the universe including God the Creator. Generally, people in this worldview have only a vague idea of what the Absolute is. (In fact, it is not even *possible* to experience the full reality of the Absolute until we are, at least, in Cosmic Consciousness and the fullest reality of the Absolute is not experienced until we are in Unity Consciousness.)

It is important to note that the Consciousness Worldview can be divided into two steps. In Step 1, we have had the experience of unity and we understand it, and we know that the Absolute is the ultimate Reality. In Step 2, we act on that knowledge and actively enter the Path and begin to practice a technique, such as meditation, that allows us to experience the Absolute in a systematic manner. In Step 2, we are *consciously* on the Path to Enlightenment.

The Consciousness Worldview is characterized by *longing*.⁷²

In the transition from the Material Worldview to the Religion Worldview, we experience God the Creator's love for us, but God remains separate from us. And in the Religion Worldview we worship God from afar, as a Being separate from ourselves.

In the transition from the Religion Worldview to the Consciousness Worldview we experience *unity* with God (God the Absolute). God is no longer separate from us: He and I are One.

For a human being in the ordinary states of consciousness (W/D/S), the experience of unity with God is, by far, the most powerful experience we can have. It is incomparable bliss! But the experience is short-lived! How can that be? One moment I am One with You, and now You are gone! How can that be? Agony beyond imagining!!

Anyone who has experienced a temporary unity with God knows that agony. After the experience of unity, nothing else matters. And the longing begins.

Monica Furlong summarizes it as follows:

... there is a reality, a profound meaning, behind or beyond or within the world of appearances. Most, perhaps all, of us have this sense at times, but for the mystics their relationship, their intimacy, with this meaning, and their longing to be united with it, is the most important one of their lives. They often give the word *God* to that reality. Visions draw them toward it, and visions create further yearning, a vocation to give up their lives to search for it, whatever the incidental hardships.⁷³

On the subject of the ephemeral nature of the unity experience, Alister McGrath writes as follows:

Epiphanies are momentary and transient, often leaving a sense “of loss and even betrayal.” These “momentary parts of the experiential flux” leave the subjects hoping that they are sustainable, only to discover that they are not.⁷⁴

On the subject of spiritual longing, many have written. Two examples follow.

⁷² That ancient longing, that timeless longing.

⁷³ Furlong, Monica, *Visions and Longings: Medieval Women Mystics*, p.1

⁷⁴ McGrath, Alister E., *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology*, p. 33

The first verses of Psalm 42 of the Hebrew Bible express it as follows:⁷⁵

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee,
O God.

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: 'When shall I come and appear
before God?'

And Rumi expresses it as follows:⁷⁶

Love Dogs

One night a man was crying,
Allah! Allah!
His lips grew sweet with the praising,
until a cynic said,
"So! I have heard you
calling out, but have you ever
gotten any response?"

The man had no answer to that.
He quit praying and fell into a confused sleep.

He dreamed he saw Khidr, the guide of souls,
in a thick, green foliage.

"Why did you stop praising?"
"Because I've never heard anything back."

"This longing
you express is the return message."

The grief you cry out from
draws you toward union.

Your pure sadness
that wants help
is the secret cup.

Listen to the moan of a dog for its master.
That whining is the connection.

There are love dogs
no one knows the names of.

Give your life
to be one of them.

God calls us to the Path. It is then our job (with God's help), first, to commit ourselves to the Path and, second, to continue along the Path to the final goal. The insatiable longing to return to God is sometimes difficult to bear, but it is *the* essential ingredient for us to stay on the Path to Enlightenment.

⁷⁵ The English translation is from the Jewish Publication Society translation [1917], taken from:
<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt2642.htm>.

⁷⁶ Barks, Colman, Translator, *The Essential Rumi*, pp. 155-156

Transition from the Consciousness Worldview (in W/D/S) to Cosmic Consciousness

In the transition from the Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness, the longing for unity with God—which characterizes the Consciousness Worldview—is translated into action. (The diamond representing this transition is designated “A6” in Figure 5-1.)

In the Consciousness Worldview we experience only the ordinary states of human consciousness, Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping. In Cosmic Consciousness we experience the Self as the Absolute. Thus, the transition from the Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness is not merely a transition; it is a *major transformation*. It involves nothing less than the transformation from death to Life.

In “death” we are unaware of the eternal Life of which we are capable. In death, we are ignorant of the true nature of the Self. (This death is far more significant than the one in which the physical body stops functioning.) In “Life” we experience eternal Being as ourselves. In Life, we have realized the true nature of the Self.

In “death,” we identify the self with the ego and the body, thoughts, and actions. In “Life,” we identify the Self with Absolute Being. The individual ego ceases to exist and the body, thoughts and actions are observed by the Self. The body, thoughts, and actions are completely separate from the Self.⁷⁷

The transformation from the Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness is the principal purpose of human existence.⁷⁸

Usually, this transformation requires a great deal of doing on our part. Rarely, however, a person undergoes this transformation spontaneously. One person for whom this happened is Eckhart Tolle. He describes his experience as follows:⁷⁹

“I cannot live with myself any longer.” This was the thought that kept repeating itself in my mind. Then suddenly I became aware of what a peculiar thought it was. “Am I one or two? If I cannot live with myself, there must be two of me: the ‘I’ and the ‘self’ that ‘I’ cannot live with.” “Maybe,” I thought, “only one of them is real.”

I was so stunned by this strange realization that my mind stopped. I was fully conscious, but there were no more thoughts. Then I felt drawn into what seemed like a vortex of energy. It was a slow movement at first and then accelerated. I was gripped by an intense fear, and my body started to shake. I heard the words “resist nothing,” as if spoken inside my chest. I could feel myself being sucked into a void. It felt as if the void was inside myself rather than outside. Suddenly, there was no more fear, and I let myself fall into that void. I have no recollection of what happened after that.

I was awakened by the chirping of a bird outside the window. I had never heard such a sound before. My eyes were still closed, and I saw the image of a precious diamond. Yes, if a diamond could make a sound, this is what it would

⁷⁷ The complete separation of the Self from the body, thoughts and actions is true in CC. In UC, the Self and non-Self are One.

⁷⁸ However, further evolution is possible, whether in human or divine form.

⁷⁹ Tolle, Eckhart, *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*, pp. 4 to 5

be like. I opened my eyes. The first light of dawn was filtering through the curtains. Without any thought, I felt, I knew, that there is infinitely more to light than we realize. That soft luminosity filtering through the curtains was love itself. ...

That day I walked around the city in utter amazement at the miracle of life on earth, as if I had just been born into this world.

For the next five months, I lived in a state of uninterrupted deep peace and bliss. After that, it diminished somewhat in intensity, or perhaps it just seemed to because it became my natural state. I could still function in the world, although I realized that nothing I ever *did* could possibly add anything to what I already had.

I knew, of course, that something profoundly significant had happened to me, but I didn't understand it at all. It wasn't until several years later, after I had read spiritual texts and spent time with spiritual teachers, that I realized that what everybody was looking for had already happened to me. I understood that the intense pressure of suffering that night must have forced my consciousness to withdraw from its identification with the unhappy and deeply fearful self, which is ultimately a fiction of the mind. This withdrawal must have been so complete that this false, suffering self immediately collapsed, just as if a plug had been pulled out of an inflatable toy. What was left then was my true nature as the ever-present *I am*: consciousness in its pure state prior to identification with form. Later I also learned to go into that inner timeless and deathless realm that I had originally perceived as a void and remain fully conscious. I dwelt in states of such indescribable bliss and sacredness that even the original experience I just described pales in comparison. A time came when, for a while, I was left with nothing on the physical plane. I had no relationships, no job, no home, no socially defined identity. I spent almost two years sitting on park benches in a state of the most intense joy.

Another, similar, experience is described by David Hawkins as follows:⁸⁰

By the time I was 38, I knew I was about to die. I didn't care about my body, but my spirit was in a state of extreme anguish and despair. As my final moment approached, the thought flashed through my mind, What if there is a God? So I called out in prayer, "If there is a God, I ask Him to help me now." I surrendered to whatever God there might be, and went unconscious. When I awoke, a transformation of such enormity had taken place that I was struck dumb with awe.

The person I had been no longer existed. There was no personal self or ego left—just an Infinite Presence of such unlimited power that it was all that was. This Presence had replaced what had been "me," and the body and its actions were controlled solely by the Presence's infinite will. The world was illuminated by the clarity of an Infinite Oneness, which expressed itself as all things revealed in their immeasurable beauty and perfection.

⁸⁰ Hawkins, David R., *Power vs. Force: The Hidden Determinants of Human Behavior*, pp. 11 to 13.

For nine months, this stillness persisted. I had no will of my own; unbidden, the physical entity went about its business under the direction of the infinitely powerful, but exquisitely gentle, will of the Presence. In that state, there was no need to think about anything. All truth was self-evident; no conceptualization was necessary or even possible. ...

It was not possible to function effectively in the world. Along with fear and anxiety, all ordinary motivations had disappeared. There was nothing to seek, as all was perfect. Fame, success, and money were meaningless. Friends urged me to be pragmatic and return to my practice, but there was no incentive to do so. However, I discovered that I could perceive the reality that underlay personalities; I saw how the origin of emotional sickness lay in people's belief that they were their personalities. And so, of its own, my practice resumed and eventually became huge.

Note that it is essential that we have understanding to go along with our experience. If we do not, then we can become very confused and disoriented if and when we enter a higher state of consciousness. This is expressed by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi as follows:

Without proper understanding, even the direct experience of eternal freedom [in Cosmic Consciousness] may be found to create confusion and fear.⁸¹

In the absence of a proper interpretation of this expression of non-attachment [as experienced in Cosmic Consciousness], one might become bewildered, and this great blessing of life might become a liability.⁸²

An example of this phenomenon from the life of a living person is as follows: Some time after Eckhart Tolle made the transition from ordinary consciousness to Cosmic Consciousness he became a homeless vagrant for several years until his intellectual understanding became equal to his experience, and he could integrate the two and return to living in the world.⁸³

For the vast majority of people, those for whom the transformation does not occur spontaneously, the transition from the Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness has three phases, as follows:

- Individual action phase
- Ready phase
- God's grace phase

Individual Action Phase

The individual action that we perform while we are in the Consciousness Worldview (in W/D/S) moving toward Cosmic Consciousness involves the *purification*⁸⁴ of the *physical body* (nervous system).

⁸¹ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 4, v. 41, commentary on p. 320

⁸² Ibid., ch. 6, v. 25, commentary on p. 434

⁸³ Tolle, Eckhart, Interviewed by Simon, Tami, Audio CD: *Even the Sun Will Die*, Part 2, Track 6, 1 min 40 s. Later in the interview, Tolle states that the reason that he lived on a park bench for so long was that "... I didn't have any spiritual guidance ..."

⁸⁴ Refer to Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 6, v. 12, commentary on p. 407.

Any state of consciousness is the expression of a corresponding state of the nervous system.⁸⁵

The physical body is the vehicle for individual consciousness. The physical body is a reflector of Pure Consciousness. The purer the physical body, the better it can reflect Pure Consciousness. When the physical body is impure, its ability to reflect Pure Consciousness is very limited. For an ordinary human being—which includes the vast majority of people—that means we can reflect only the Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping states of consciousness. When the physical body is sufficiently pure, it can reflect Pure Consciousness sufficiently to sustain the experience of Cosmic Consciousness.

The immediate goal, then, must be to purify the physical body. Purification of the physical body happens gradually. It happens by releasing the stresses (impurities, rigidities) accumulated over many, many years. How can we release stress, especially in today's world in which we seem to gain more and more stress each day?

The only way to release accumulated stress is for the mind to experience the Absolute (albeit momentarily). We need not be aware of the experience; but it must happen, none-the-less, for stress release (bodily purification) to occur.

In the ordinary states of consciousness (that is, before CC), when the mind experiences the Absolute, the following happens: Very momentarily, the metabolism of the physical body goes to nil and the body achieves perfect rest. That perfect rest allows stress (imperfections in the physical body) to be released. When stress is released, that process produces some bodily activity, which we perceive as a thought. (Again, before CC), when the thought is produced, the mind attaches itself to the thought and goes with the thought into the Relative. Thus, the mind ceases to experience the Absolute.

The process can be summarized as follows:

- The physical body is operating at its ordinary metabolic rate.
- The mind experiences Transcendental Consciousness (the Absolute). The body achieves perfect rest.
- The rest allows for releases of stress. The stress release produces a thought.
- The mind attaches itself to the thought. The mind stops experiencing the Absolute.
- The body returns to its ordinary metabolic rate.

This entire process occurs in a split second.

The outward manifestations of the process, then, are a slowing of the metabolism and the creation of thoughts. The greater percentage of time that the mind is experiencing the Absolute, the slower the metabolism becomes and the greater is the possibility for the release of stress, which manifests itself as thoughts.

In the Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping states of consciousness, the mind has very limited contact with the Absolute. Thus, in these ordinary states, very little stress is released. During the Waking state, the mind might experience the Absolute briefly when we see a beautiful object or experience a natural scene, for example, when we see a flower or we are in deep woods. This experience of the Absolute, no matter how brief, does result in the release of stress. That is the reason we feel renewed after being out in nature.

⁸⁵ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 4, v. 38, commentary on p. 314

During the Dream state, there is stress released as is indicated by the many thoughts and images that we experience while we are dreaming. Therefore, the mind must be in intermittent, brief contact with the Absolute.

In dreamless sleep, “the real Self is present as a witness, while the ego-sense, which we call ‘ourselves,’ our individuality, has become temporarily merged in ignorance and disappeared”.⁸⁶ In deep Sleep state, the metabolism slows and the body is rested. Deep sleep allows the body sufficient rest so that it can enter the Dreaming state (REM sleep) in which it releases stress.

As long as we remain in the ordinary states of consciousness, progress toward Self realization is *very slow* indeed! In addition, the brief and intermittent experiences of the Absolute we might have in the ordinary states of consciousness are not recognized, as such, by the thinking mind.

When the mind experiences the Absolute, the person is said to be in Transcendental Consciousness. (Refer to the topic **Transcendental Consciousness** on page 20.) However, as long as the physical body has any impurities left, as discussed above, this experience results in stress release, which we experience as a thought. Therefore, as long as there is residual stress, a sustained experience of Transcendental Consciousness is not likely to occur.⁸⁷

Being in Transcendental Consciousness allows us to release stress! Therefore, being in TC accelerates our progress toward realization of the true Self. But how can we experience this state of consciousness? And more to the point, how can we do so predictably so that we have a mechanism for systematic stress release? Meditation techniques (and other spiritual practices) provide us with systematic methods of entering Transcendental Consciousness. Therefore, regular practice of such techniques *greatly increases* our progress toward Self realization.

