

Anab Whitehouse

Synopsis
of a
Sufi's
Spiritual
Search



© Dr. Anab Whitehouse

Interrogative Imperative Institute

Brewer, Maine

04412

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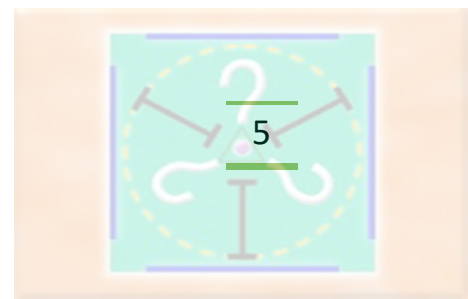
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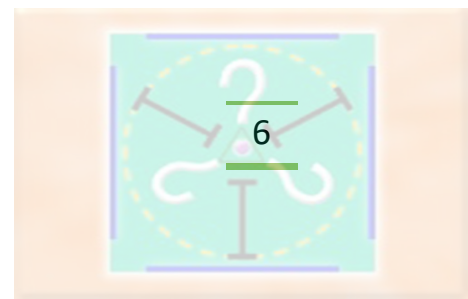
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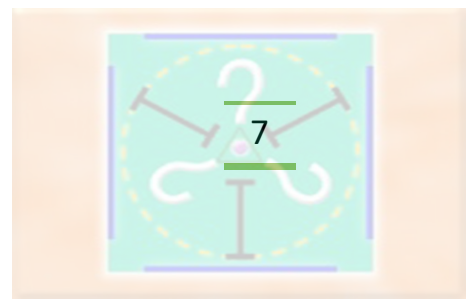
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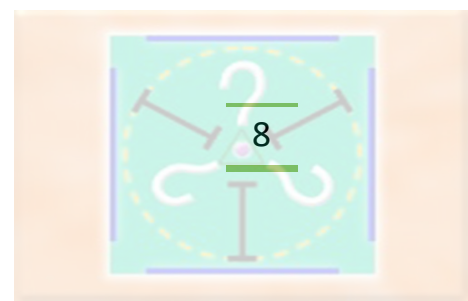
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Synopsis 1 : Some Basic Principles



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Introduction to Synopsis 1

The following 80-plus pages of the first section engage the Sufi path from a dozen, or so, different directions involving principles that have considerable importance within tasawwuf – that is, the Sufi mystical tradition. However, there is no intention which is present in what is said during the ensuing discussions to try to give the impression that the material being covered during this initial section of synopsis exhausts what is to be known or understood concerning the nature of the Sufi path.

What the Prophets know and understand is greater than what the non-Prophetic saints know and understand. What the latter individuals know and understand is more than what the generality of individuals know who aspire to the Sufi path.

I am little more than someone who was initiated into a Sufi silsilah or order and who has done a bit of traveling on that path. I am making no claims about being a realized individual.

On the other hand, if a seeker is sincere, then, such a person doesn't spend time among those who do know and understand without picking up a few things along the way. Indeed, if this were not true, then, there would be no point to the mystical journey because many people who step onto the path are "works-in-progress" rather than individuals who can be said to have spiritually "arrived", but the reason the aforementioned sorts of individuals are to be considered "works-in-progress" is because a certain amount of knowledge and understanding has begun to seep into their beings as they struggle toward working their way toward arriving at the final destination concerning the potential of their essential nature or fitra, and, as a result of the presence of such knowledge and understanding, limited though these might be, nonetheless, spiritual changes have, by the Grace of Allah, begun to take place.

In a sense, what follows is part of my observing the first pillar of Islam – namely, to bear witness to the truth according to my level of understanding. Bearing witness is an on-going



process that changes over time as one begins, God willing, to spiritually mature and become open to some of the multiplicity of possibilities that are entailed by the dynamics of bearing witness to the truth.

One doesn't have to accept everything – or, worse case scenario, anything -- that is being said in the essays that follow as being true ... certainly not in any ultimate sense, although there might be – hopefully – partial truths introduced as one makes one's way through the book. Nevertheless, the material that is to be presented offers the reader an opportunity to engage in one's own form of bearing witness concerning the issues, themes, ideas, principles, teachings, and possibilities that are being given voice.

Some of the essays, especially toward the beginning of the section, are quite brief. Other entries are longer.

Both lengths of exploration are intended to complement one another. Moreover, just as painting a picture takes time as different layers, details, depth, richness, and nuances are added to the dynamic of painting, so too, the conceptual painting that is being attempted here seeks to add a variety of layers, details, depth, richness and so on as the process of writing unfolds across the present book.

A Hadith Qudsi

The phrase: “Hadith Qudsi” refers to sayings that are manifested through the mouth of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) but which are believed to give expression to Divine communications that are considered to be separate from the hidayat, or guidance, that comes through the Qur’an and, yet, which, nevertheless, constitute a form of Divine assistance. In addition, such sayings of the Prophet (and there are a number of these) are set apart from those sayings of the Prophet which are not distinguished in this manner. One such hadith qudsi provides an overview of the entire Sufi mystical path – namely:

“Whoever seeks Me, finds Me.

Whoever finds Me, comes to know Me.

Whoever comes to know Me, comes to love Me.

Whoever comes to love Me, that person I slay,

And whoever I slay, I owe that person blood-money,

And to whoever I owe blood-money, I am the recompense for that blood-money.”

In the foregoing saying, the notion of “seeking” gives expression to the discipline of tariqat or the Sufi path. Among other things this process of seeking encompasses the five pillars of Islam (namely, bearing witness, prayer, fasting, zakat or charity, and hajj or pilgrimage), as well as zikr (remembrance), seclusion, night vigils, meditation, contemplation, service (to both one’s shaykh as well as the community), and fatiha – which is a gathering of individuals who wish to offer up prayers of gratitude for all that God gives, as well as to voice requests for Divine blessings and assistance, together with an acknowledgment of those individuals (such as the Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him) who have dedicated their lives to the service of God.]

The process of “finding” that is mentioned in the foregoing hadith qudsi alludes to the experiences of “haqiqat” or truths

that are realized through the tajalli (that is, Divine manifestations) that are encountered through such phenomena as: kashf (unveiling), ilham (flashes of intuition), and veridical dreams, and although all dreams can be informative, not all dreams are veridical – that is, authentic communications from the realm of the Unseen.

The word “knowing” in the aforementioned hadith qudsi refers to the condition of gnosis or ma’rifat – a condition that transcends the conditions of submitting (muslim) or believing (mu’min) and tends to be characterized by yaqueen or certainty of knowledge.

The word “love” that appears in the foregoing hadith qudsi might be best expressed by the term: “Ishq”, which is derived from the word “ashiqah” -- a vine that envelops its immediate surroundings wherever it grows and which removes everything apart from the enveloping process.

The slaying of the individual that takes place through the station of love gives rise to the condition of “fana” in which all – including one’s sense of self -- is extinguished from a person’s consciousness and all that remains in awareness is the overwhelming presence of Divine manifestation.

Finally, the dynamic being alluded to in the aforementioned hadith qudsi which involves God being the recompense for the blood-money that is owed to the one who is slain in the way of Allah refers to the condition of “baqa” or a condition of Self-awareness that abides or subsides within God’s Presence according to the potential that is inherent in one’s fitra or essential nature and as a function of the infinite Divine Baraka or Grace that is bestowed on the individual in that condition or station of baqa.

Eight Kinds of People

There are those who know and know that they know. These rare manifestations of the Self (with a capital “S”) are spiritually blessed individuals, and one should seek them out and learn from them through being in their presence. And, for the record, I am not such an individual, but the Sufi path begins at no beginning and works toward no end without the assistance of such an individual.

There are those who know but don’t know that they know. These individuals are asleep and should be woken up. We all have the capacity to wake up but, like seeds sown in the field, not everything comes to fruition.

There are those who don’t know and know that they don’t know. These souls are able to learn and should be taught. Important changes came when this realization arose within me after an opportunity entered into my life to do something constructive about not knowing.

There are those who don’t know and don’t know that they don’t know. These are the ignorant ones, and they should be avoided. The halls of religion, governance, corporations, medicine, entertainment, the media, and education are fraught with such individuals.

There are those who don’t know, but believe that they do know. These people might be referred to as “genuine fakes” in as much as they sincerely believe that they know but are genuinely mistaken about their condition.

There are those who know that they don’t know but who, for a variety of delusional reasons, attempt to induce seekers of truth to believe that the former know when this is not the case. These individuals are charlatans who are masters of seduction and misdirection while going about the dirty business of trying to compromise the spiritual potential of seekers after the truth as well as to attempt to corrupt the character of that search.

There are those people who even when they are shown the truth cannot bear to live with the implications of what has been

disclosed and choose to live their lives in various states of denial that become the doorways through which further misadventure may enter into their lives as well as the lives of others.

There are those who through choice, training, and/or inherent disposition are indifferent to truth but, nonetheless, serve a purpose that is both dark and hidden ... even to them.

We each have the potential to be any one of the foregoing kinds of people. The path to becoming one, or more, of the foregoing kinds of individuals gives expression to the journey of life.

In passing, one might keep in mind that being able to discern the difference between, on the one hand, those who know and know that they know, and, on the other hand, those who know that they do not know, but pretend as if they do know, is both crucial and, potentially, quite difficult.



From Allah

The following has been found among Sufi writings but is unattributed.

I created human beings, and they were bound to Me, and they were coming to Me. When I showed them the world, 9/10ths of them became world-bound and 1/10th remained with Me.

When I told those who remained with Me about Paradise, 9/10ths of those who remained desired Paradise and only 1/10th remained with Me.

When I poured My troubles and My pains upon those who stayed with Me, they cried for help and 9/10ths left and 1/10th remained with Me.

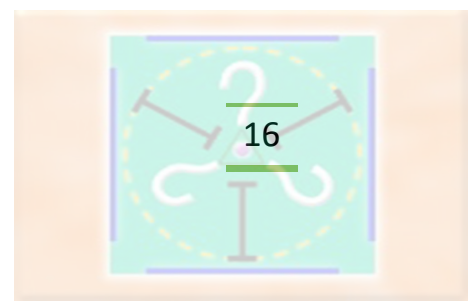
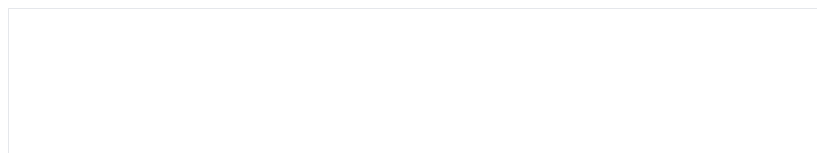
To this 1/10th, I said: I will pour upon you such calamities that the mountains could not bear their weight.

They said: "As long as they come from You, it is well with us."

Hazrat Ghareeb Nawaz (may Allah be pleased with him) is reported to have said: "Do not look at things in terms of whether they are good or bad. Is it not enough that they come from Allah? The arrow of a Friend goes nowhere but to a friend."

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have been feeling ill one day and showing signs of that illness. An individual who was with him at the time is reported to have said: 'This illness is due to the poisoning that a woman did following the siege of her city by Muslims.' The Prophet is reported to have given the man a stern look and said: By Allah, nothing comes to me except from Allah.

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What Is the Literal Meaning of ... ?

Some years ago a non-Muslim individual who seemed to have become entangled in a web of hubris tried to argue that Muslims were required to engage the Qur'an in a literal way. This raises the following question: What would constitute a literal understanding of the Qur'an?

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "Truly, the Qur'an has an outward and an inward dimension, and the latter has its own inner dimension, and, so on, for up to seven dimensions." If one were to put aside, for the sake of relative simplicity, the various inner dimensions of the Qur'an, what would the nature of the outer dimension be like? Is there only one literal way to engage that outer dimension?

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also is reported to have said: 'All of the revealed books are contained in the Qur'an. And, the meaning of the Qur'an is contained within Surah al-Fatiha. And, the meaning of Surah al-Fatiha is contained in Bismillah ir-Rahman, ir Raheem, and the meaning of Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Raheem is contained in Bismillah, and the meaning of Bismillah is contained in the dot beneath bey.' To have taqwa or piety is to be open to that which is disclosed through such a spiritual portal, and, as such, true meaning comes only from God and not through any process of interpretation.

However, let us leave such considerations aside and take an example from English as a way of alluding to the complexities of coming to an understanding of any given text – even very simple texts. Consider the sentence: "Mary had a little lamb" and ask yourself what is the literal meaning of the simple set of five words?