Alister McGrath offers the following insight on this topic:

This approach to experiencing the transcendent involves the development of practices aimed at facilitating the turning into this inner landscape. ... Religious traditions have developed a range of techniques for the “deliberate facilitation of religious experience”—such as fasting, meditation, and other forms of spiritual discipline.⁸⁸

During meditation, the mind is in the Waking state most of the time, and it is in Transcendental Consciousness some of the time. The alternation between these two states of consciousness (in and out) is, usually, instantaneous. This diving in and out from Waking state to Transcendental Consciousness and back is the *most important process* in the evolution

⁸⁶ Prabhavananda, Swami and Isherwood, Christopher, Translated with an introduction by, *Shankara's Crest-Jewel of Discrimination (Viveka-Chudamani)*, p. 8

⁸⁷ There is, perhaps, one exception. If the physical body has no readily releasable stress at this time, and deeper stresses are not ready to be released yet, then we can be in the state of Transcendental Consciousness for an extended period. However, eventually, one of the more deep-seated stresses is released, which results in a thought. And Transcendental Consciousness ends.

⁸⁸ McGrath, Alister E., *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology*, p. 71

of human consciousness.⁸⁹ (Diving into TC from the Waking state is called the *inward stroke* of meditation, and coming out of TC to the Waking state is called the *outward stroke*.)

Why is this process so important? This is the process whereby the transition between the Consciousness Worldview and Cosmic Consciousness is achieved. It is this process that allows us to purify the nervous system rapidly. It is this process that allows us to evolve quickly from ignorance of the true nature of the Self to realization of the true nature of the Self, which is called Enlightenment!

What allows this process to occur? Inward stroke of the process: *It is the natural tendency of the mind to seek fields of greater happiness.* The Absolute is the field of greatest happiness. Therefore, it is the natural tendency of the mind to seek the Absolute. When left to itself, outside the realm of thought, speech, or action, the mind naturally seeks to experience the Absolute (which we experience as Transcendental Consciousness).

Outward stroke of the process: *It is the natural tendency of the body to release stress.* Our bodies are full of impurities, caused by stresses and strains, that have been accumulated over a long period of time. When we are at rest, with a reduced metabolic rate (such as during sleep) it is the natural tendency of our bodies to get rid of those impurities (for example, by dreaming). When the mind is experiencing the Absolute, the body is at its most profound state of rest, perfect rest with nil metabolism. In that condition, the body naturally throws off any of the accumulated impurities that are ready to be released, from the most superficial to the most profound. When an impurity is released, there is some activity in the body, which the mind experiences as a thought. When the mind experiences the thought, we return to the Waking state of consciousness and no longer experience the Absolute.

The inward stroke of meditation leads the mind to Self-consciousness and infuses the state of Self-consciousness, Being, into the nature of the mind. The outward stroke of meditation brings such a mind into the field of action, where it acts with a certain degree of Being. This practice of meditation and the activity that follows it—morning and evening meditation and activity during the day—develop a state in which the nature of the mind becomes transformed into the state of Being, while the ability to act in all fields of practical life is fully maintained.⁹⁰

The most fortunate people in the world are those who have found and who practice a technique that allows them to transcend in a regular and systematic manner. They are the most fortunate because they will make the transition from death to Life (from ignorance of the true nature of the Self to realization of the true nature of the Self).

Even though many meditation techniques have developed as a part of what we typically think of as religious tradition, the techniques themselves go beyond (transcend) the realm of religion. Religion is the worship of God the Creator. God the Creator is the finest layer of the Relative. Thus, the realm of religion ends at the finest layer of the Relative. Meditation allows us to go beyond the finest layer of the Relative; it allows us to experience the Absolute. Thus, in meditation we transcend God the Creator and thus, we transcend religion.

⁸⁹ Because of its special importance, this process is indicated as a starburst in the flow diagram shown in Figure 5-1. In addition, its special importance is indicated by its position in the center of the diagram.

⁹⁰ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 5, v. 10, commentary on p. 344

It is by contacting the Absolute repeatedly—every morning and every evening, day in and day out—through meditation that we achieve rapid evolution of consciousness (rapid spiritual development).

No matter where we start—in this religious tradition or that, in this intellectual tradition or that, or with no tradition at all—in meditation, we end up with the same experience: the experience of the Absolute.⁹¹

The Absolute is Truth. Truth transcends all religion, all belief, all understanding, all emotion. No religion can be Truth; no belief can be Truth; no understanding can be Truth; no feeling can be Truth. The Absolute, which transcends all these, is Truth.

As we discussed before, transitions in the evolution of human consciousness have three phases: “individual action”, “ready”, and “God’s grace”. All transitions require time. The God’s grace phase of transitions involves almost no time at all. This phase of the transition washes over us and usually lasts only minutes or hours. (None-the less, the experience is generally so powerful that its impact lasts for years or even for the rest of our lives.) The individual action phase of transitions, however, often needs considerable time.⁹² For example, the individual action phase of the transition from the Consciousness Worldview to CC is one that involves purification of the physical nervous system. Culturing the nervous system “. . . requires regular and sustained practice, which obviously needs time”.⁹³

(Note that from the point of view of an enlightened person, NOW is all there is. And that is true. However, the reality of the person in ordinary human consciousness is that time exists. And time is required to achieve any goal.)

The entire process of going from W/D/S to CC can be described in different, but equivalent, terms. When we experience the Absolute in meditation, we are immersed in Pure Being many times, albeit briefly each time. When we come out of meditation we are infused with Being,⁹⁴ and we feel at peace. However, that infusion of Being and peace are not permanent. They must be tested in Relative reality. Therefore, we must engage in activity in the Relative. Activity is often stressful. Thus, some of the Being that was infused is lost, *but some remains*. Each time we meditate and then engage in activity, we make Being more permanent in our lives. Therefore, the two steps to making Being a permanent reality in our lives are rest (the infusion of Being in meditation) followed by activity in the Relative.

It is interesting to note that when we are in the individual action phase of the transition from the Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness, we can become quite unsettled. The life we used to live is no longer satisfying to us. However, we are not yet living the life we feel is possible.

... when a man’s consciousness evolves from one level to another, the life of the previous level becomes useless to him. ... [This is] one who, as the result of a certain amount of practice [of meditation], has risen above the level of

⁹¹ Refer to **Appendix C: Short-Cutting the Ordinary Route to Entering the Path** on page 79.

⁹² The time required for the “ready” phase of a transition can vary considerably from seconds to a very long time, depending on the will of God. Refer to the Glossary topic **transitions** on page 95.

⁹³ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 4, v. 38, commentary on p. 315

⁹⁴ We can express what the *experience of Absolute Being* does in two different ways: First, we can say it gives us perfect rest and thus allows us to release stress. Second, we can say that it infuses us with Being. The stress that is released makes us more pure. And that greater purity allows us to reflect Being more perfectly. Thus, the two expressions are merely two ways to say the same thing from different perspectives.

ordinary human consciousness but who has not yet attained cosmic consciousness Such a man has lost ground[ing] on the human level but has as yet no foothold on the divine level. He is neither here nor there.⁹⁵

When we are in such a condition, we must be patient and simply live through it in the best way we can.

Ready Phase

The culmination of the purification process—achieved by continually experiencing the Absolute in Transcendental Consciousness, followed by activity in the Relative—is a body that is sufficiently purified to sustain the experience of the Self as the Absolute. At this point, we are ready to enter Cosmic Consciousness. We cannot know when this point is achieved. Therefore, we just continue the purification process until the time is right.

God's Grace Phase

Then, God the Creator gives us His grace. In the transition from the Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness, God's grace dispels the "mistake of the intellect".

As is alluded to on page 26, when we are in the Consciousness Worldview and before (that is, before we enter Cosmic Consciousness), the intellect makes a big mistake. It misidentifies the "I" with the small "s" self: the individual ego and body, thoughts, and actions. (That is, we have the tendency to believe that we are what we think and what we do.)

[The] intellect forgets, in the midst of the hectic activity, that silence exists, both in one's awareness and in nature, and this deluded intellect makes poor decisions ... from a state of mind dominated by stress.⁹⁶

[This mistake of the intellect] is the mistaken perception that the ever-changing display we experience through our senses is all there all is; we do not perceive the underlying wholeness of life It is as if we sailed out into the sea, looking out over the waves on the surface, and concluded that they comprise the total reality of the ocean—without perceiving that there are unfathomably vast, silent depths beneath from which those waves spring.⁹⁷

The [activity of Nature] find[s] an expression, for instance, in the metabolic processes of the body, and on their basis feelings of hunger and thirst arise. The need for food and water is in the physiological sphere, but the ego feels "I am hungry", "I am thirsty". The [activity of Nature is] responsible in a similar way for all experience. [It is] the basis of all events and activities, but the ego [or intellect] takes these upon itself and feels "I am acting".

As long as the Self has not been experienced as separate from activity, the mind [or intellect] remains deluded about its own status and its relationship with activity; associating itself with the [activity of Nature], it assumes the

⁹⁵ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 6, v. 38, commentary on p. 458

⁹⁶ "Functioning without Silence: the Mistake of the Intellect" quoted from http://web.me.com/larissanicole/larissanicole/Nourish/Entries/2008/5/31_The_Mistake_of_the_Intellect.html

⁹⁷ Hospodar, Miriam Kasin, *Heaven's Banquet: Vegetarian Cooking for Lifelong Health the Ayurveda Way*, p. 4

authorship of action, which actually belongs to [Nature itself]. This is how, through ignorance of his own Self, man falls into the bondage of action.⁹⁸

In fact, the “I” is Pure Consciousness; the true nature of the Self is the Absolute.

Our part (the individual action part) of the transition from the Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness is to purify our body sufficiently so that it can sustain the experience of Pure Consciousness. When that is complete, God sheds His grace upon us by dispelling the mistake of the intellect. God dissolves the misidentification of the “I”, and the intellect correctly identifies the “I” with the Absolute, with the true Self. Then, we enter Cosmic Consciousness, and the Self is established in Being.

This is the third time that God’s grace allows us to make a life-changing transition. The first is when God shows us His love; the second is when God gives us an experience of the Absolute; and this, the third time, is when God dispels the mistake of the intellect.

The God’s grace phase of the transition requires no time. It is instantaneous. At one instant the mistake is there, and in the very same instant, the mistake is gone. At one instant we are on one side of the door, and in the very same instant we are on the other side of the door. And our life is changed forever!

In Cosmic Consciousness the physical body is pure enough for the awareness to be fully established in the Absolute (for the Self to be permanently established in Pure Consciousness) while, at the same time, the body is engaged in activity in the phenomenal world.

Cosmic Consciousness is the *normal*⁹⁹ state of human consciousness! (Note that CC is at about the midpoint, not the end, of the Path of development of human consciousness as shown in Figure 5-1.) CC is the platform from which yet higher states of consciousness are reached. It is only from the state of Cosmic Consciousness that *seeking* God becomes a realistic possibility. It is only from the state of CC that the Path to union with God *begins*. How can we seek union before there are two aspects—the Divine (the Absolute) and the world (the Relative)—to unite?¹⁰⁰

Transcendental Consciousness

Repeated experience of Transcendental Consciousness is required for us to achieve the transition from ignorance to Enlightenment. Thus, the experience of TC is part of the transition from the ordinary states of consciousness (W/D/S) to Cosmic Consciousness. Therefore, TC is discussed here.

The state of Transcendental Consciousness is described (on page 20) in **Chapter 4: The Seven States of Consciousness**. To summarize, Transcendental Consciousness (TC) is the 4th state of human consciousness. In TC, we experience¹⁰¹ *only* the Absolute, only Being, only Consciousness Itself. In this state, we experience the Self as It truly is: Being. For a person in Transcendental Consciousness, the Relative does not exist. For a person in this state,

⁹⁸ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 3, v. 27, commentary on p. 221

⁹⁹ Not “ordinary” but “normal”.

¹⁰⁰ Refer to Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, Preface, p 14.

¹⁰¹ As is stated in footnote 7 on page 6, strictly speaking, it is not possible to “experience” the Absolute, because the Absolute is not an object. When we are in Transcendental Consciousness and in the other higher states of consciousness, we *are* the Absolute; we *live* the Absolute; we *are One with* the Absolute. In the higher states of consciousness, the Self *is identical* to the Absolute.

neither thoughts nor forms nor time nor space exists. Only the Absolute exists. In TC, we are fully conscious but without an object of consciousness. In this state of consciousness, “I AM” is the only reality. (The square representing Transcendental Consciousness is designated “A7” in Figure 5-1.)

When we are in Transcendental Consciousness, our metabolic rate is nil. The physical body is completely at rest, yet the consciousness is awake. Our mind is not functioning; it is not active. But awareness is clear. This clarity of awareness is Pure Consciousness.

As we enter and as we leave TC from the Waking state, just at the junction point between the two states of consciousness, we experience pure Bliss!¹⁰²

Transcendental Consciousness is a very interesting state of consciousness. In general, when we are in the Waking state of consciousness, we can experience TC only very fleetingly. This is because, in the Waking State, experience of TC allows for stress release, which results in a thought, which results in leaving TC.

Transcendental Consciousness is also available to a person who is in CC or in GC. In CC and GC a person experiences Self (the Absolute) and non-Self (the Relative). To enter Transcendental Consciousness (and experience *only* the Absolute), the person in CC or GC need only withdraw his/her attention from the Relative.¹⁰³

In UC, we experience the Self as the Absolute and the Relative as the Absolute. All is One. In a sense, UC is TC at a higher level. In TC, we experience “All is One and I am that One.” Again in UC we experience “All is One and I am that One.” The difference is that in TC the “All” includes only the Absolute, whereas in UC the “All” includes the Absolute and the Relative.

Cosmic Consciousness

The state of Cosmic Consciousness is described (on page 22) in **Chapter 4: The Seven States of Consciousness**. To summarize, Cosmic Consciousness (CC) is the 5th state of human consciousness. In this state of consciousness, we experience the Self as Absolute Existence *simultaneous* with experiencing the body and the world as Relative Existence. In Cosmic Consciousness, we experience the Self and the world as distinct realities, completely separate from one another. In CC, we experience a complete duality: the Self and other than the Self. In CC, the true Self is a witnessing Presence (the I AM) that witnesses our bodies, our thoughts, and our activities and witnesses the events of the world. (The square representing Cosmic Consciousness is designated “A8” in Figure 5-1.)

Cosmic Consciousness is the first state of consciousness in which someone can be called “Enlightened.” This is the first state in which a person knows the true nature of the Self (as the unchanging Absolute) and can simultaneously operate in the ever-changing Relative world. In Cosmic Consciousness, all of our actions are in the flow of Nature. All action that we take is right action. In addition, all of our needs are fulfilled when the need arises.

¹⁰² Refer to Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 6, v. 27, commentary on pp. 437 - 438.

¹⁰³ Refer, for example, to the statement of Eckhart Tolle, quoted on page 42: “Later I also learned to go into that inner timeless and deathless realm that I had originally perceived as a void and remain fully conscious. I dwelt in states of such indescribable bliss and sacredness that even the original experience I just described pales in comparison.”

The evolution from TC to CC involves bringing the experience of the Absolute from Transcendental Consciousness back into Waking consciousness. As we experience TC more and more often, the experience of I AM is gradually brought back into Waking consciousness.

In CC, the Self is established in Being. The non-Self is the Relative perceived at the surface level. In CC our senses are not sufficiently refined to perceive the finer values of Creation. The transition to CC does not bring about a change in a person's perceptions of objects in Relative Existence. These perceptions remain as they were in the Waking state. For example, a tree that the person saw in the Waking state remains the same tree in Cosmic Consciousness.