'Mary had a little lamb' could mean that Mary either has – in the present – or once had – in the past – a little lamb as a pet.

'Mary had a little lamb' might also mean that Mary ate a little piece of lamb during a meal or while having a snack.

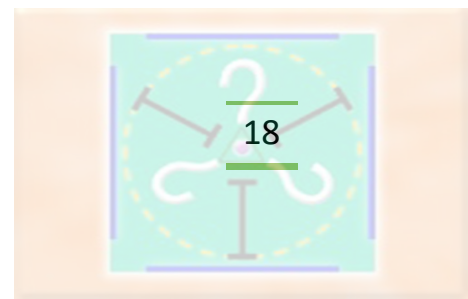


Additionally, 'Mary had a little lamb' could be a reference to an infant or child to which Mary had given birth either recently or in the past and gives expression to how many people considered the infant/child to be as gentle, sweet, playful, and full of energy as a little animal known as a "lamb"

Moreover, 'Mary had a little lamb' might be a reference to some sort of weird genetic experiment in which Mary was induced to give birth to an animal that was not human.

Finally, it is possible that the meaning of "Mary had a little lamb' gives expression to a coded form of knowledge, but no one will understand the meaning of that sentence except the one to whom the key of decryption has been given or will be given.

In this respect one might keep in mind that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: 'There are 71 sects among Jews, and only one of them is correct. There are 72 sects among Christians, and only one of them is correct. There are 73 sects amongst Muslims, and only one of them is correct.' One might also keep in mind the following question: Which understanding of the outer dimension of the Qur'an that is being alluded to by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the earlier-cited hadith will be consonant with the one correct perspective that exists among the Jews, Christians, and Muslims?



Understanding Versus Interpretation

Approximately, forty years ago, my shaykh recounted the following series of events to me and several other individuals who were present at the time. It is an account concerning someone who is, without question, an authentic spiritual guide.

The anniversary of Hazrat 'Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) was approaching. The shaykh about whom my guide spoke wanted to have a sama'- that is, music -- session as part of the observance and, consequently, sent an invitation to a certain woman who lived in the area and was a highly regarded singer.

The woman responded to the invitation by indicating that she wanted her payment to be given prior to her participation in the commemoration. She was informed by the shaykh that the adab or etiquette for such an event was organized in a certain manner.

For instance, the established tradition was that donations would spontaneously be laid before the shaykh by different people attending the festivities during the performance of music and/or singing. In addition, at the end of the festivities the woman would receive remuneration for her participation.

The woman insisted on being paid ahead of the commemoration and indicated that without such a payment, she would not participate in the festivities. The shaykh told her to begin to keep track of her medical bills.

The woman became sick and her condition worsened with each passing day. She went to the shaykh and asked if something could be done to bring her condition back to health, and the shaykh indicated that the arrow had already been cast, and, therefore, nothing could change what had transpired.

Sometime later, the woman passed away. Her death might be understood as an expression of either Divine qualities of jalali or jamali or some combination of the two.

For instance, jalali qualities such as: Rigor, accountability, power, discipline, justice and the like might have been operative in the foregoing set of circumstances as a result of the woman's unreasonable and arrogant actions not only in conjunction with

the general etiquette of such a sama' session as well as in relation to the shaykh presiding over the festivities but, perhaps even more importantly, her breach of etiquette ultimately was directed against a high spiritual personality who is among the awliya or near ones to God – namely, Hazrat 'Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) ... someone for whom the shaykh who was presiding over the festivities had a deep love.

Alternatively, some individuals might wish to maintain, in what could seem to give expression to a counterintuitive perspective, that the foregoing set of circumstances constitutes an example of the presence of qualities such as compassion, love, forgiveness, and the like. More specifically, although the woman had shown little regard for the adab or etiquette of such spiritual observances, and, moreover, although she had been disrespectful toward the shaykh, his invitation, as well as toward the person of Hazrat 'Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), nonetheless, conceivably, her life might have been taken as expiation for breeches of adab she was committing in this world so that she would not be held responsible in the world to come for the acts she had committed during her earthly life.

Maybe, there was some combination of jalali and jamali qualities involved in her death. On the other hand, perhaps, there were dimensions of the affair to which we are not privy and, as a result, we have no insight, knowledge or understanding concerning why what happened to that woman took place.

For those who might have lost patience with the foregoing account, the following ayats or verses from the Qur'an might be of assistance:

In the Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

[18.65] Then they found one from among Our servants whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves.

[18.66] Musa said to him: Shall I follow you on condition that

you should teach me right knowledge of what you have been taught?

[18.67] He said: Surely you cannot have patience with me:

[18.68] And how can you have patience in that of which you have not got a comprehensive knowledge?

[18.69] He said: If Allah pleases, you will find me patient and I shall not disobey you in any matter.

[18.70] He said: If you would follow me, then do not question me about anything until I myself speak to you about it.

[18.71] So they went (their way) until when they embarked on a boat, he made a hole in it. (Musa) said: Have you made a hole in it to drown its inmates? Certainly you have done a grievous thing.

[18.72] He said: Did I not say that you will not be able to have patience with me?

[18.73] He said: Blame me not for what I forgot, and do not constrain me to a difficult thing in my affair.

[18.74] So they went on until, when they met a boy, he slew him. (Musa) said: Have you slain an innocent person otherwise than for manslaughter? Certainly you have done an evil thing.

Sadaqaallahu Azim --- Allah, The Almighty, speaks the Truth

In the Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

[18.75] He said: Did I not say to you that you will not be able to have patience with me?

[18.76] He said: If I ask you about anything after this, keep me not in your company; indeed you shall have (then) found an excuse in my case.

[18.77] So they went on until when they came to the people of a town, they asked them for food, but they refused to entertain them as guests. Then they found in it a wall which was on the point of falling, so he put it into a right state. (Musa) said: If you had pleased, you might certainly have taken a recompense for it.

[18.78] He said: This shall be separation between me and you; now I will inform you of the significance of that with which you could not have patience.

[18.79] As for the boat, it belonged to (some) poor men who worked on the river and I wished that I should damage it, and there was behind them a king who seized every boat by force.