In CC, our physical bodies are sufficiently purified to sustain the experience of the Self as the Absolute. However, we are unaware that non-Self is also Self.

For human beings, CC is the normal state of consciousness. In this state of consciousness we know who we are and we can operate in the world. The evolution of human consciousness goes from “unity” to Unity—from illusory unity in ignorance, in the W/D/S states of consciousness, to true Unity in UC. The midpoint in this evolution (CC) is complete separation—separation of the Self from the non-Self (which is the world). From this platform of normal human life, we can progress to the yet higher states of consciousness that are possible for any human being.

Transition from Cosmic Consciousness to God Consciousness

The transition from Cosmic Consciousness to God Consciousness has three phases, as follows:

- Individual action phase
- Ready phase
- God's grace phase

(The diamond representing this transition is designated “A9” in Figure 5-1.)

Individual Action Phase

The individual action that we perform while we are in Cosmic Consciousness moving toward God Consciousness is *the refinement of the senses*.

The transition from W/D/S to CC involves repeated experience of the *Absolute* (in Transcendental Consciousness). The transition from CC to GC involves repeated experience of the *Relative*, each time at more and more refined levels.

The journey from CC to GC involves ever-increasing refinement of the senses. When we first enter CC, our senses are not very well developed. To the person newly in CC, the world and everything in it looks pretty much the same as it did before. At the end of the journey, when we enter GC, we can perceive the finest of the Relative with all of our senses.

How is that achieved? A different meditation technique is required.¹⁰⁴ In the transition from W/D/S to CC, the goal is to experience the Absolute as often as possible. Therefore, the appropriate meditation technique for this transition is one that allows the mind to go *as quickly as possible* from the surface level of the Relative to the Absolute. In the transition

¹⁰⁴ Refer to Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, Introduction, p. 20; ch. 3, v. 13, commentary on p. 201; ch. 6, v. 10, commentary on p. 402.

from CC to GC, the goal is to experience the Relative in all its wonderful detail. Therefore, the appropriate meditation technique for this transition is one that allows the mind to go *slowly* from the surface level of the Relative to finer and finer levels of the Relative to the finest level of the Relative, just above or before the Absolute.

The mind experiences objects through the senses.¹⁰⁵ The mind, using a particular sense, passes through the levels of experience, from the grosser to the finer levels of experience.¹⁰⁶ Thus, as the mind experiences finer and finer aspects of an object, it uses finer and finer aspects of the senses. This process of progressively experiencing finer levels of the Relative refines the senses more and more.

Thus, the individual action that we perform in the transitions from CC to GC can be summarized as follows:

- Practice a technique¹⁰⁷ that enhances the level of perception.
- Finer perception leads to fascination with the objects of perception.
- Fascination leads to a real appreciation of the object.
- Appreciation leads to love of the object of perception.
- Love of the object leads to an overwhelming desire to experience the One (God the Creator) who created the object.

Ready Phase

We experience with all five senses the entire range of the Relative from the grossest to the finest. And we are total enthralled by what we perceive. We do not yet, however, perceive the Creator of all this splendor. So we call out “Author, author!”

God’s Grace Phase

Then, God the Creator gives us His grace. The culmination of the transition from Cosmic Consciousness to God Consciousness is that *God the Creator reveals Himself to us face to face!*

Our individual action allows us to perceive the finest value of the Relative. The being Who constitutes this finest value is God the Creator. Therefore, our individual action gives us the ability to perceive God the Creator. Once we have that ability, it is God’s grace that He reveals Himself to us by direct perception through our senses. This is the fourth instance in which the grace of God the Creator is required for us to make a life-changing transition.

God Consciousness

The state of God Consciousness is described (on page 23) in **Chapter 4: The Seven States of Consciousness**. To summarize, God Consciousness (GC) is the 6th state of human consciousness. In this state of consciousness, we continue to experience the Self as Absolute Existence and all else (non-Self) as Relative Existence. However, we now experience the finest aspects of Relative Existence (including God the Creator). Thus, God Consciousness is

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., ch. 2, v. 59, commentary on p. 160

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., ch. 2, v. 61, commentary on p. 162

¹⁰⁷ Certain advanced meditation techniques allow the mind to go *slowly* from the surface level of the Relative to finer and finer levels of the Relative to the finest level of the Relative.

glorified Cosmic Consciousness. (The square representing God Consciousness is designated “A10” in Figure 5-1.)

In God Consciousness, our senses are fully refined, and we can perceive all layers of Creation, from the grossest to the finest. All of Creation is fascinating to us and we love everything and everyone. All of Creation displays God's glory, and we revel in that glory.

When we are in God Consciousness, we can literally “see” (and “converse with”) God the Creator! It is only when we are in GC that we can truly know God the Creator and begin to be devoted to Him and worship Him. It is only in GC that a true love of God the Creator can develop. In this state, there is truly a lover (you) and a beloved (God the Creator). Note, however, that the strict duality of Self and non-Self remains. The non-Self is just a lot richer than it was before.

Recall (refer to 50) that at the junction point between the Waking state and the Absolute (just before we enter Transcendental Consciousness) we experience complete Bliss. In GC, we are living that reality all the time. We are experiencing the finest of the Relative all the time. Thus in GC, we experience bliss, beyond extreme happiness, all the time.

In Cosmic Consciousness, the separation between Self and non-Self is complete. In GC, there is still a separation of Self and non-Self, but now the separation is growing toward Unity. We feel very close to God the Creator and to all of His Creation.

Transition from God Consciousness to Unity Consciousness

The transition from God Consciousness to Unity Consciousness has three phases, as follows:

- Individual action phase
- Ready phase
- God's grace phase

(The diamond representing this transition is designated “A11” in Figure 5-1.)

Individual Action Phase

The individual action that we perform while we are in God Consciousness moving toward Unity Consciousness is *ever-increasing devotion to God the Creator*.

When we first enter God Consciousness, we perceive God the Creator for the first time. We have called out to God “Author, Author”, and He has heard our call and responded.

It is only now, from the platform of God Consciousness, that true devotion to God the Creator *can* begin. First, how can we be devoted to another being if we do not know who *we* are? (It is only in CC and later that we know that we are the Absolute.) And second, how can we be devoted to another being if we do not know who *he or she* is? (It is only in GC that God the Creator reveals Himself to us.) Therefore, the journey to know and love and be devoted to God the Creator can begin only *after* we are in GC.

When we are in God Consciousness, we are in the presence of God the Creator at all times. He is our entire experience. When that is the case, devotion to Him grows naturally. How can it be otherwise? No “technique” is required. Merely being in His presence is all we need.

The combined set of individual actions that we perform in the transitions from CC to GC and from GC to UC can be summarized as follows:¹⁰⁸

- Practice a technique that enhances the level of perception.
- Finer perception leads to fascination with the objects of perception.
- Fascination leads to a real appreciation of the object.
- Appreciation leads to love of the object of perception.
- Love of the object leads to love of the One (God the Creator) who created the object.
- Love of God the Creator leads to devotion to God the Creator.
- Devotion to God the Creator leads to union with God the Creator.

An obvious analogy to this process is “falling in love.” We meet another person and see in them finer qualities than those we see in others. That leads to a fascination with that person, which makes us want to know them better. As we know them better and better, we appreciate them more and more for these qualities. And appreciation leads to love and devotion and finally union in marriage.

Of course, the process of refining our senses and becoming devoted to God the Creator is simultaneously on a much finer level and a much higher level than the process of falling in love with another human being. In fact, could it be that all love and devotion between human beings is a rehearsal, a training ground, for the ultimate goal of our love and devotion to God the Creator?

The transition from GC to UC involves further self-purification. This further purification is achieved by a growing devotion to God the Creator.

[The] experience [in CC and GC] of the complete separateness of the Self and activity should mean the culmination of the process of self-purification. But still the process continues, finally to give rise to that state of Unity which does not accept activity even as separate from the Self. Here the separateness responsible for giving rise to a sense of duality in the state of Cosmic Consciousness [and God Consciousness] is transformed into the light of God, allowing the duality of Self and activity to merge into the homogeneity of divine existence in the oneness of [Unity Consciousness]. This state of the eternal Unity of life is the real culmination of the process of self-purification.¹⁰⁹

Before we enter GC, we might perceive the Relative as imperfect in some way. That perception of imperfection is merely a reflection of our own inability to love perfectly. When we enter GC (and subsequently UC) we realize that the Relative is perfect (and was¹¹⁰ perfect all along).

At the culmination of God Consciousness, we are perfectly devoted to God the Creator. Our entire being—heart, mind, and body—all we do and all we are is devoted to God. We live and breathe God the Creator, and we are in a perfect state of surrender to God. And at the

¹⁰⁸ The beginning of this process has already been discussed in the topic **Transition from Cosmic Consciousness to God Consciousness: Individual Action Phase** on page 51.

¹⁰⁹ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 5, v. 11, commentary on p. 347

¹¹⁰ Of course, there is no “was.” The Relative is perfect Now, and Now is all there is.

culmination of God Consciousness, all the “doing” is done. The physical body is fully purified, and the heart and mind are fully developed.

Ready Phase

In God Consciousness, life feels full and complete; nothing is lacking. However, there is one more step along the Path. So in one way, being in GC is like waiting. We are at the door, on the threshold. However, there is no sense of waiting. We might know that something more is yet to come, or we might be unaware of the final step. It does not matter. For now, we are full and complete. We are in perfect bliss. We love completely, and we are loved completely in return.

God’s Grace Phase

Then, God the Creator gives us His grace. In the transition from God consciousness to Unity Consciousness, we receive God’s final, and most important, expression of grace.

In God Consciousness we have expanded our awareness to include the entire universe and even to include God the Creator. In GC we have purified our body perfectly. We worship the Creator perfectly and we are in perfect awe of the Creation. We have done all that can be done. We are in perfect harmony and perfect bliss. And yet, we are not experiencing the ultimate Truth of Existence. We are not experiencing the unity of all Existence.

It is now that the Creator bestows the highest grace that it is possible to bestow. The Creator “withdraws” Himself from our experience, and we, who were in GC, enter Unity Consciousness. This is truly the “Grace of God.”

As has already been noted, God’s grace is always with us from the time of our creation until we reach Unity Consciousness. Just as the first transition along the Path—a brief experience—is provided by God’s grace, this fifth and final transition—opening our eyes to the ultimate Truth of the Unity of All—is also the grace of God.

The change from GC to UC is not evolutionary; it is revolutionary! The Self and the non-Self become One! All that we thought was “other,” we now experience as our Self. All the boundaries between the Self and the non-Self have, as it were, dissolved. The God we worshipped (God the Creator) ceases to exist as a separate reality. We and God the Creator become One!

The transition into Unity Consciousness is *the most confusing* experience of our entire existence, from our creation in complete unconsciousness to our experience of complete consciousness in UC.¹¹¹ Throughout our evolution as beings, we depend on others, who are more advanced than we are, to guide us and to tell us of how we are progressing on the Path. The transition from GC to UC can be the point at which we *most* need that guidance and most need the information as to where we are and what we are experiencing. Just a word will do it. But without that word, we can remain in a state of complete confusion for a very long time. Who am I? What am I? What is going on?

¹¹¹ The author attended lectures in the early 1970s presented by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in which Maharishi described the transition into Unity Consciousness as it is presented here. The author has also spoken to others for whom the transition into Unity Consciousness was not confusing. In both cases, however, the people entering UC had an extremely profound sense of “coming home.” At every step along the Path, our experience is unique to us. Each individual is different from all others.

Then, you hear a voice, the voice of your teacher: “This is IT!” And it all becomes clear; you now have the understanding to go along with the experience. You know you have come to the end of the Path. You know you have come home. You know that you are in Unity Consciousness! You know that you are all that exists and that everything that exists is YOU!

Another way of describing this transition in, perhaps, less dramatic terms is as follows:

... the supreme state of knowledge is not gained from outside. It is gained within oneself, when one has lived for some time the perfected state of Yoga [union] in [Unity Consciousness]. The element of time indicates here that during the early stage of [Unity Consciousness] life is full of such *overwhelming experience of Unity in diversity that one lives deeply lost in it*. Gradually as time passes one begins to appreciate this Unity in terms of other things and activities in the world.¹¹²

Unity Consciousness

The state of Unity Consciousness is described (on page 25) in **Chapter 4: The Seven States of Consciousness**. To summarize, Unity Consciousness (UC) is the 7th state of human consciousness. In this state, we experience Absolute Existence and Relative Existence as One, and we are that One. All of Existence is complete Unity. (The square representing Unity Consciousness is designated “A12” in Figure 5-1.)

In Unity Consciousness, we are fully Enlightened. Unity Consciousness is the highest state of human consciousness. In this state of consciousness, we experience the ultimate Truth.

In UC, the distinction between the Absolute and the Relative ends. The Self is established in Being and what was the non-Self is also established in Being. Both the Self and the "non-Self" are perceived as the direct experience that ALL—Absolute, Creator, and Creation—is the Absolute. The Absolute is all there is, and I AM THAT.

The Self and the non-Self are One! All the boundaries between the Self and the non-Self have, as it were, dissolved. The God you worshipped (God the Creator) ceases to exist as a separate reality. You and God the Creator are One!

The famous expression from the Vedic (Indian) tradition “I am That, thou art That, all this is That” is a very concise and complete expression of our reality in Unity Consciousness.

Unity Consciousness is a higher form of Transcendental Consciousness. In Transcendental Consciousness we are All that exists, but that All includes only the Absolute. In Unity Consciousness, we are also All that exists. But now that All includes the entire Relative aspect of Existence, as well as the Absolute aspect.

The evolution of human consciousness goes from “unity” to Unity: from illusory unity in the W/D/S states of consciousness, to complete separation in CC and GC, to true Unity in UC. Unity Consciousness is the culmination of that progression; in UC we are, in fact, united with all of Existence.¹¹³

¹¹² Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 4, v. 38, commentary on p. 316 (emphasis added)

¹¹³ For more on this concept, refer to the topic **From “Unity” to Separation to Unity** on page 69.

More about Transitions

Transitions along the Path of human evolution are usually exhilarating and exciting. But often, they are also difficult. Each and every one of these transitions turns our world upside down for the better. However, each and every transition is also difficult because, in the transition, we must leave behind ideas that we believed to be true with all our hearts, but now we know are not true at all or are only partially true. We are forced by our new experience and understanding to reject most or all of what we had formerly held dear. Once the transition is made, however, we often can feel a real sense of relief. “Boy, am I glad to be rid of that!” The relief comes because we know that our new reality is a step closer to the Truth than was the old one.

As has already been discussed (page 26), there are two aspects of human experience and understanding: in ordinary states of consciousness (W/D/S) these two aspects can be expressed as the (lower case) “self” and the “non-self” (everything but what we consider to be the self). In the higher states of consciousness, they can be expressed as the (upper case) “Self” and the “non-Self”. During each transition either one or the other of these two aspects is being developed. (Refer to Table 5-1 on page 63 for a summary of the changes in the self / Self and the non-self / non-Self during the various transitions in the evolution of human consciousness.)

An example of this development, in this case of the non-self, is the transition from the Material Worldview to the Religion Worldview. In the Material Worldview, a person believes that the non-self is made up only of matter and energy. In the Religion Worldview, the person’s idea of the non-self has expanded to include God the Creator. This and other examples are provided later in this chapter.

There are five transitions in the evolution of human consciousness, as follows:

- Material Worldview to Religion Worldview
- Religion Worldview to Consciousness Worldview
- Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness
- Cosmic Consciousness to God Consciousness
- God Consciousness to Unity Consciousness

All five transitions are discussed in detail below.

Transition 1: Material Worldview to Religion Worldview

Let us say you have believed all your life that the physical universe of matter and energy is the ultimate Reality. Maybe you have lived 20 or 30 years or maybe 60 or 70 years or more. It does not matter. All your life you have assumed, taken it for granted, never really thought about it much, or even thought about it a great deal and concluded that the physical universe is the ultimate Reality. And you have lived your entire life, thus far, on that premise.

Then what happens? God's grace reveals to you (gives you a glimpse) that God the Creator exists and not only that but that God loves *you*, yes you! Yes even you, just as you are, with your many faults and all!

Is that going to turn your world upside down? You bet it is! Is that going to make you the happiest, most glowing, most radiant person in the world? You bet it is! The most important

and powerful Being in the universe loves you! That is going to make you want to dance and sing and tell the entire world about this wonderful, marvelous new reality.

[It needs to be emphasized here that at this stage of evolution, you receive only a glimpse of God's love. It is not until you are in God Consciousness (GC) that you experience fully the infinite love that God has for you.]

What is there that might make this transition difficult, even though there is so much about it that is positive? In this transition, we need to give up the material way of life. We need to give up “wine, women, and song” (or in more modern terms “drugs, sex, and rock 'n' roll”). We can no longer just do as we please. We learn that actions have consequences. We learn that some actions are evolutionary and some are not. We learn that we need to follow a moral code to help us decide which actions are evolutionary and which are not. Let's face it; the material way of life is quite alluring. We might find that it is not so easy to give up, despite all we gain when we realize that there is more to life than material pleasure.

The transition from the Material Worldview to the Religion Worldview involves the development of the experience and understanding of the non-self. (Refer to Table 5-1 on page 63.) In the Material Worldview, a person believes that the non-self is made up only of matter and energy (for example, other people, planets, stars, and so on). In the Religion Worldview, the person's idea of the non-self has expanded to include God the Creator.

Transition 2: Religion Worldview to Consciousness Worldview

Let us say that you have believed for many years that God the Creator is the ultimate Reality. Maybe it has been 10, 20, even 50 years or more. It does not matter. For all those years you have believed with all you heart and soul and being that God the Creator is the ultimate Reality. You have believed that the words written in your holy book are the Word of God, written for you and for your salvation. And that if you believe in and follow those words, God the Creator will grant you eternal life in heaven with Him. And you have lived your life on that premise.

Then what happens? God's grace reveals to you (gives you a glimpse) that the Absolute exists and not only that but that you *are* the Absolute! The true nature of your Self is the Absolute. The true nature of *your* Self is *identical* to the true nature of God! Now you realize that the words you used to believe were ultimate truth are merely symbols that point to that higher Reality. Now you have a glimpse of what eternal life really is; it is living the Absolute. And you find out that you do not merely have God's love, as important as that is, but now you know by your own direct experience that you are *One with God*! That is truly an amazing revelation.¹¹⁴

Is that going to turn your world upside down? You bet it is! For a few minutes or a few hours, you have glimpsed a Reality beyond your wildest dreams. Now you want to make that your permanent Reality. You have an all consuming desire and deep longing to return to that state. But how can you do that? You begin to seek a teacher who can show you the way or a technique that can allow you to progress to the goal. And once you find the teacher or technique, you begin to follow the Path to Self Realization in which the Self is permanently fully established in the Absolute.

¹¹⁴ As is discussed in footnote 68, for some of us, the “experience” can be something as simple as reading a book or hearing a lecture.

[It needs to be emphasized here that at this stage of evolution, we receive only a glimpse of unity with God. It is not until we are in Unity Consciousness (UC) that we experience complete unity with all of Existence.]

What is difficult about this transition? In this transition, we need to give up the idea that God the Creator does it all for us. We find out that our *individual action* is required to progress further along the Path of evolution. We learn that we are not “saved” or “forgiven” and that there is no “eternal heaven”, at least not in the naïve (almost childish¹¹⁵) way we used to think about those concepts. And we find out that the stories in our holy book are just that—stories. [They are none-the-less important because they are symbolic of (point to) a higher reality.] In addition, we find out that we will receive the results—good or bad—of our past actions, that there is a long road ahead us, and that (with God's help) we need to take every step of that road on our own, to reach the final goal. For some of us, these might be hard lessons to learn. (Note, however, that in this transition, we do not need to give up the most important aspect of the Religion Worldview, our personal relationship with God the Creator. In fact, that relationship continues to grow as we progress through the next stages of evolution, culminating in God Consciousness.)

The transition from the Religion Worldview to the Consciousness Worldview involves the development of the experience and understanding of the non-self. (Refer to Table 5-1 on page 63.) In this transition, the person's self remains identified with the ego, body, thoughts, and actions. However now, there is also a *concept* of the Self as the Absolute.

In the Religion Worldview, a person believes that the non-self is matter and energy plus God the Creator. In the Consciousness Worldview, the person's idea of the non-self has expanded to include a concept of the non-Self as the Absolute, which is the source of the Relative.

Transition 3: Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness

Every transition in the evolution of human consciousness involves both individual action and God's grace. In the first two transitions, however, we are not consciously aware that we are engaged in individual action as part of the transition. We are only aware of God's grace at the culmination of the transition. Therefore, the change in our experience and understanding during the first two transitions, seemingly, comes unlooked-for and unbidden. In the third transition, however, we are very much aware that we are engaged in individual action as part of the transition.

For most of us, the transition from the Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness occurs only after long and patient practice of a meditation technique, or another technique, that allows us to transcend the Relative aspect of Existence on a regular basis. Over the years of practice, we get glimpses of CC that, at first, last for brief periods of time and then for longer periods. Then finally, with God's grace, we enter Cosmic Consciousness as a full-time reality.

Even though we have had glimpses before, the full reality of CC is still staggering. The Self is established in the Absolute. The Self performs no action. The Self is completely separate from everything else. The Self is absolutely safe. It cannot be harmed in any way. It is

¹¹⁵ 1 Cor 13:11 to 12: 11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I am known.

eternal. It is imperishable. Life goes on around the Self, but the Self has absolutely no involvement in it.

What we used to consider to be the “self”—our body, mind, and actions—we now find is a part of the non-Self. The mind thinks thoughts; the mouth speaks words; the body performs actions. The Self is unaffected. The body sleeps; the body dreams; the body wakes. The Self is unaffected. This state of being is totally different from any other that has gone before.

In addition, all thought, speech, and action are totally in accordance with the laws of nature. There is no more need for a moral code of behavior. All action is right action. And all of our needs are fulfilled spontaneously, before we even think about them.

What is difficult about this transition? In this transition, the small “s” self dies. Losing the individual self is very difficult and traumatic. The individual self does not want to die! It is full of tricks to keep us from reaching CC. However, once we are there, the small “s” self is no more.

The transition from the Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness involves the development of the experience and understanding of the self / Self. (Refer to Table 5-1 on page 63.) In the Consciousness Worldview, a person has only a *concept* of the Self as the Absolute. In Cosmic Consciousness, the Self is established in Being (the Absolute) as a *living reality*.

In the transition from the Consciousness Worldview to CC, there is no change in the non-Self. However, now, the individual ego is gone, and the non-Self includes aspects of what were considered to be part of the self: body, thoughts, and actions. (All else in the Relative remains non-Self).

The transition from the Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness is more than a transition: It is a transformation. This transformation from the self in ignorance to the Self as the Absolute is one of the most significant transitions in the evolution of human consciousness.

Transition 4: Cosmic Consciousness to God Consciousness

As with the transition from the Consciousness Worldview to CC, in the transition from CC to GC we are aware of the individual action that we are performing. The transition from CC to GC requires that we engage in a technique that enables us to contact the Absolute in a systematic manner. Once we attain CC, however, the Self is established in Being (the Absolute) on a permanent basis. Therefore, we need another technique that takes us the next step along the Path. In CC, the Self is completely separate from the non-Self. The final goal of human evolution is Unity Consciousness in which the Self (the Absolute) and (what was) the non-Self (the Relative) are One. Thus, the technique we need to practice to attain GC is one that allows us to experience and understand the Relative so that, later, we can become united with it. The way we experience the Relative is through the senses. Therefore, the technique we now need is one that allows for the refinement of the senses. (Refer to the topic **Transition from Cosmic Consciousness to God Consciousness**, on page 51, for a description of this process.)

As with the transition from the Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness, the transition from CC to GC occurs only after long and patient practice. Over the years of

practice, we gradually experience increasingly finer and finer aspects of the Relative. Then finally, with God's grace, we enter God Consciousness as a full-time reality.

The transition between CC and GC is a gradual one. God Consciousness is glorified Cosmic Consciousness. None-the-less, the final outcome of the process is an amazing one. The final outcome is a direct experience of and a direct relationship with God the Creator! This experience and relationship is not on the level of thinking or believing. No. It is on the level of direct sensory experience, just as is a relationship we might have with another human being. But this is no human being; this is God the Creator!

In the transition from CC to GC we are able to perceive finer and finer aspects of the Relative. In these finer realms, there are more and more beautiful beings and things. We can, naturally, become attracted to and fascinated by these new wonders. These beautiful beings and things can entice us to leave the Path, so that we can enjoy them at our leisure.¹¹⁶ What, then, is difficult about *this* transition? We need to lose the attachment to the objects of our sense perception. We need to observe the many delights along the Path, acknowledge them, and then *leave them behind!* We need never again to be lead astray by sensual pleasures, so that we can focus all of our attention on devotion to God the Creator.

In the transition from the Material Worldview to the Religion Worldview, we had to give up the pleasures of *earthly* "wine, women, and song". Now, in the transition from CC to GC, we need to turn our backs on their *celestial* counterparts. That is not easy, even for the strongest among us.

The transition from Cosmic Consciousness to God Consciousness does not involve changes in either the Self or the non-Self. The Self remains established in Being (the Absolute), and we still have a concept of the non-Self as the Absolute. (Refer to Table 5-1 on page 63.)

However, this transition involves a *dramatic change in perception*. The sense perception expands from experience of only the surface value of the Relative in CC to a *direct experience* of the full range of the Relative including the finest value of the Relative, God the Creator, in GC. Up until this point in our evolution, we have experienced only a small portion of the Relative sphere of Existence. As we gradually approach GC and then enter GC, the universe opens up to us as we could hardly have imagined. Realms upon realms of beings. And everything exquisitely beautiful. To say nothing of the most unimaginably wonderful experience of God the Creator Himself!

Transition 5: God Consciousness to Unity Consciousness

The final transition in the evolution of human consciousness, that from God Consciousness to Unity Consciousness, as with all the other transitions, involves both individual action and God's grace.

In the transition from GC to UC, the individual action that we perform is ever-increasing devotion to God the Creator. Once we are in the presence of God the Creator, growing devotion to Him is not only desirable, it is inevitable. At the culmination of GC, just before we enter UC, our devotion to God the Creator is perfect. Our love for God the Creator is perfect. And we spend every second of every day worshiping the One we love and to Whom

¹¹⁶ For example, refer to Prabhavananda, Swami and Isherwood, Christopher, Translated with commentary by, *How to Know God: The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, pp. 195 – 198.

we are devoted. We are perfectly happy, swimming in His love. There is no desire for anything more. “More” is not even conceivable.

And yet, we are sitting at the threshold of something that is, in fact, inconceivably more. Then, one day, for no reason or for the best of reasons, and only when we are ready, God the Creator gives us His final grace: God withdraws from our experience, and we enter Unity Consciousness. This is a sudden transition. There is nothing gradual about it. One instant there are two: the Self and God the Creator (the non-Self). The next instant there is One: You alone. God the Creator is nowhere to be found. Non-Self is nowhere to be found. This is Unity Consciousness. The Absolute is the Self. The Relative is the Self. You are IT! There is nothing other than YOU!

Each transition in the evolution of human consciousness is difficult. But the transition, from GC to UC is by far the most difficult. What is difficult about this transition? In the transition from GC to UC we lose all individuality; we lose all boundaries. From the time we were created up until this transition, we have always experienced self and non-self and then Self and non-Self. There has always been a non-self / non-Self in our experience. In some sense, our definition of what we considered to be the self / Self was dependent upon what we considered to be the non-self / non-Self. Now all that is gone! The Self is all there is. This is the most confusing experience that we can ever have! And the confusion is so profound that we are totally unable to free ourselves from it. Until we hear “This is IT.” from our teacher¹¹⁷ (and gain the understanding that those words bring), we are totally lost in this new experience.

To make this transition even more difficult, we lose our love, the love of our life: We lose God the Creator as an object of love and of worship. The One we have depended on and been devoted to and loved with all our hearts and minds is no longer to be found. That is an *unimaginable loss*!

The consolation, of course, is that we have now come to the end of the Path, and we know it. The joy of that experience and understanding sweeps away all sense of loss. We have fulfilled our destiny as a created being. We are now One with the All.

The transition from God Consciousness to Unity Consciousness involves a change only in the non-Self. (Refer to Table 5-1 on page 63.) In this transition, the Self remains established in Being.

In God Consciousness, we experience the non-Self as a direct experience of the full range of the Relative, including God the Creator. In Unity Consciousness, we experience the full range of the Relative as the Self (the Absolute) as a *living reality*.

The transition from God Consciousness to Unity Consciousness is more than a transition: *It is a transfiguration*. In this process, we realize that not only the Self is the Absolute but the entire Relative is also the Absolute and I AM THAT. This transfiguration is the most significant, and is the final, transition in the evolution of human consciousness.

¹¹⁷ Refer to the topic **Unity Consciousness** (on page 56).

Table 5-1. Summary of the changes in the concept of the self / Self and the non-self / non-Self during the various transitions in the evolution of human consciousness

	self / Self	non-self / non-Self and perception of non-self / non-Self
Material Worldview	The self is identified with the ego, body, thoughts, and actions.	Belief that the non-self is only matter and energy. Sense perception is on the surface value of the Relative.
Material Worldview to Religion Worldview	No change: The self remains identified with the ego, body, thoughts, and actions.	Expands from the belief that the non-self is only matter and energy to the belief that the non-self is matter and energy plus God the Creator. Sense perception remains on the surface value of the Relative.
Religion Worldview to Consciousness Worldview	No change: The self remains identified with the ego, body, thoughts, and actions. However now, there is a <i>concept</i> of the Self as the Absolute	Expands from the belief that the non-self is matter and energy plus God the Creator to a <i>concept</i> of the non-Self as the Absolute, which is the basis of the Relative. Sense perception remains on the surface value of the Relative.
Consciousness Worldview to Cosmic Consciousness	Expands from a <i>concept</i> of the self as the Absolute to the Self is established in Being (the Absolute) as a <i>living reality</i> . (The individual ego is no longer found and the Self is not at all identified with the body, thoughts, or actions).	No change: a <i>concept</i> of the non-Self as the Absolute. However now, the non-Self includes body, thoughts, and actions (as well as the entire remainder of the Relative). Sense perception remains on the surface value of the Relative.
Cosmic Consciousness to God Consciousness	No change: the Self is established in Being (the Absolute) as a <i>living reality</i> .	No change: a <i>concept</i> of the non-Self as the Absolute. Sense perception expands from experience of only the surface value of the Relative to a <i>direct experience</i> of the full range of the Relative, including God the Creator.
God Consciousness to Unity Consciousness	No change: the Self is established in Being (the Absolute) as a <i>living reality</i> . However now, the Relative is also the Self (the Absolute) as a <i>living reality</i> .	Expands from the Relative as the non-Self with a <i>direct experience</i> of the full range of the Relative including God the Creator to the full range of the Relative as the Self (the Absolute) as a <i>living reality</i> .