[18.80] And as for the boy, his parents were believers and we feared lest he should make disobedience and ingratitude to come upon them:

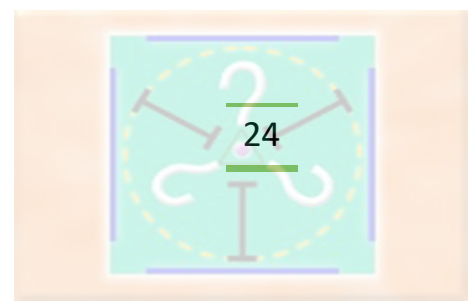
[18.81] So we desired that their Lord might give them in his place one better than him in purity and nearer to having compassion.

[18.82] And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure belonging to them, and their father was a righteous man; so your Lord desired that they should attain their maturity and take out their treasure, a mercy from your Lord, and I did not do it of my own accord. This is the significance of that with which you could not have patience.

Just as the individual who is described in the foregoing Quranic passages as being one who had been given knowledge by God

and, therefore, did not act of his own accord, one can be certain that the shaykh about whom my spiritual guide told me did not act of his own accord either. Moreover, one might do well to take the following caveats into consideration and ponder them in conjunction with all that has been said previously in this posting – namely, (1) I have had personal experiences with a spiritual charlatan -- that is, a false shaykh -- who often tried to create the impression in the minds and hearts of those who came into contact with him that he was a vehicle for manifesting jamali and jalali qualities of Divinity but who, in reality, merely manifested his own darkness and sought to induce others to interpret that darkness as something other than it was --- and, no, the identity of this spiritual charlatan is not a reference to the person who related the foregoing account but, instead, alludes to another individual altogether; (2) during the ‘End Times’ there will be one who will appear to do wonders but who actually only will be giving expression to occult powers that are devoid of anything of spiritual value such as the capacity to assist a person to realize his, her or their essential fitra or spiritual potential.

The joyous possibilities associated with the Sufi path are real. The dangers associated with that path are also very real. It is not a children’s game or merely an imaginative fantasy.



Discernment

The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is reported to have said:

“Do not attend the circle of a learned person unless that individual asks you to give up five things in favor of accepting five other things:

- Doubt in favor of belief;
- Hypocrisy in favor of sincerity;
- Worldliness in favor of asceticism;
- Pride in favor of humility;
- Enmity in favor of love.”

One could, of course, explore the nuances of what might be meant by ‘doubt’, ‘belief’, ‘hypocrisy’, ‘sincerity’, ‘worldliness’, ‘asceticism’, ‘pride’, ‘humility’, ‘enmity’ and ‘love’. For example, should one exercise belief rather than doubt when someone makes a statement that might not be true, or, should one exercise asceticism rather than a certain amount of worldliness when one’s family is hungry and one needs to work in order to acquire the food that is necessary to feed them, or should one love Iblis when the Qur’an indicates that he is an enemy to human beings, and, if in such circumstances ‘enmity’ of some kind were warranted, what quality should it have?

The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) also is reported to have said:

“The movements of nafs are more difficult to detect than the movements of a black ant on a smooth rock in the dead of night.”

Some people equate the notion of “nafs” with the ego. However, the latter term does not accurately reflect the complexity of the ‘nafs’.

To have a better sense of the subtleties entailed by the ‘nafs’, one must add dimensions such as: Desire, aspiration, negative emotion, instinct, dishonesty, duplicity, manipulation, lack of conscience, secrecy, cruelty, cleverness, exploitation, fantasy, and delusion to the sort of rationalizations, self-centeredness,

and limited forms of intelligence that tend to be associated with the notion of “ego”. We also are warned against the machinations of dunya – which some translate as worldliness – but 'dunya' is nothing but the manifestation of 'nafs' writ large in a collective fashion and through which all of the entanglements of worldly existence come into being.

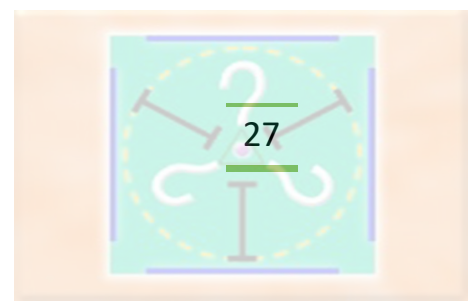
My spiritual guide use to preface the word “nafs” with the term: “wretched.” Indeed, the inclinations of 'nafs' are truly wretched for it is constantly lobbying and seeking to exert undue influence with respect to our choices concerning, among things: Doubt with respect to belief, or hypocrisy rather than sincerity, or worldliness versus asceticism, or pride instead of humility, or enmity over love.

One of the primary tasks of life is to struggle toward, God willing, gaining mastery over the tendencies of 'nafs' as it moves about within our consciousness and seeks to push us here or pull us there or orient us in one way rather than another. This is the greater jihad about which the Prophet informed Muslims – the need to struggle against the capacity for wretchedness within each of us that has been seeded into humans as a potential by God, and this can only be accomplished through engaging in a process of rigorous critical reflection that leads, if God wishes, to an insightful discernment concerning the nature and character of the dynamics of 'nafs', and its more extended and entangled form known as 'dunya', as well as how nafs – and to that extent our world -- might be transformed, God willing, to some degree.

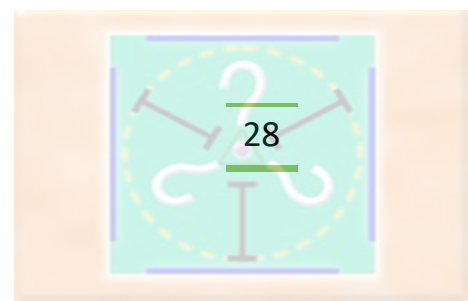
One has the opportunity to acquire such discernment if one is able to associate with a truly learned person, such as an authentic shaykh, who not only knows the difference between: doubt and belief, hypocrisy and sincerity, worldliness and asceticism, pride and humility, as well as enmity and love, but acts in accordance with that knowledge on a second-by-second basis.

Human beings tend to absorb something of the qualities of the individuals with whom they associate. This is why one should choose carefully the sort of circle in which one sits or

interacts for a stone that spends its time in an outhouse smells differently than a stone that spends its time in a rose garden.



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Different Kinds of Knowledge

When I was a high school freshman and sophomore, I participated in an experimental educational program that was sponsored by the Maine Department of Education. The program had two courses -- one dealt with science, while the other course covered topics in mathematics.

The program was one of many nation-wide responses to the fact that Sputnik had been launched several years earlier. As a result, Americans had entered into a catch-up modality of existence.

From time to time, students from different schools in the region that were participating in the experimental program would come together for presentations and discussions. This was done in conjunction with an itinerant instructor who served as a supplemental resource for the television shows that were being produced in science and mathematics and which all the participating students were watching on a weekly basis.

During one of those gatherings, the instructor posed to the class a question concerning infinity. I volunteered to answer the question and indicated that there were different kinds of infinity, and the teacher replied words to the effect that someone had been doing some reading, which, in fact, was true because at some point prior to that class I had taken a look at a book that had explored different ideas concerning a mathematical approach to the notion of infinity.

Fast forward a decade, or so, later – a time that coincided with the very early days of my stepping onto the Sufi path. This was prior to my becoming initiated a year or more later.

On Christmas Eve, I met with the individual who would become my shaykh. The meeting took place in what was one of the first mosques in Toronto, and I seem to recall that it occurred somewhere during the last ten days of Ramadan.

However, at the time I had not begun to observe the five pillars of Islam. Or, at least, I had not, yet, begun to observe the process of fasting.

I was taken to a spot toward the center of the main floor of the mosque where no one else was present or engaged in any sort of activity. After we sat down, I was given instructions for observing a certain zikr or form of remembrance, and as I began doing the zikr, a state came upon me that was quite pronounced.

I didn't know what was happening. Nonetheless, although inwardly things were transpiring in a strange way, outwardly I don't believe I was showing any indication of what was taking place within me.

I continued doing the zikr in the company of the shaykh. The session went on for an indeterminate period of time, and the state that had descended upon me continued on as well.

At some point, we stopped doing the zikr. The aforementioned state continued on for a while after we stopped and, then, gradually subsided altogether. I didn't mention anything to the shaykh about what had, or was, happening.

I can't tell you why I proceeded in the foregoing fashion. I suppose I was trying to get my head around what was transpiring, and I really had no reference point from the rest of my life that would provide guidance with respect to how to handle the situation.

Mystical experience of any kind had not been a part of my life or, to the best of my understanding, part of the life of anyone that I knew prior to that time, despite having lived in several cities in Maine as well as several cities in Massachusetts, lived for a time in New York City, and had lived in several cities in Canada. This was the case despite the fact that while I had been moving about here and there, I had met a fair number of individuals – both students and non-students, both religious and non-religious.

I stayed with the shaykh for some time following the zikr session. However, prior to coming to the meeting, I had come across information earlier in the day that one of my favorite science fiction movies – *'The Day The Earth Stood Still'* – was going to be shown later that night on a local television station, and since this was prior to having any means to record the

program, I chose, at some point, to leave the meeting and asked for permission to do so.

The shaykh looked at me in what seemed to be a sort of strange way and said: "Are you sure?" I, then, answered in the affirmative, and, thus, the meeting came to an end.

Through the zikr I was, among other things, being called to begin waking up. Yet, my nafs was calling me to go back to sleep, and, on that occasion, my nafs was, unfortunately, the voice to which I listened. Ironically, on the very day in which – spiritually speaking -- my earth actually came to a standstill, and I say this with a considerable sense of chagrin but, perhaps this is also why I have the name Anab (that is, one who turns to God in repentance) -- I opted for a mere fictional, illusory creation concerning a similar theme -- namely, *'The Day The Earth Stood Still.'*

Some years later – but a number of months after my initiation – I mentioned the previous experience to my shaykh. He explained to me some of its meaning, but because I was still spiritually groggy while trying to wake up a little, I wasn't quite sure what to make of what he told me.

Nonetheless, the foregoing experience has played an important role in my life. However, to help put things in proper perspective, I am reminded of a story that my shaykh once related following a Thursday night fatiha session or gathering.

If I remember the story correctly, and I might not, a person who was an initiate of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him) – a very well-known spiritual guide of the sixteenth/seventeenth century – came to the compound of the shaykh late one night causing a disturbance, yelling again and again that he had seen God. The shaykh finally managed to calm the man somewhat and asked the individual to explain what had gone on.

The man related his experience, and the shaykh responded with something to the effect of 'You silly fool, all you have experienced is the light or nur that was emanating from your state of ritual cleanliness.' The man was told to go home ...

perhaps he watched some sort of science fiction movie when he got there.

Prior to stepping onto the Sufi path, I went to Harvard. After becoming an initiate in a Sufi Order, I did graduate work at the University of Toronto.

Although both institutions are among the best schools in the world, and although many people might consider me to have become an educated person because of the time spent at those institutions and because of the people to whom I was exposed at those institutions, the truth of the matter is, however, that I learned more about myself, other people, the world, and life as a result of the 15-16 years during which I toiled in the fields of my spiritual teacher than I ever learned as a result of any formal process of education I had undergone.

Many years later, after my first teacher – the authentic one – had passed away but before meeting a second teacher who was not an authentic spiritual guide – indeed, he was a charlatan – but who played a role that helped induce me to learn some additional lessons about myself, other people, the world, and life, I went on a trip to India. While visiting one of the Sufi shrines about which I had been told, I asked the caretaker of the shrine if he knew where the ‘mosque of the jinn’ was located which I understood was somewhere nearby.

The man asked me what I knew. I said, “Not much,” and this was probably unduly flattering the extent of my ignorance.

As a result of my response, he briefly checked the sky, and said that it was approaching sunset, and as a result, he indicated that it might be better if I did not go to that mosque at this time. I thanked him for his counsel, and followed his advice.

I recall my shaykh once mentioning a saying of Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (may Allah be pleased with him). The Companion of the Prophet had said words to the effect that ‘even awareness of our ignorance is a kind of knowledge.’

Over the last 4-5 years I have been able to purchase – at a considerably reduced rate – a lot of e-books on an array of topics, ranging from: History, to: Constitutional law, quantum

physics, biophysics, medicine, psychology, cosmology, plasma physics, political theory, electricity, epigenetics, sociology, philosophy, biographies, evolution, mysticism, and so on. I have read quite a few of those works. Nevertheless, I know – with a fair degree of certainty – that in the time I have left in life (whatever that might be), I am never going to finish the books that I have purchased, but, nonetheless, I like building the library because I never know where my explorations will take me, and, consequently, I like to have research material on hand to begin such quests as soon as I can.