Fixed Worldviews

The flow of the evolution of human consciousness through the various worldviews (and beyond) is a natural process. Each person evolves from one stage to the next. And each of the stages of evolution is useful and valuable. Each worldview serves its purpose and then is superseded by the next stage of evolution.

However, sometimes the beliefs of one stage become stagnant and fixed: the beliefs become an end in themselves. When that happens, the person who holds those beliefs becomes isolated from the natural flow of evolution, and, as long as the ideas remain fixed, further progress is impossible. (Refer to Area B in Figure 5-1 Flow Diagram.)

When the beliefs in one stage become fixed, the people who hold those views believe that only their views are correct and all other beliefs are wrong and bad and must be eliminated. Thus, people with fixed ideas, no matter what the fixed ideas are, tend to fight with each other. And the fights are never ending.

The problem is not that one idea is correct and that all other ideas are wrong. No, all the worldviews have valid beliefs within that stage of development. The problem is that the people who have fixed beliefs feel that their beliefs are the **ONLY** valid beliefs. People with fixed ideas do not have the perspective of the big picture. Thus, they feel that their myopic view of reality is the only one that is reasonable. The word "only" is the source of most misunderstanding and of most human suffering in the world today. "Only" is the dirtiest four letter word in the English language!

Fixed Material Worldview

People who hold the Material Worldview are often either just too busy to be concerned with the higher matters of life or currently have no interest in or attraction for such thoughts.

They are frequently just struggling for survival. Generally, people in this situation are not inclined to give themselves a label or category of any sort. (The square representing the Fixed Material Worldview is designated "B1" in Figure 5-1.)

People who are *fixed* in the Material World view, on the other hand, have often thought a great deal about the spiritual aspect of life and have rejected it. These people frequently call themselves *atheists*.

Atheists believe that science has provided (or will eventually be able to provide) all the answers to life. They hold that people who believe in a god or gods (someone or something that transcends ordinary reality) are just deluding themselves.

In many cases, but not all,¹¹⁸ people become atheists in reaction to those in the Religion Worldview who are stuck in a rigid theistic interpretation of religion. Perhaps, if there were fewer people in the fixed Religion Worldview, there would also be fewer people in the fixed Material Worldview.

¹¹⁸ For example, refer to Eller, David, *Natural Atheism*.

Fixed Religion Worldview

Religion can be a great force for good in the world.¹¹⁹ And organized religions have a definite appeal. They offer a social and political framework in which people feel comfortable and on which they can center their lives. (The square representing the Fixed Religion Worldview is designated “B2” in Figure 5-1.)

Organized religions generally have a fixed cannon of beliefs. These beliefs are symbolic of something more, something deeper.¹²⁰ However, some people do not see the deeper meaning of the beliefs, and they get stuck in the literal interpretation. Somehow, their intellectual understanding of the process is incomplete. They tend to believe that they have reached the goal, but of course, they have hardly even entered the Path. These people do not progress very far until they can transcend the limited interpretation provided by the particular religion and move on to a more universal interpretation of their beliefs.

In addition, organized religions tend to put up barriers to progress. One barrier, which was already mentioned, is that people involved in a religion believe that they have already reached the goal, so they stop looking for something more. Another barrier is that organized religions tend to set up a very destructive “us / them” dichotomy: “My religion, and *only* mine is the true religion; your religion is all lies and is the work of the devil.” This belief, once established, can be very difficult to overcome. (Many of the wars in the world today are being fought for this reason.)

Fixed Consciousness Worldview

People in the Consciousness Worldview have been given a great gift. Through the grace of God the Creator, they have been allowed to have a direct (albeit brief) experience of the Absolute and of their unity with It.¹²¹ However, this experience only puts these people in Step 1¹²² of the Consciousness Worldview. After the experience, it is up to them to take individual action to enter the Path (and thereby enter Step 2). If after the experience of the Absolute, the person does not consciously enter the Path, he or she gets stuck in the Consciousness Worldview. (The square representing the Fixed Consciousness Worldview is designated “B3” in Figure 5-1.)

People in the fixed Consciousness Worldview have had an experience of the Absolute, and it has affected them profoundly but, unfortunately, only for a short time. As the experience fades, they fall back into old thought patterns and old habits of routine life. They might cherish their experience and try to recall it and speak about it to others. They might also join with others to celebrate the “new life” that they have experienced. However, they do not *act* on it.

As long as people in the fixed Consciousness Worldview merely stay on the surface level of life, they will never go on to actually *enter* the Path. If this occurs, God’s great gift is wasted! People in Step 1 of the Consciousness Worldview need to go on to enter the Path to engage in a technique that allows them to experience the Absolute in a regular, systematic manner.

¹¹⁹ For example, refer to Smith, Huston, *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief*.

¹²⁰ For example, for a book on the deeper meaning of the Christian religion, refer to Besant, Annie, *Esoteric Christianity or the Lesser Mysteries*, and for books on the deeper meaning of the Jewish religion, refer to Scholem, Gershom, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* and Kushner, Lawrence, *The River of Light*.

¹²¹ Refer to the topic **Transition from the Religion Worldview to the Consciousness Worldview** (on page 35).

¹²² Refer to the topic **The Consciousness Worldview (in W/D/S)** (on page 38).

As Rumi writes:¹²³

Which is worth more, a crowd of thousands,
or your own genuine solitude?
Freedom, or power over an entire nation?

A little while alone in your room
will prove more valuable than anything else
that could ever be given you.

Self Help

People who are fixed in a worldview, any worldview, tend to gravitate to “self-help” books and courses that bolster their beliefs. In fact, an entire industry has developed for people who seek to improve themselves. (Actually, three industries have developed, one for each of the worldviews.) Unfortunately, these books and courses tend to merely reinforce the beliefs that one already has. Thus, the “self help” sometimes leads in circles and might not produce any meaningful change in people’s lives.

The self help books and lectures, and so on are not bad in themselves. In fact, they often provide new ideas and valuable insights.¹²⁴ The problem arises if they become an end in themselves, if they seem to satisfy the quest for more meaning. Self-help books and courses might cheat us into thinking that we are progressing, when in fact, we are standing still.

To truly progress along the Path we need to transcend all thought, reading, discussion, and so on and experience the Absolute in a regular, systematic manner. If we stay on the level of thought and action, no matter how positive we feel those thoughts and actions might be, we cannot progress along the Path at any worthwhile rate.

Transitions Out of the Fixed Worldviews

Transitions out of the fixed worldviews are, without a doubt, some of the most difficult transitions to make.

If we do get stuck, never fear. God will call us again to the true Path. God’s call, in this case however, might need to be a bit more vigorous. Because once we get caught in a dogma (whatever that dogma might be), it is harder to hear the *true* call than it was before we heard the call for the first time.

Backsliding

To backslide means to lapse morally or to revert to a worse condition. It is going from a more advanced state to a less advanced state. Backsliding is very common. We all backslide much of the time, especially in little things like inappropriate or negative thoughts. However, we catch ourselves and move on. In addition, we often read about the backsliding of political and religious leaders and of celebrities. (Refer to Area C in Figure 5-1 Flow Diagram.)

In the evolution of human consciousness, we can backslide by leaving our current worldview and reverting to a previous one or by leaving the Path and reverting to a previous way of

¹²³ From the poem *Two Days of Silence* from: Barks, Colman, Translations and Commentary, *Rumi: The Book of Love: Poems of Ecstasy and Longing*, pp. 35 to 36

¹²⁴ If a self-help book or seminar opens a door or provides a boost to enter the Path, then it can be very positive.

living. In Figure 5-1, backsliding is represented by the set of six dashed lines with left facing motion.

Backsliding to a Previous Worldview from a More Advanced Worldview

In the current presentation of the evolution of human consciousness, there are three ways to backslide between the worldviews.

Backsliding from the Consciousness Worldview to the Religion Worldview

Religion is a very powerful force, especially if we were brought up in an environment of religion as a child. At times, we might forget (or begin to doubt) the experience of the Absolute that lead us to enter the Consciousness Worldview. In that case, we might revert to the Religion Worldview.¹²⁵

Backsliding from the Consciousness Worldview to the Material Worldview

The material way of life can be very alluring, and we can get caught up in it without really realizing it. Also, in today's busy world, it is all too easy to forget what is important in life. In that case, we might revert to the Material Worldview.

Backsliding from the Religion Worldview to the Material Worldview

Being a member of some religious organization and adopting its moral code, does not guarantee that we are immune to backsliding. We can still fall back into our old material life. Physiological or psychological addictions are very powerful. Either one or the other or both can drag us back to a former way of life. If this does happen, we can either recognize our error for ourselves, or we can wait for God's next call to wake us up.

Backsliding from Being on the Path to Leaving the Path

Again, in the current presentation of the evolution of human consciousness, there are three ways to backslide once we have entered the Path.

Leaving the Path to Return to Step 1 of the Consciousness Worldview

We recall that the Consciousness Worldview has two steps, the second of which is commitment to the Path of Enlightenment.¹²⁶ Commitment to the Path means practicing a technique (for example, meditation) that allows us to transcend regularly. If we stop that practice, but all else remains the same, then we leave the Path and revert to Step 1 of the Consciousness Worldview. We still know that the Absolute is the ultimate Reality, but we do nothing that will allow us to become One with It.

Leave the Path to Return to the Religion Worldview

Religion is a world of black and white. Being on the Path is full of grays. Sometimes the desire for surety can be a powerful force. It can make us begin to doubt what, at one time, we knew (experienced) to be correct. It can draw us away from the Path. If that happens, we might seek the reassurance and comfort of black and white and revert to the Religion Worldview.

¹²⁵ However, while remaining in the Consciousness Worldview, we can still attend a religious service to experience the heart opening affect of the ceremony, for example the familiar ritual and the beautiful music.

¹²⁶ Refer to the topic **Consciousness Worldview (in W/D/S)** (on page 38).

Leave the Path to Return to the Material Worldview

Staying on the Path requires individual action: the regular practice of a technique that allows us to transcend regularly. That action can be quite time consuming. And sometimes it might seem like we are getting nowhere (even though that is not the case).

We might begin to feel like all we really want is to live a little, to have some fun. Then the allure of “drugs, sex, and rock 'n' roll” can once again overtake our lives. And we leave the Path and revert to the Material Worldview.

Or we might begin to feel that money and our job are the most important things in our lives. Let's face it, sometimes it is tough to even survive in this world. Sometimes we need to just drop everything else and work as hard as we can just for survival. Is it smart in the long term? No! Is it sometimes necessary in the short term? You bet! But that, too, causes us to leave the Path.

Evolution Is Never Wasted

It is inevitable. We all backslide. But take heart.

First, no evolutionary action we have taken in the past is ever wasted. As it has been said,¹²⁷ “Fortunately, departure from the Path does not destroy all the good created by meditation in the past.”

If someone has begun to wash a cloth and for some reason can rinse it only once, he has at least succeeded in removing some of the dirt, even though the cloth is not completely clean. Certainly he has not made it more dirty. A man begins the practice of meditation and, even if he meditates only a few times and transcends only once or twice, whatever purity the mind has gained thereby is his.¹²⁸

When a man begins to meditate, Being begins to grow into the nature of his mind. If, after a certain degree of infusion, he stops the practice ... whenever he again resumes his practice he will do so at that level of purity of consciousness which he had obtained through his former practice.¹²⁹

Second, the backsliding will end eventually, and we will return to the Path. Guaranteed!

... the strength of ... former practice is in itself sufficient to set a man on this path of Yoga [union]. Nature becomes favourable to him, and circumstances mould themselves in favour of his resuming the practice.

... whether he makes a conscious effort to start the practice or is unconsciously drawn by the accumulated effect of the practice performed [previously], he resumes meditation.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Paraphrased from a lecture by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

¹²⁸ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 6, v. 40, commentary on p. 459

¹²⁹ Ibid., ch. 6, v. 43, commentary on p. 462

¹³⁰ Ibid., ch. 6, v. 44, commentary on p. 463

From “Unity” to Separation to Unity

The story of the evolution of human consciousness is from “unity” to separation to Unity, from the illusory unity of ignorance to the complete separation of Cosmic Consciousness to the true Unity of Unity Consciousness. (Refer to Area D in Figure 5-1 Flow Diagram.)

The starting point of this story is the unity we feel in the Material Worldview. In that worldview, we experience communion with our fellow human beings, with our parents, our siblings, and our friends. And we have a sense of unity with those around us, all one big happy family.

As we progress through the next worldviews, the feeling of unity begins to decrease. We begin to feel a growing separation from our fellow human beings as we draw closer to God the Creator in the Religion Worldview, and then the separation increases even more as we spend many hours alone in the meditation room in the Consciousness Worldview.

The midpoint of the story is Cosmic Consciousness. In CC, the separation is complete—complete separation of the Self from the non-Self.

The next stage of development is God Consciousness. In the transition from CC to GC our feeling of separation decreases dramatically as we grow closer and closer to God the Creator and His Creation.

The final chapter of the story is Unity Consciousness. UC is the culmination of the progression from “unity” to separation to Unity. In UC we are, in fact, united with, are One with, all of Existence.

Appendices



Theism and Transtheism

Theism, specifically *monotheism*, is defined¹³¹ as follows:

Belief in the existence of a personal God (God the Creator¹³²) viewed as the creative agent of the Relative aspect of Existence—the human race and the world, Who transcends yet is immanent in the world, and Who intervenes in the world and sustains a personal relation to His creatures.

In monotheism, God the Creator is the ultimate reality.

The term *transtheism* was coined in the early 1950s by philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich (and by Indologist Heinrich Zimmer) as a system of thought or religious philosophy that transcends theism, and is thus neither theistic nor atheistic. Transtheism can be defined¹³³ as follows:

Belief in the existence of an impersonal God (God the Absolute) viewed as the source of the Relative aspect of Existence, That altogether transcends the Relative aspect of Existence; That has no manifestation of any kind; and That can be experienced by human beings.

In transtheism, God the Creator exists, but He is not the highest spiritual instance. In transtheism, God the Absolute is the ultimate Reality.

Huston Smith, in his book *The World's Religions*, lists the following major religions:¹³⁴ Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Of the six major religions, three have their origins in the Middle East—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—and three have their origins in the Far East—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism.

The three Middle Eastern religions are often referred to as “monotheistic” religions. And that is an apt characterization of these religions because the vast majority of the followers of these religions believe that God (God the Creator)—Who created the universe and Who sustains a personal relationship with each of them—is the ultimate reality of existence.

¹³¹ This definition loosely follows the definition for *theism* given in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* and in *The New Oxford American Dictionary*.

¹³² Refer to the topic **How Can We Speak About God?** (on page 13) for definitions of the terms *God the Creator* and *God the Absolute*.

¹³³ This definition loosely follows the definition for *transtheistic* given in *Wikipedia*, the free online encyclopedia. The Internet contains several other definitions of this term, most of which miss the point. They miss the point because the authors of the definitions believe that God is this *or* this *or* this when in fact God is this *and* this *and* this. God is One: God is God the Absolute *and* God the Creator *and* God the Creation.

¹³⁴ Smith, Huston, *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions*. Huston Smith also discusses Confucianism and the Primal religions. Confucianism is more concerned with ethics than religion, and the Primal religions are beyond the scope of this brief essay.

The three Far Eastern religions are “transtheistic” religions. They believe in God the Creator (to varying degrees), but they go a step further. They believe that there is an aspect of God—God the Absolute—That transcends all manifestation, even God the Creator. Thus, they believe that God the Absolute is the ultimate Reality of Existence.

[It is interesting to note that as we progress from west to east, the religions change from more concrete to more abstract. In the Middle Eastern religions, the emphasis is almost entirely on God the Creator—Yahweh, the Father¹³⁵, Allah—with hardly any mention, if any at all, of God the Absolute. The Vedic tradition of India strikes a balance between the two aspects of God, Ishwara and Brahman.¹³⁶ The Buddha was neutral¹³⁷ on the existence of a Supreme Being; he placed his sole emphasis on full realization in Unity Consciousness. Taoism, the religion of China, has no mention at all of a personal God. It is concerned only with the Tao (the Absolute) and Its manifestation, the Te (the Relative), with no reference to God the Creator.]

¹³⁵ Or, perhaps more accurate according to theistic Christianity, the “Godhead”: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

¹³⁶ Refer, for example, to Prabhavananda, Swami and Isherwood, Christopher, Translated with an introduction by, *Shankara’s Crest-Jewel of Discrimination (Viveka-Chudamani)*, p. 17.

¹³⁷ Refer, for example, to www.hinduwebsite.com/buddhism/buddhaongod.asp

B

A Sufi Perspective of GC and UC

God Consciousness and Unity Consciousness (and the transition between them) are described in the main body of the text. This Appendix presents another description of these states of consciousness from the Sufi perspective.¹³⁸

Then comes the revelation of Love and Spiritual Knowledge (*mahabba* and *ma'rifa*). The soul awakens to an incredibly clear awareness that embraces both divine Love and Knowledge. It is an inner realization by the soul that the God it sought is all-inclusive Love, and the soul experiences that Love within itself. It knows that This is the sustaining Power and guide of all its life. And it vows to surrender all else for the sake of being filled throughout life with this perfect Love. With great joy, the soul is refreshed, and sings: "Thou art my God, the sole Father of my being, the sweet breath of Love that lives in my heart; and I shall follow Thee, and live with Thee, and lean on Thee till the end of my days."

This experience of divine Love may be likened to the corona of the Sun; it is fully Light, yet it has a still deeper Source. And this Love, while fully complete, yet yearns for its own source, its own center of radiance; and so, while being the fulfilling Light itself, it is drawn by longing to Itself. Says Rumi: "The hearts of the wise are the nests of love, and the hearts of the lovers are the nests of longing, and the hearts of the longing are the nests of intimacy." The longing of the lover for God is often compared to that of a worldly lover for her beloved. The soul so blessed, or afflicted, with divine Love has no other thought or desire but to reach her Beloved. She weeps sweet tears of love nightly, and calls in her heart for death at her Beloved's feet. Like a moth drawn to a flame, she longs to be annihilated in her Beloved's embrace, and so to enjoy the ultimate intimacy of union with her beloved God.

It is this love-longing which leads to the station of Annihilation (*fana*). This is the profoundly transformative experience previously referred to as *nirvana*, *samadhi*, or "the vision of God." For, at the moment the ego is extinguished, the eternal and all-pervasive "I" is realized. It is an experience that overturns all previous conceptions of God and the soul. Previously, there was a relationship: the soul to God, the lover to the Beloved; but now, the ego-soul is no more. The false sense of selfhood which is part of the illusion of phenomenal existence has been erased, and only the Real, the One, exists. What shall we call It? The *Dharmakaya* of the Buddhists? The *Atman* of the Vedantists? The "One" of Plotinus? The Sufis call It *Haqq*, "the Real."

¹³⁸ In the *History of Mysticism*, Swami Abhayananda presents a beautiful description of the Sufi Path to Self Realization. The entire description goes from pages 228 to 234. The quotation used here is from pages 231 to 233.

Scholars may imagine that a Buddhist experiences one thing, a Vedantist another, and so forth; but one who has experienced It, whether a Sufi, Christian or Hindu, knows that It is the final Truth, the only One. There are not different Unities, one for each sect or denomination; there is only one One, and it is That which is experienced by Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Sufis alike. It should be obvious that, if there is such a thing as Unity, and if It can be experienced, then the experience must be the same for all; since Unity, by its very definition, by its very nature, is one. So what if that One is called by different names in different lands! In every place and in every generation, new terms are ever being invented in the hope of elucidating the knowledge of Unity.

All phenomenal existence comes into being by the power of that One. This makes an apparent two; but it is really only one. The appearance of two is just the result of the "imaginary" juxtaposition of subject and object. But, of course, the subject and the object are the same One. It is this Unity that is realized when the soul reaches the station of *fana*. When the ego-mind is dissolved, having been drawn to its extinction by its own Source, there is no longer a subject-object relationship. There is only the Unnameable, beyond all subject-object predications. It is what has been called by the Sufis, *jam*, or "Unity."

The Upanishadic seers of this Unity declared that, "When one realizes Brahman, he becomes Brahman." "When I died to myself," says the Sufi, "I became the Beloved." "I have ceased to exist, and have passed out of self," said Rabi'a; "I am one with Him and entirely His." It is from the standpoint of this experience of Unity that al-HaUaj declared, *ana'l Haqq*, "I am He"; and Bistarni exclaimed, "Glory be to Me! There is nothing under my garment but He." For, after such a revelation, if one is to speak the truth, he can no longer make a distinction between "me" and "Thee." He knows full well that there is no other in all the universe but "I." If he makes the slightest separation between "I" and "Thou," he has forfeited the Truth, and re-established Duality. How strange and baffling, that only moments before, he was a soul on fire with love; and now he is enjoined by the Truth revealed to him to forget about souls and desire for union.

One might imagine this experience of *fana* to be the final station on the Sufi path, but, in Sufism, as in nearly every mystical tradition, there is recognized to be a further, final, station on the journey to perfection. This ultimate summit of spiritual attainment is called Retention of Identity (*baqa*). This is the state of one living continuously in the enlightened awareness of Unity. It is the state of the *jivanmukta* of Vedanta; the state of Buddhahood of the Buddhists; the Beatitude of the Christians; the Sagehood of the Taoists. *Baqa*, the final and ultimate station, is nothing less than the continuous retention of the awareness of Unity throughout one's life; in every moment and breath, to live in the awareness of one's true, all-pervasive, Identity. This is the perfect life of freedom, contentment, and utter surrender of the soul to the will of God within.

C

Worship

The word “worship” is derived from the Old English word for “worthiness”. Worship is reverence offered to God the Creator, the One who is worthy of our praise. Worship is extolling God for His greatness, wisdom, care, and love. Worship is devotion to, adoration of, and submission to God.

Worship does not depend upon a particular belief system. God the Creator is very far beyond anything that the human mind can conceive of.¹³⁹ Worship does not depend upon a particular name of God. God the Creator has ten thousand names, and He knows them all and responds to them all.

We can engage in the worship of God the Creator regardless of the worldview that we hold. And we can even worship God after we are in Cosmic Consciousness. In fact, worship and devotion are an indispensable part of the transition from God Consciousness to Unity Consciousness.

It is the natural tendency of the mind to seek the field of greatest happiness and then transcend that field and experience the Absolute. Worship is one mechanism whereby we can transcend the Relative and experience the Absolute. (Although that is never a motive for worship, it can be a result.) Worship is a Path to enlightenment, a Path to Cosmic Consciousness.

Cosmic consciousness is the state of Brahman [the Absolute]. Since it is transcendental Self-consciousness that develops into cosmic consciousness, in order to achieve cosmic consciousness through worshipping, one has to transcend through worshipping. This necessitates entering into the subtle [refined] phases of the act of worship. And this is most successfully done in a systematic manner by taking the name or form of the god and experiencing it in its subtler [more refined] states until the mind transcends the subtlest [most refined] state and attains transcendental consciousness. Those who are highly emotional, however, may even transcend through an increasing feeling of love for god during the process of making offerings.

Transcending the act of worship is said to be the offering of the worship to Brahman. It has the advantage of receiving the blessings of the god and at the same time of helping to develop cosmic consciousness.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ See for example Chapter 11 of Prabhavananda, Swami and Isherwood, Christopher, Translated by, *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*, 91 to 97.

¹⁴⁰ Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch 4, v. 25, commentary on pp. 292 to 293

Throughout the ages, people of all religions have worshipped God the Creator. People who have reached enlightenment through worship might include the following:¹⁴¹

- Jewish tradition: Solomon Ibn Gabirol
- Christian tradition: Hildegard von Bingen, Meister Eckhart, and Teresa of Avila
- Islamic tradition: al-Hallaj, Ibn Arabi, and Jalaluddin Rumi

One final definition of worship:

Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose—and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable ...¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ For information on these enlightened saints refer to Abhayananda, Swami, *History of Mysticism* and Evelyn Underhill, *Mystics of the Church*.

¹⁴² Temple, William, *Readings in St. John's Gospel*, from www.worshipsource.com/articles/why-define-worship-worship-defined

D

Short-Cutting the Ordinary Route to Entering the Path

The main body of this book presents an overview of the vast possibilities of human consciousness and describes the evolution of human consciousness from its rudimentary state to its most exalted state. (See Figure 5-1 Flow Diagram.) This description allows us to see where we have been, where we are, and where we are going.

One of the most significant transformations along the way is that from the Consciousness Worldview (in W/D/S) to Cosmic Consciousness, in which the Self is established in Being. In the individual action phase of this transformation we know that we are “on the Path”.

The question is: Can we somehow short circuit the long route through all the worldviews and enter the Path right away, right now? Fortunately, the answer is: Yes!

Anyone in any worldview can begin to meditate at any time. It is the act of meditation that puts us on the Path. Meditation provides a systematic technique for the evolution of human consciousness.

The most universal of the meditation techniques are purely “mechanical”.¹⁴³ They do not depend on belief or intellect or emotions. And therefore, anyone can practice them. All that is necessary is the ability to consciously experience.

Meditation puts us in contact with the Absolute, the Source of peace, love, and creativity.

Many people have greatly benefitted from the practice of meditation, for example:

- Middle school students in the inner city for whom the violence in their school goes to near zero as they experience the Source of peace¹⁴⁴
- A nun in a convent for whom her love of God increases exponentially as she contacts the Source of love
- Successful, highly-creative artists, scientists, and business executives as their creativity goes through the roof as they contact the Source of creativity¹⁴⁵

Prior belief or misunderstanding can be a barrier to learning a meditation technique, but it need not be so. Fortunately, anyone with an open mind and an open heart and with the desire to expand his or her potential can practice a mechanical meditation technique and thus begin to experience the Absolute and begin to live the full value of life.

¹⁴³ Mechanical in the sense that: You do this and that happens. For example, you jump off the diving board, and you end up in the water. No belief, no thought, no effort. Refer, for example, to Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *The Science of Being and Art of Living*, pp. 300 to 303.

¹⁴⁴ Refer, for example, to Rosenthal, Norman E., *Transcendence: Healing and Transformation through Transcendental Meditation*, Chapter 8, pp. 173 to 188.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Chapter 10, pp. 203 to 238.

E

A Perfect Human Life

Table D-1 shows an idealized, perfect human life, from birth in ignorance to death in Unity Consciousness.

Table D-1. A perfect human life

Age	Activity	Transition	Worldview / State of Consciousness
Birth	Enter human life in ignorance of the true nature of the Self		Begin Material worldview
Birth to 28 years	Devote life to personal development		Experience only Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping states of consciousness (with, perhaps, brief flashes of higher states)
3 years	Begin to learn religion stories		
7 years	Continue to learn religion stories	Receive God's grace and experience God's unconditional love	Begin Religion worldview
12 to 28 years	Practice meditation techniques to dive into the Absolute (Transcendental Consciousness) to purify the nervous system		
14 years	Learn the symbolic (true) meaning behind religion stories*	Receive God's grace and experience the unity of all of Existence	Begin Consciousness Worldview
28 years	Have purified the nervous system sufficiently to sustain the experience of the Self as the Absolute	Receive God's grace of having the mistake of the intellect dispelled and, thus, begin to indentify the "I" with the Absolute	Enter Cosmic Consciousness

Table D-1. A perfect human life (continued)

Age	Activity	Transition	Worldview / State of Consciousness
28 to 56 years	Devote life to spouse and children, career, and society Practice advanced techniques to experience finer and finer levels of the Relative and to further purify the nervous system		
56 years	Experience the finest level of the Relative	Receive God's grace and experience God the Creator face to face as a living reality	Enter God Consciousness
56 to 84 years	Withdraw from the world and devote life to God Experience an ever growing devotion to God		
84 years	Worship God perfectly in every thought, word, and action Have achieved a perfectly pure nervous system	Receive God's final grace in which He withdraws Himself and experience the Unity of Existence	Enter Unity Consciousness
84 years and older	Return to the world and devote life to teaching the Truth of Existence to others		
Death of the body	Depart from human life in perfect knowledge of the true nature of the Self	Undergo Mahasamadhi and leave the body	

*The purpose of religion stories is to attract people to God and to let them know that God loves them. (For example, refer to Freke, Timothy and Gandy, Peter, *The Jesus Mysteries*, p. 129.) By the time a person has acquired the Consciousness Worldview, however, the stories have fulfilled their purpose, and thus the stories, in themselves, are irrelevant to further progress (evolution). An analogy might be that, when a person is young, Santa Claus adds to the magic of Christmas morning. But after a certain age and understanding, Santa Claus, in himself, is irrelevant to the enjoyment of the festivities of December 25. (For example, refer to 1 Cor 13:11 – 13:12.)

F

Creator and Source

God the Creator, the personal God, the God of ten thousand names.

God the Creator is the Being most able to express love,
But He is not the Source of love.

God the Creator is the most creative Being,
But He is not the Source of creativity.

God the Creator is the most intelligent Being,
But He is not the Source of intelligence.

God the Absolute, the impersonal God, the God that cannot be named.

God the Absolute is the Source of All.

God the Absolute is the Source of love, creativity, intelligence.

Worship the Creator.

Be One with the Source.