Notwithstanding the quality of many of the foregoing books, I realize that no matter how extensive one’s grasp of secular information might be, it all pales in comparison with what remains to be discovered in conjunction with the dimensions or realms of Being that lie beyond and beneath the purely surface issues with which secular understanding tends to be entangled.

The Sufi path refers to “worlds” such as Nasut, Malakut, Jabarut, Lahut, and Hahut. Nasut is the realm of the mortal, physical, material world, and its reality extends far beyond the horizons of what most people understand concerning the nature of the world in which we go about our lives. Malakut alludes to the realm of angels and associated realities, while Jabarut and Lahut concern dimensions of manifestation that are even more subtle and profound than that which transpires through the realm of Malakut, while Hahut alludes to the unmanifested realities of Divine Essence or Dhat.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: “Reflect on all things but reflect not on God’s Essence.” In other words, any reflection concerning the realities of the Unmanifested can lead nowhere but to error and difficulty.

My shaykh sometimes alluded to this when he mentioned that God’s reality is beyond, and beyond the beyond, and beyond the beyond the beyond, and so on ad infinitum. This reminds me of a Hadith Qudsi or saying in which Allah is said to be speaking through the mouth of the Prophet and, as such, the words inhabit a territory of significance that is somewhat between the

normal sayings of the Prophet and revelation. The Hadith Qudsi that I have in mind indicates how God said via the Prophet that: "In the beginning, I [that is, God] was alone, and I am now as I was in the beginning."

Manifestation has a reality, but it is not Reality in Essence. Human beings are made possible by the Presence of Divinity, but we are not Divinity in Essence. The manifest will always be the manifest, and the Unmanifested will always be the unmanifested.

The Prophet is also reported to have said: "God has seventy thousand veils of light and darkness; were they to be removed, the Glories of God's Face would burn away everything perceived by the sight of God's creatures." The Face of God might be experienced in some fashion through an appropriate spiritual capacity such as: Heart, sirr, kafi, or ruh, all of which are mentioned in the Qur'an.

However, sometimes, spiritual states are conferred on individuals and such conditions are independent of the spiritual efforts, or merit, of the people who are blessed with them. As an example of what is meant here, one might cite the state that was conferred on me that was alluded to toward the beginning of this essay – a state that was not deserved in any way.

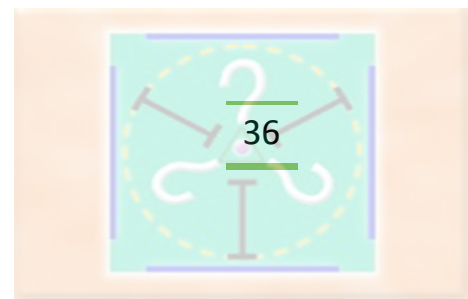
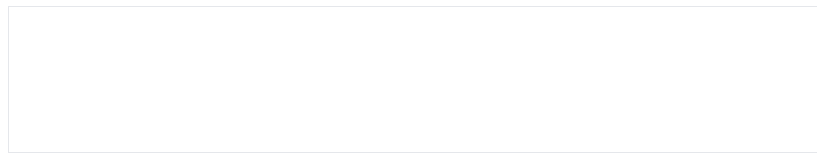
Nonetheless, for the most part on the Sufi path, spiritual travel operates on the basis of what is revealed or disclosed to human beings – usually after considerable struggle and austerities have been engaged -- via the dynamics of kashf – or, unveiling – and ilham – that is, brief flashes of insight. However, this is not the spiritual equivalent of storming the Bastille and trying to lay claim to whatever one believes one is entitled to based on this or that action.

One must struggle, as best as one can, toward God, but the gifts of tajalli – that is, the Divine disclosures that occur, if God wishes, during different spiritual stations -- must be given by God irrespective of what struggles and austerities one might have gone through. Indeed, as the Qur'an makes clear, Allah: "helps whomsoever He pleases." (and this is from the 5th ayat or verse of Surah 30, known as the Romans)

The Face of God is the outer (or inner) demarcation/boundary where, in a manner of speaking, the manifest leaves off and, in a manner of speaking, the unmanifested begins even as the Unmanifested is, has, and always will be Present and alone, while the manifest is, was, and always will be a shadowy, pseudo-reality that has been gifted with a mysterious set of capacities that have the potential – if activated – to be opened up to truths concerning the many worlds, realms, or dimensions of manifestation that are made possible by His Unmanifested Presence and to which we are invited to become sincere witnesses concerning those truths.

Since God gave me a wake-up call some fifty years ago, I continue to seek to discover the reality of 'The Day the Earth Stood Still' in my life and have sought to struggle to extract myself from its fictional, delusional, illusory counterpart to which I hurried home to enjoy so long ago. Along the way, I wish I had been a better student because so much remains unlearned.

| A Sufi Synopsis |



The Stages of Love

Some Sufi masters contend that the experience of love can be partitioned according to a number of stages that, God willing, take place over a period of time during a spiritual journey through the byways of life. One version of the aforementioned parsing process includes the following way stations - namely, (1) compatibility, (2) inclination, (3) fellowship, (4) passion, (5) friendship, (6) exclusive friendship, (7) ardent affection, (8) enslavement, and (9) bewilderment -- which is sometimes described as being in a condition of *Huwa la Huwa ...* that is, He but not He.

Shortly, a brief delineation of each of the foregoing stages will be given, but before doing so, I would like to mention there is a Sufi saying which indicates that:

“When love of Allah enters your heart and seeks nearness to Allah, then, know that: Love has contracts, so do not violate them, and love has adab or spiritual etiquette, so do not omit this, and love has rights, so do not abandon them,”

The foregoing Sufi saying should be applied to the nine stages noted previously so that one keeps in mind that certain contractual obligations, forms of adab, as well as frameworks of rights are associated with each of those stages and, accordingly, are not to be violated, omitted, or abandoned by the seeker. Consequently, each stage of love is characterized by some combination of contracts, adab, and rights.

Various individuals have marveled at the extent of the service and austerities of a seeker as the latter person moves, God willing, from one of the foregoing stages of love to the next one, but we also should keep in mind a saying of the folk of the Path - namely, that while a seeker's service to a shaykh or to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) or to Allah might be a beautiful or an inspiring phenomenon to behold, nonetheless, greater still is Allah's service to a seeker, and this service extends beyond what is already being given expression through the shaykh and the Prophet that has been provided by God. One might also keep in mind the admonition which Rab'ia of Basra (may Allah be pleased with her) directed toward a seeker who

considered his actions as being spiritually superior to those of the generality of Muslims when she said: “Thy existence is a sin with which none other can compare.”

There are a myriad number of ways of alluding to the foregoing nine stages of love. The following set of descriptions is but one possible manner of proceeding. However, none actually knows the reality of the stages being indicated except individuals who have been graced by God with the realizations to which those stages give expression.

Moreover, during the following set of descriptions concerning the nine stages of love, one might note that irrespective of whether one mentions the term shaykh or refers to the Prophet in conjunction with any of the indicated stages of love, the identity of the One Who makes all spiritual travel possible is none other than God even though adab, or spiritual etiquette, requires that one should show gratitude for, and acknowledgment concerning, the role that is played by the loci of manifestation – such as one’s shaykh and/or the Prophet -- through which God’s Grace may flow to the seeker. In addition, one’s love of the shaykh and the Prophet is done with the understanding that while much is owed to the austerities experienced, and the struggles undergone by, one’s shaykh or the Prophet during the course of their respective lives, nevertheless, the One Who brings about whatever forms of spiritual manifestation or tajalli that might occur in a given stage of love is none other than Allah.

Here follows a brief account of each of the nine stages of love that were noted previously:

(1) To have ‘**compatibility**’ with one’s shaykh, or the Prophet, or Allah is to experience a certain chemistry of resonance between that to which they call one and one’s spiritual aspirations ... however poorly those aspirations might be understood at the time of feeling the tug of that to which one is being called.

(2) To be **inclined** toward one's shaykh, or the Prophet, or Allah is to seek to move toward the object of one's focus with steps of sincerity so that one's actions begin to reflect the nature of the dynamic toward which one is drawn.

(3) To enter into **fellowship** is to begin to become more deeply aware of the need for, and value of, companionship with respect to one's shaykh, or the Prophet, or Allah as one proceeds through the challenges and trials that are entailed by one's spiritual journey.

(4) To have **passion** for one's shaykh, or for the Prophet, or for Allah is to be enveloped in, and to become increasingly intrigued by, and fascinated with, the diverse lights of counsel that emanate through the presence of one's shaykh, or the Prophet, or Allah.

(5) To acquire **friendship** with one's shaykh, or the Prophet, or Allah, is to become immersed in the healing waters that wash over, and through, one which consist of the realized truths, steadfast trust, and compassionate acceptance of existential camaraderie .

(6) To engage in **exclusive friendship** is to be committed with body, mind, heart, soul, and spirit to the essential themes that are being demarked by one's shaykh, the Prophet, or Allah as one travels along the spiritual path.

(7) To experience **ardent affection** is to be exposed to the reality of the condition noted by Hazrat Khwajah Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti (may Allah be pleased with him) when he is reported to have said: "The heedless desire the world, the wise cherish the Hereafter, I am in love. I seek naught but the Beloved one."

(8) The condition of **enslavement** emerges when one knows with certainty that the freedom to give expression to one's essential potential will take place, God willing, only when all one's hopes, ideas, beliefs, desires, ambitions, fears, and other human preoccupations are laid bare on the altar of sacrifice so that a seeker's affairs are turned over to the One Who is known to be looking after those affairs.

(9) The station of '**bewilderment**' -- of: **Huwa la Huwa ...** of: **He but not He** -- is when the tajalli or Divine manifestations are bestowed on the seeker in such measure and with such rapidity and intensity that one becomes bewildered by the constant unveiling of different, endless dimensions of possibility that are entailed by one's potential ... a potential that is made possible only by God but a potential, as well, which God transcends in every conceivable and inconceivable way, and, therefore, is, simultaneously, both He and not He.

Al Hujwiri (may Allah be pleased with him) once indicated that when the heart is veiled it is said to be in a state of contraction, but when the heart is unveiled, it is said to be in a state of expansion. In the light of his observation, the Sufi path can be described as consisting of a series of contractions and expansions as God withholds or grants unveiling of one kind or another that begins with the heart and carries on with other, inner, spiritual faculties such as the sirr (the mystery), kafi (the hidden), aqfah (the more hidden), and ruh or spirit.

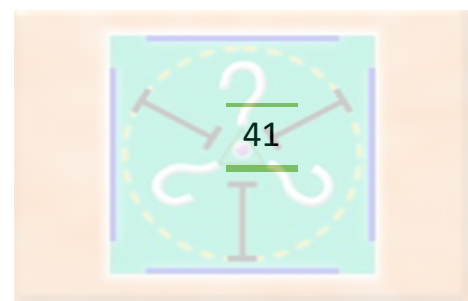
With respect to the possibility of the foregoing modalities of witnessing that might, if God wishes, occur during various stages of the spiritual journey, one would do well to keep in mind a saying that is attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). More specifically, he is reported to have said: "There are hidden gems of knowledge unknown to all but those who know God. If those gems are spoken of, none denies them except those who are arrogant toward God."

The foregoing statement does not mean that anything that might be said or thought in conjunction with such hidden realities by individuals – for example, spiritual charlatans -- who do not necessarily know the truth about what they are claiming and, therefore, if one withholds judgment concerning such proclamations that one is being arrogant toward God. Instead, the foregoing statement which has been attributed to the Prophet indicates that there are dimensions of reality which are present and that await whatever God wishes to disclose concerning them to those who conscientiously engage in the search for one's fitra or essential potential ... a potential which

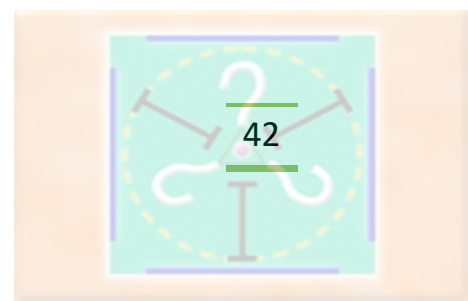
reveals the full nature of one's on-going relationship with Allah. However, until such disclosures occur, one is in a state of ignorance concerning them and to be unwilling to admit one's lack of knowledge concerning those sorts of possibilities is to exercise arrogance toward God.