Glossary

Absolute

God the Absolute. The impersonal God. The transcendent aspect of God. The unmanifest aspect of Existence. The unchanging aspect of Existence. The fundamental reality of Existence. Without attributes, qualities, or features. The Source of all Relative Existence. See also *God the Absolute*, *impersonal God*, and *Relative*.

atheism

Without a belief in the existence of a god or gods. The Universe and Human beings are solely a result of chemical evolution. In atheism, matter and energy are the ultimate reality. See also *theism* and *transtheism*.

backsliding

To lapse morally or to revert to a worse condition. To go from a more advanced (more evolved) state to a less advanced (less evolved) one.

Consciousness Worldview

A conception of the world that holds that the Absolute is the ultimate Reality and that the true nature of their Self is that Reality. People who hold this worldview believe in a reality *beyond* God the Creator. Thus, they are said to be “trans-theistic”. See also *Material Worldview*, *Religion Worldview*, *God the Creator*, *Absolute*, and *transtheism*.

Cosmic Consciousness (CC)

The 5th state of human consciousness. In Cosmic Consciousness, we experience the Self as Absolute Existence *simultaneous* with experiencing the body and the world as Relative Existence. In Cosmic Consciousness, we experience the Self and the world as distinct realities, completely separate from one another. In CC, we experience a complete duality: the Self and other than the Self. In CC, the true Self is a witnessing Presence (the I AM) that witnesses our bodies, our thoughts, and our activities and witnesses the events of the world. Cosmic Consciousness is the first state of consciousness in which someone can be called “Enlightened.” This is the first state in which a person knows the true nature of the Self (as the unchanging Absolute) and can simultaneously operate in the ever-changing Relative world. In Cosmic Consciousness, all of our actions are in the flow of Nature. All action that we take is right action. In addition, all of our needs are fulfilled when the need arises.

When a person experiences the Self as the Absolute and simultaneously experiences the world of thoughts, forms, time, and space as separate from the Self, that person is in Cosmic Consciousness.

See also *Waking state of consciousness*, *Dreaming state of consciousness*, *Sleeping state of consciousness*, *Transcendental Consciousness*, *God Consciousness*, and *Unity Consciousness*.

Creation

The universe both seen and unseen. The Creator and His Creation, together, comprise the Relative aspect of Existence. Contains a myriad of forms—a myriad of individuals—from galaxies, to human beings, to bacteria. Each of these forms has one thing in common: They were all brought into being by the Creator. See also *God the Creator* and *Relative*.

Creator

See *God the Creator*.

“death”

Ignorance of the true nature of the Self. A condition in which we are unaware of the eternal Life of which we are capable. A condition in which we identify the self with the ego and the body, thoughts, and actions. A condition that has nothing whatever to do with the physical body ceasing to function. See also “*Life*” and *transformation*.

Dreaming state of consciousness

One of the three ordinary states of consciousness, in which (as in the Waking state) we experience thoughts. In this case, however, rather than the “real world” we experience images that we create with our own minds. These images might relate to our desires or to stresses we have experienced during our waking hours. See also *ordinary states of consciousness*, *Waking state of consciousness*, *Sleeping state of consciousness*, *Transcendental Consciousness*, *Cosmic Consciousness*, *God Consciousness*, and *Unity Consciousness*.

ego

That which we, in our ignorance, believe is the self especially as contrasted to another self or to the world. That which we call “ourselves.” That which we call our “individuality.” We believe the ego to be our self. But it is not.

As you grow up, you form a mental image of who you are, based on your personal and cultural conditioning. We may call this phantom self the ego. It consists of mind activity and can only be kept going through constant thinking. The term *ego* means different things to different people, but when I use it here it means a false self, created by unconscious identification with the mind.

To the ego, the present moment hardly exists. Only past and future are considered important. This total reversal of the truth accounts for the fact that in the ego mode the mind is so dysfunctional. It is always concerned with keeping the past alive, because without it – who are you? It constantly projects itself into the future to ensure its continued survival and to seek some kind of release or fulfillment there. It says: “One day, when this, that, or the other happens, I am going to be okay, happy, at peace.” Even when the ego seems to be concerned with the present, it is not the present that it sees: It misperceives it completely because it looks at it through the eyes of the past. Or it reduces the present to a means to an end, an end that always lies in the mind-projected future.¹⁴⁶

See also *self* and *Self*.

Enlightenment

The realization that the true nature of the Self is the Absolute as a living reality. Self realization. See also *Absolute*, *Self*, and *Self realization*.

¹⁴⁶ Tolle, Eckhart, *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*, pp. 22 to 23.

evolution of human consciousness

Human consciousness evolves through a series of states (or stages) and undergoes a series of transitions (or transformations) between those states. The stages are as follows: Material Worldview (in W/D/S), Religion Worldview (in W/D/S), Consciousness Worldview (in W/D/S), Transcendental Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness, and Unity Consciousness.

The first three stages in the evolution of human consciousness are not distinct states of consciousness; they are worldviews. In all three of these worldviews, we experience the Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping states of consciousness. Therefore, in the transitions between the first three stages, we experience a change in our level of awareness, not in our level of consciousness. The changes we experience between the worldviews seem quite great at the time, but they are all grounded by the same three states of consciousness.

The last four stages in the evolution of human consciousness are distinct states of consciousness. Therefore, the transitions between them are much more dramatic than the transitions between the worldviews.

There are five transitions between the stages. Each transition in the evolution of human consciousness involves three phases: individual action phase, ready phase, and God's grace phase. The entire process of the evolution of human consciousness involves these three phases of development.

The panorama of the evolution of human consciousness begins at the material level, with the Material Worldview in W/D/S. It ends with the ultimate goal of human life—total Enlightenment, total Self realization—in Unity Consciousness.

See also *Material Worldview*, *Religion Worldview*, *Consciousness Worldview*, *Waking state of consciousness*, *Dreaming state of consciousness*, *Sleeping state of consciousness*, *Transcendental Consciousness*, *Cosmic Consciousness*, *God Consciousness*, *Unity Consciousness*, *transitions*, *God's grace*, *ready*, and *individual action*.

Existence

The Absolute is Existence Itself. Under certain circumstances, the Absolute becomes manifest as the Relative (while remaining unchanged Itself). In that condition, Existence has two aspects: the Absolute and the Relative. See also *Absolute* and *Relative*.

finer and finest aspects of the Relative

Existence can be divided into three spheres: gross, subtle, and transcendent. The gross and subtle aspects are in the Relative and the transcendent is the Absolute. The gross aspect of creation is the one we experience every day. The finer and finest layers of creation are in the subtle sphere of creation, which has been called "Numinous creation". Some passages that might be suggestive of the subtle aspect of the Relative are as follows: Bhagavad-Gita, Chapter 11; Hebrew Bible, Isaiah 6:1 to 6:3; Christian Bible, Revelation 4:1 to 4:8.

fixed worldviews

The worldviews—Material, Religion, and Consciousness—follow a natural progression of experience and understanding of the world. At each progressive stage, a person's comprehension of reality grows toward the Truth. Unfortunately, that natural progression can be blocked if a person gets fixed in a particular conception of the world, and his/her beliefs become an end in themselves. When that happens, the person who holds those beliefs

becomes isolated from the natural flow of evolution, and, as long as the ideas remain fixed, further progress is impossible. See also *Material Worldview*, *Religion Worldview*, and *Consciousness Worldview*.

God Consciousness (GC)

The 6th state of human consciousness. In God Consciousness (as in Cosmic Consciousness), we continue to experience the Self as Absolute Existence and all else (non-Self) as Relative Existence. However, we now experience the finest aspects of Relative Existence (including God the Creator). Thus, God Consciousness is glorified Cosmic Consciousness.

In God Consciousness, our senses are fully refined, and we can perceive all layers of Creation, from the grossest to the finest. All of Creation is fascinating to us and we love everything and everyone. All of Creation displays God's glory, and we revel in that glory.

At the culmination of God Consciousness, we are perfectly devoted to God the Creator. Our entire being—heart, mind, and body—all we do and all we are is devoted to God. We live and breathe God the Creator.

When we are in God Consciousness, we can literally “see” (and “converse with”) God the Creator! It is only when we are in GC that we can truly know God the Creator and be devoted to Him and worship Him. It is only in GC that a true love of God the Creator can develop. In this state, there is truly a lover (you) and a beloved (God the Creator). Note, however, that the strict duality of Self and non-Self remains. The non-Self is just a lot richer than it was before.

In God Consciousness, all the “doing” is done. The physical body is fully purified, and the heart and mind are fully developed.

When a person experiences the Self as the Absolute and simultaneously experiences the finest aspect of the Relative (that is, directly experiences God the Creator), that person is in God Consciousness.

See also *Waking state of Consciousness*, *Dreaming state of consciousness*, *Sleeping state of consciousness*, *Transcendental Consciousness*, *Cosmic Consciousness*, and *Unity Consciousness*.

God's grace (phase of transitions)

God the Creator is always showering us with His infinite grace, every second of every day, from the time of our creation until we reach Unity Consciousness. However, as our consciousness evolves, there are several times when the grace of God the Creator is *absolutely necessary*: God's grace is *required* for each and every transition in the evolution of human consciousness.

In the first transition, God shows His love for us and we want to return that love. In the second transition, God gives us an experience of the Absolute and puts us consciously on the Path. In the third transition, God dispels the mistake of the intellect and allows us to identify the “I” with the Absolute. In the fourth transition, God reveals Himself to us face to face so that we can perceive Him with our senses. And in the fifth and final transition, God the Creator withdraws Himself, and we know by direct experience that Absolute Existence and Relative Existence are One, and we are that One.

See also *transitions*, *individual action*, *ready*, and *evolution of human consciousness*.

God the Absolute

The Absolute. The impersonal God. The transcendent aspect of God. The unmanifest aspect of Existence. The unchanging aspect of Existence. The fundamental reality of Existence. Without attributes, qualities, or features. The Source of all Relative Existence. See also *Absolute, impersonal God, and Relative*.

God the Creator

The personal God. The immanent aspect of God. The supreme Being of almighty nature with a specific form, a specific nature, certain attributes, and certain qualities. With His Creation, together, comprise the ever-changing aspect of Existence, the Relative. The first manifestation of the Absolute. The Light of Existence. The “only begotten” of the Absolute. That is, the only Being who arises directly from the Absolute without any other agency. The only Being in the Relative who is everywhere at once, has power over everything, and knows everything that is happening at all times. Despite His exalted position, is still within time and space. See also *personal God, impersonal God, God the Absolute, Relative, and Absolute*.

He / Him

(with a capital “H”) The pronouns used to designate the personal God, God the Creator. God the Creator has individual consciousness. God the Creator creates the universe. God the Creator can hear and see and has likes and dislikes. Therefore, God the Creator needs to be referred to as either “He” or “She.” God the Creator is the “Mother” of the universe. Therefore, the pronoun “she” seems appropriate. However, (at this time) in Western culture, God the Creator is usually referred to as “He.” See also *It, personal God, and God the Creator*.

higher states of consciousness

States of consciousness in which the Self is identified with the Absolute. The higher states of consciousness are Transcendental Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness, and Unity Consciousness. See also *Transcendental Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness, Unity Consciousness, ordinary states of consciousness, and normal states of consciousness*.

ignorance, state of

Ignorant of the true nature of the Self as the Absolute. People who experience only the Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping states of consciousness are said to be in the state of ignorance.

impersonal God

The Absolute. God the Absolute. The transcendent aspect of God. The unmanifest aspect of Existence. The unchanging aspect of Existence. The fundamental reality of Existence. Without attributes, qualities, or features. The Source of all Relative Existence. See also *personal God, Absolute, God the Absolute, and Existence*.

individual action (phase of transitions)

In the evolution of human consciousness individual action is *required* to make possible each and every transition along the Path. In the first transition, our individual action¹⁴⁷ involves seeking greater happiness in the Relative aspect of Existence. In the second transition, our individual action involves seeking greater closeness to God the Creator. In the third transition, our individual action involves purification of the nervous system by using a technique such as meditation, which allows us to experience the Absolute in a regular and systematic manner. In the fourth transition, our individual action involves the refinement of the senses, such that we can experience the finest layer of the Relative. In the fifth transition, our individual action involves ever increasing devotion to God the Creator until our nervous system is perfectly purified and we have perfect love for God the Creator.

See also *transitions, ready, God's grace, and evolution of human consciousness*.

inward stroke of meditation

Meditation is a process that allows us to experience the Absolute in a regular and systematic manner. During meditation, the mind alternates between the Waking state and Transcendental Consciousness. Meditation has two phases: In the first phase, the mind goes from Waking state to Transcendental Consciousness. In the second phase, the mind goes from TC to Waking state. This process repeats many times during one session of meditation. The first phase of the process is called the inward stroke of meditation. See also *outward stroke of meditation, meditation, Absolute, and Transcendental Consciousness*.

It

(with a capital “I”) The pronoun used to designate the impersonal God, the Absolute (God the Absolute). The Absolute is Consciousness Itself. The Absolute does not hear or see and has no likes or dislikes. Therefore, the Absolute can be referred to as “It.” See also *He / Him, impersonal God, and God the Absolute*.

“Life”

Realization of the true nature of the Self. A condition in which we experience eternal Being as our Selves. A condition in which we identify the Self with Absolute Being and in which the individual ego ceases to exist and our body, thoughts, and actions are observed by the Self, as separate from the Self. See also *“death” and transformation*.

Material Worldview

A conception of the world that holds that the physical universe is the ultimate reality. People who hold this worldview do not believe in a higher power (God). Thus, they are said to be “a-theistic”, without God. See also *Religion Worldview, Consciousness Worldview, and atheism*.

meditation

A practice that allows the mind to experience the Absolute (as Transcendental Consciousness) in a regular and systematic manner. During meditation, the mind is in the Waking state most of the time, and it is in Transcendental Consciousness some of the time. The alternation

¹⁴⁷ During the first two transitions, we are *not consciously aware* that we are performing individual action *to progress in our evolution*. We become consciously aware of the value of individual action for evolution only in the third transition and later.

between these two states of consciousness (in and out) is, usually, instantaneous. This diving in and out from Waking state to Transcendental Consciousness and back is the *most important process* in the evolution of human consciousness.

Meditation uses the natural tendency of the mind to seek the Absolute and the natural tendency of the body to throw off stress. Thus meditation, with its inward and outward strokes, allows the body to become purified. Purification of the body is what allows us to evolve quickly. Therefore, it is meditation that allows us make the transition from ignorance of the true nature of the Self to realization of the true nature of the Self, which is called Enlightenment! See also *Absolute, Transcendental Consciousness, Waking state of consciousness, natural tendency of the mind, natural tendency of the body, inward stroke of meditation, outward stroke of meditation, and Enlightenment*.

mistake of the intellect

The misidentification, by the intellect, of the “I” with the small “s” self: the individual ego and body, thoughts, and actions. In fact, the “I” is Pure Consciousness; the true nature of the Self is the Absolute.

natural tendency of the body

It is the natural tendency of the body to release stress. Our bodies are full of impurities, caused by stresses and strains, that have been accumulated over a long period of time. When we are at rest, with a reduced metabolic rate, such as during sleep, it is the natural tendency of our bodies to get rid of those impurities. When the mind is experiencing the Absolute (in Transcendental Consciousness), the body is at its most profound state of rest, perfect rest with nil metabolism. In that condition, the body naturally throws off any of the accumulated impurities that are ready to be released, from the most superficial to the most profound. When an impurity is released, there is some activity in the body, which the mind experiences as a thought. When the mind experiences the thought, we return to the Waking state of consciousness and no longer experience the Absolute. The natural tendency of the body to release stress is the mechanism that allows for the outward stroke of meditation. See also *natural tendency of the mind, meditation, Absolute, Transcendental Consciousness, and outward stroke of meditation*.

natural tendency of the mind

It is the natural tendency of the mind to seek greater and greater fields of happiness. The Absolute is the field of greatest happiness. Therefore, it is the natural tendency of the mind to seek the Absolute. When left to itself, outside the realm of thought, speech, or action, the mind naturally seeks to experience the Absolute (which we experience as Transcendental Consciousness). The natural tendency of the mind to seek fields of greater happiness is the mechanism that allows for the inward stroke of meditation. See also *natural tendency of the body, meditation, Absolute, Transcendental Consciousness, and inward stroke of meditation*.

nervous system

For the purposes of this book, all aspects of the human body from the gross to the subtle.

non-self

(with a lower case “s”) The non-self is everything except the self. In the ordinary states of consciousness, the self is identified with the ego, body, thoughts, and actions. Therefore, the

non-self is everything else in the universe. See also *self*, *Self*, *non-Self*, and *ordinary states of consciousness*.

non-Self

(with a capital “S”) The non-Self is everything except the Self. In the higher states of consciousness, the Self is the Absolute. Therefore, the non-Self¹⁴⁸ is everything in the Relative *including* the body, thoughts, and actions. See also *Self*, *self*, and *non-self*.

normal states of consciousness

States of consciousness in which the Self is identified with the Absolute. The normal states of consciousness are¹⁴⁹ Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness, and Unity Consciousness. See also *Cosmic Consciousness*, *God Consciousness*, *Unity Consciousness*, *ordinary states of consciousness*, and *higher states of consciousness*.

ordinary states of consciousness

States of consciousness in which the self is identified with the ego, body, thoughts, and actions. The ordinary states of consciousness are Waking, Dreaming, and Sleeping¹⁵⁰. See also *Waking state of consciousness*, *Dreaming state of consciousness*, *Sleeping state of consciousness*, *normal states of consciousness*, and *higher states of consciousness*.

outward stroke of meditation

Meditation is a process that allows us to experience the Absolute in a regular and systematic manner. During meditation, the mind alternates between the Waking state and Transcendental Consciousness. Meditation has two phases: In the first phase, the mind goes from Waking state to Transcendental Consciousness. In the second phase, the mind goes from TC to Waking state. This process repeats many times during one session of meditation. The second phase of the process is called the outward stroke of meditation. See also *inward stroke of meditation*, *meditation*, *Absolute*, and *Transcendental Consciousness*.

Path

A series of states and transitions between the states that we pass through as we progress from ignorance, in the material level of life, to full Self realization, in Unity Consciousness.

Whether we know it or not, we are all on the Path. We entered the Path a very long time ago, and everything we do is a further step along the way. In the early stages, we do not know we are on the Path. Eventually, however, we become aware that we are on the Path.

See also *ignorance*, *Self realization*, and *evolution of human consciousness*.

personal God

God the Creator. The immanent aspect of God. The supreme Being of almighty nature with a specific form, a specific nature, certain attributes, and certain qualities. With His Creation, together, comprise the ever-changing aspect of Existence. He has “ears” and “eyes” and

¹⁴⁸ In Transcendental Consciousness, there is no non-Self. In Unity Consciousness, the Self includes what had been the non-Self as well as the Absolute. (Refer to the main body of the text for further explanation.)

¹⁴⁹ In Transcendental Consciousness, the Self is also identified with the Absolute. But TC cannot be considered to be a “normal” state of consciousness because when we are in TC, we cannot operate in the world.

¹⁵⁰ Strictly speaking, in the Sleeping state of consciousness, the self has no identification.

definite opinions. He is God the Father to whom we pray. He loves us as He loves Himself. See also *impersonal God* and *God the Creator*.

ready (phase of transitions)

In each of the transitions in the evolution of human consciousness there is a ready phase. In the first transition, we are in the ready phase when we realize that there is no lasting happiness in the Relative and that realization leads us to a yearning for something more. In the second transition, we are in the ready phase when we realize that, in our current state of consciousness, it is not possible to have a satisfying relationship with God and that realization leaves us dissatisfied and yearning for something more. In the third transition, we are in the ready phase when our body is purified sufficiently to sustain the experience of the Self as the Absolute. In the fourth transition, we are in the ready phase when our senses are refined sufficiently to perceive the finest level of the Relative. In the fifth transition, we are in the ready phase when we have perfect devotion to and love of God the Creator.

See also *transitions*, *individual action*, *God's grace*, and *evolution of human consciousness*.

Relative

The manifest aspect of Existence. The ever-changing aspect of Existence. Has two aspects: the Creator and the Creation. Made up of countless individuals, each of whom has individual consciousness. Has myriad attributes, qualities, and features. See also *Absolute*, *Creator*, and *Creation*.

Religion Worldview

A conception of the world that holds that God the Creator is the ultimate reality. People who hold this worldview believe in a higher power (God). Thus, they are said to be “theistic”. See also *Material Worldview*, *Consciousness Worldview*, *God the Creator*, and *theism*.

self

(with a lower case “s”) Experienced only in the Waking and Dreaming states of consciousness. The self is identified with the ego, body, thoughts, and actions. See also *ego*, *non-self*, *Self*, and *non-Self*.

Self

(with a capital “S”) Experienced only in the higher states of consciousness. The true nature of the Self is the Absolute. We experience only the Self in Transcendental Consciousness. We experience both the Self and the non-Self in Cosmic Consciousness and God Consciousness. And in Unity Consciousness, we experience All as the Self. (What had been the non-Self is now also the Self.) See also *non-Self*, *self*, *non-self*, *Transcendental Consciousness*, *Cosmic Consciousness*, *God Consciousness*, and *Unity Consciousness*.

Self realization

The realization that the true nature of the Self is the Absolute. Enlightenment.

There are three levels of Self realization: Transcendental Consciousness, in which we experience the Self as the Absolute (and that is all we experience); Cosmic Consciousness and God Consciousness, in which we experience the Self as the Absolute and the non-Self as the Relative; and Unity Consciousness, in which we experience the Self as the Absolute and the Relative as the Absolute. All is One.

See also *Absolute, Relative, Self, Enlightenment, Transcendental Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness, and Unity Consciousness.*

Sleeping state of consciousness

One of the three ordinary states of consciousness, in which we experience nothing. We have no thoughts, and we have no experience of the world, either real or imagined. See also *ordinary states of consciousness, Waking state of consciousness, Dreaming state of consciousness, Transcendental Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness, and Unity Consciousness.*

steps of progress

Individual action and God's grace; experience and understanding; rest and activity

theism

Belief in the existence of a personal God (God the Creator) viewed as the creative agent of the Relative aspect of Existence—the human race and the world, Who transcends yet is immanent in the world, and Who intervenes in the world and sustains a personal relation to His creatures. In theism, God the Creator is the ultimate reality. See also *atheism* and *transtheism*.

transcendent

Lying beyond the limits of ordinary experience. Being beyond the limits of all possible experience and knowledge. Being beyond comprehension.¹⁵¹

Transcendental Consciousness (TC)

The 4th state of human consciousness. In this state, we experience *only* the Absolute, only Being, only Consciousness Itself. In this state, we experience the Self as It truly is: Being. For a person in Transcendental Consciousness, the Relative does not exist. For a person in this state, neither thoughts nor forms nor time nor space exists. Only the Absolute exists. In TC, we are fully conscious but without an object of consciousness. In this state of consciousness, "I AM" is the only reality.

When a person is in Transcendental Consciousness, the person's metabolic rate is nil. The physical body is completely at rest, yet the consciousness is awake. His or her mind is not functioning; it is not active. But awareness is clear. This clarity of awareness is Pure Consciousness.

When a person experiences the Self as the Absolute and the Relative does not exist for him/her in any shape or form, that person is in Transcendental Consciousness.

See also *Waking state of consciousness, Dreaming state of consciousness, Sleeping state of consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness, and Unity Consciousness.*

Transfiguration

In the context of this book, the transition from the illusion of separation to the reality of Unity. In this transition, we realize that not only the Self is the Absolute but the entire Relative is also the Absolute, and I AM THAT. This transfiguration is the most significant, and is the final, transition in the evolution of human consciousness. See also *Transformation*.

¹⁵¹ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition, p. 1327

Transformation

In the context of this book, the transition from “death” to “Life”: The transition from the state of ignorance of the true nature of the Self to the realization of the true nature of the Self. The true nature of the Self is the Absolute. Transformation is the purpose of human life. It is the reason you are here on earth. See also *Transfiguration*, “*death*” and “*Life*”.

transitions (in the evolution of human consciousness)

Transitions in the evolution of human consciousness have three phases: individual action, ready, and God’s grace. The goal of our individual action is to achieve the transition. And our individual action is all important, because without it, we would never be ready.

But the final phase of the transition does not depend upon us. It depends upon God’s grace. And God’s grace is all important, because without it, the transition would never occur.

It is our individual action that brings us to the ready phase. However, we do not know, and we *cannot* know, when we are ready. Only God knows when we are ready. Moreover, it is not our readiness that matters. It is God’s readiness that matters!

All we can do is to continue our individual action in peace, not waiting, not expecting, and definitely not anxious for the transition to occur.

Transitions happen on God’s timetable, not on ours.

See also *individual action*, *ready*, *God's grace*, and *evolution of human consciousness*.

transtheism

Belief in the existence of an impersonal God (God the Absolute) viewed as the Source of the Relative aspect of Existence, That altogether transcends the Relative aspect of Existence; That has no manifestation of any kind; and That can be experienced by human beings. In transtheism, God the Creator exists, but He is not the highest spiritual instance. In transtheism, God the Absolute is the ultimate Reality. See also *atheism* and *theism*.

Unity Consciousness (UC)

The 7th state of human consciousness. In Unity Consciousness, we experience Absolute Existence and Relative Existence as One, and we are that One. All of Existence is complete Unity.

In Unity Consciousness, we are fully Enlightened. Unity Consciousness is the highest state of human consciousness. In this state of consciousness, we experience the ultimate Truth.

In UC, the distinction between the Absolute and the Relative ends. The Self is established in Being and what was the non-Self is also established in Being. Both the Self and the "non-Self" are perceived as the direct experience that ALL—Absolute, Creator, and Creation—is the Absolute. The Absolute is all there is, and I AM THAT.

The Self and the non-Self are One! All the boundaries between the Self and the non-Self have, as it were, dissolved. The God you worshipped (God the Creator) ceases to exist as a separate reality. You and God the Creator are One!

The famous expression from the Vedic (Indian) tradition “I am That, thou art That, all this is That” is a very concise and complete expression of our reality in Unity Consciousness.

When a person experiences both the Absolute and the Relative as the Self, that person is in Unity Consciousness.

See also *Waking state of consciousness, Dreaming state of consciousness, Sleeping state of consciousness, Transcendental Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, and God Consciousness.*

Waking / Dreaming / Sleeping states of consciousness

The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd states of consciousness. The three ordinary states of consciousness. See also *ordinary states of consciousness, Waking state of consciousness, Dreaming state of consciousness, Sleeping state of consciousness, Transcendental Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness, and Unity Consciousness.*

Waking state of consciousness

One of the three ordinary states of consciousness, in which we experience thoughts, a constant stream of thoughts, and we engage in speech and in action. In this state of consciousness, we also experience the ever-changing aspect of Creation, the sights and sounds and so on of the surface level of the world around us. See also *ordinary states of consciousness, Dreaming state of consciousness, Sleeping state of consciousness, Transcendental Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness, and Unity Consciousness.*

W/D/S

Waking / Dreaming / Sleeping states of consciousness. See *Waking state of consciousness, Dreaming state of consciousness, and Sleeping state of consciousness.*

worldview

The framework of ideas and beliefs through which an individual interprets the world and interacts in it. See also *Material Worldview, Religion Worldview, Consciousness Worldview, and fixed worldviews.*

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The Absolute exists. It is Existence Itself.

The true nature of the Self is the Absolute.

Contacting the Absolute in a systematic manner every day, every day, every day, for example through meditation, is by far and away the most important thing that anyone can do.

If words in a book could transform a person, then millions upon millions would already be transformed. If words in a book could transform the world, then the world would already be transformed. We have so many books.

The vast majority of human beings are born, live their entire lives, and die without knowing that they are in the state of ignorance! Not only do they not experience the true nature of the Self, they do not even know that such a possibility exists.

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) wrote thousands of pages of Christian theology. He has been declared the "Angelic and Universal Doctor of the Church" (*Doctor Angelicus* and *Doctor Communis*). But towards the end of his life, on the 6th of December 1273, after celebrating Mass on the Feast of St. Nicholas, Aquinas had an experience (an experience of the Truth) that caused him to give up his writing, saying, "All that I have written seems to me like mere straw compared with what has now been revealed to me."

Although manifest creation, which includes men and other creatures, springs from the unmanifest, its manifestation is by virtue of prakriti [Nature]. But the divine manifestation of the unmanifest Being, *which comes to re-establish the forgotten wisdom of life*, is by virtue of 'Lila-shakti', which is the very power of the Absolute, an integral part of Its transcendent divine nature.

Surgery is the inseparable power of the surgeon. Sometimes it is active, as when the surgeon works at the operating table, but at other times it is latent, as when he is resting at home. Lila-shakti (the play-power of Brahman) functions in an analogous way, and by virtue of this the unmanifest, ever remaining in Its absolute state, manifests into creation. The almighty nature of the eternal Being thus maintains Reality in both Its aspects, absolute and relative.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, ch. 4, v. 6, commentary on pp. 261. (Emphasis added)

Franklin P. Mason grew up in Westport, Connecticut, where he graduated from Staples High School. He earned a B.A. degree in Chemistry from Kalamazoo College in Kalamazoo Michigan. Franklin then went on to earn a Ph.D. in Chemistry from the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon.

Franklin taught Chemistry for eight years at the college level, including at San Jose State University in San Jose, California. He then went on to a 20-year career as a Technical Writer and Manager of Technical Publications at a manufacturer of scientific instruments in California's Silicon Valley.

Franklin is now retired from business but he remains very much active in life.

Franklin is married with four children and two grandchildren. He resides in Clayton, California.

In 1970, Franklin learned Transcendental Meditation® in Eugene, Oregon. During 1971 and 1972, Franklin was privileged to attend summer courses in the Science of Creative Intelligence® taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California.

Over the years, Franklin has had several experiences of the unity of all Existence. Each experience was brief, lasting from a few minutes to a few hours. However, these experiences now define his life.

After Franklin began meditation, and after his experiences of the unity of all Existence, Franklin's attention turned to religion. And more specifically, his attention turned to the mystics in each religion. Even though each religion expresses its ideas in words unique to it, and even though members of the various religions often disagree (even violently), the saints and prophets, the Sufis and sages, the seers and gurus of all religions all say the same thing: God is One and each of us is One with God.