To know the difference between truth and falsehood in such matters requires discernment that can only be provided by God, and, in the meantime, realization of one's ignorance concerning those issues serves as its own kind of knowledge. A healthy regard for one's condition of ignorance concerning such matters serves as an antidote to the poison of arrogance about which the statement being attributed to the Prophet warns.

The foregoing discussion provides information that can be used to resolve a two-sided riddle – namely, What meeting takes place but is not observed, and what parting is observed but never takes place?



| A Sufi Synopsis |



Mystical Science

Many people today believe that science and religion stand at opposite ends of any process of inquiry. For example, many individuals might claim, among other things, that science is rooted in methodology whereas religion is a function of theology. Or, alternatively, many people maintain that science seeks to provide hard evidence and work out rigorous proofs in support of various claims, whereas religion bases its assertions on professions of faith and speculation.

While I am quite willing to concede that there often is a great deal of truth in the foregoing ways of characterizing and comparing science and religion, I don't feel that such a perspective necessarily does justice to the discipline of authentic mysticism. Although the impression of some people concerning the nature of mysticism is that it tends to become entangled in notions of flights of fancy of one kind or another, the essential nature of authentic mysticism is quite different from such considerations.

If one were to characterize scientific methodology, one might indicate that it consists of the following sorts of procedures or protocols: (1) empirical observation; (2) the use of instrumentation; (3) recursive methodology; (4) objectivity; (5) a community of expertise; (6) experimental replication, and (7) reliable prediction. My contention is that authentic mysticism gives expression to all of the aforementioned aspects of scientific methodology, and the following discussion seeks to provide something of an overview that lends support to the foregoing contention concerning the scientific nature of mysticism when this existential orientation is properly pursued, and I will use the Sufi path as a specific case study.

(1) The empirical roots of the Sufi path come in many forms. Not only do the normal, external sensory channels provide empirical data, there are internal channels of empirical data as well.

Dreams, hal (that is, mystical states), maqam (spiritual stations), Kashf (mystical unveilings), and ilham (flashes of Divine intuition) also provide infinite sources of empirical data.

Furthermore, these internal sources of empirical data come in different manifested forms of intensity and levels of certainty.

As is true in the case of modern sciences, there is a considerable difference between the empirical character of the reports of a trained observer and the reports of an untrained individual concerning the nature of a given observation or experience. For example, not everyone who looks at an X-ray or who examines a photograph of the traces of a sub-atomic event can correctly interpret this empirical data. Similarly, not everyone who undergoes a mystical dream, state, station or unveiling – assuming the experience is veridical -- is able to understand, correctly, the empirical data to which such experiences give expression.

The Sufi path provides an intense program that trains its adherents to be competent, exacting, empirical observers. The intensity and rigor of such a program rivals -- if not exceeds -- anything which modern science offers in the way of training its own observers.

If an individual were critical of the scientific method but had never tried to engage its procedures or perform any of its experiments, or never worked with any of its instruments, then, a modern proponent of science might be justified if she or he were to say that such a would-be critic should try to acquire some minimal amount of experience concerning such matters before giving voice to an uninformed sort of opposition. Similarly, if a proponent of modern science were to express reservations concerning the potential value of the mystical path without, say, having gone into spiritual seclusion for an extended period of time in order to participate in an essential form of methodology and experimentation concerning the nature of the ego and other dimensions of human nature, then, a practitioner of the mystical dimension of Islam might well be justified in advising that such a would-be critic of the Sufi path should acquire some first-hand knowledge of the rigorous character of that tradition before trying to pass judgment on such a perspective.

(2) Modern science employs a variety of instruments in its pursuit of understanding. On the one hand, there are what might be termed "natural" instruments such as logic, reason, and mathematics. On the other hand, there are different kinds of external, constructed tools or instruments used in the detection and measurement of various physical phenomena.

The physical sciences provide different way of engaging and probing the nature of the universe. For instance, light telescopes, radio telescopes, infrared telescopes, and X-ray telescopes will all gather different information concerning the character of the universe

Like the physical sciences, the Sufi mystical path also employs a number of different instruments that are capable of exploring different facets of existence. To begin with, mysticism shares a common commitment with the physical sciences to the properties of the mind and its qualities of logic and reasoning.

In addition, according to Sufi masters, the heart (the spiritual entity, not the physical object) is the locus of gnosis, or knowledge. This provides a direct, conceptually unmediated engagement of different dimensions of Divine reality.

Another instrument spoken of by Sufi masters is the sirr or mystery. The sirr is said to be the locus of spiritual witnessing with respect to whatever God may disclose to the individual and helps to protect the heart from remembering other than, or becoming preoccupied with other than, the presence of Divinity.

A further instrument of the Sufi path is referred to as the kafi or "the hidden". The kafi is described as being the locus of manifestation for the spiritual illumination, wisdom, knowledge and understanding which comes through encounters with the Divine lights and colors of a certain realm of God's Dominion.

Beyond the kafi, there is further potential for spiritual instrumentation capable of engaging still further dimensions of Reality through the agency of the aqfah - the "more hidden". These concern certain modalities of Divine mysteries and

secrets which are breathed into the essential capacity of human beings through the Spirit of God.

Another modality of mystical instrumentation comes via the ruh or spirit. Sufi masters describe the spirit as being the locus of love for Divinity. When the potential for love that is inherent in the spirit is realized, this enables the individual to experience, know and understand life, identity and one's relationship with Divinity in a manner which is different from, but supplemental to, the other spiritual instruments of mind, heart, sirr, kafi, and aqfah.

Of course, in the matter of the physical sciences, one can be like the Church elders during the time of Galileo and refuse to look at reality through the lens of a telescope. Similarly, one can refuse to become trained in the use of, and take advantage of, the instruments to which the Sufi masters allude through which one can engage different dimensions of reality. However, failing to use instruments – whether in the physical sciences or the mystical sciences – does not justify claims that such instruments have nothing to tell one about the nature of Reality or Being.

Finally, the instruments that are used in modern science must all be calibrated to provide reliable readings. This also is the case on the Sufi path. Mystical instruments, like their physical counterparts, only produce reliable results after a process of calibration in which a variety of adjustments are necessary in the use of a given form of instrumentation so that various sources of distortion and inconsistent readings can be eliminated.

(3) Modern science employs a recursive methodology which entails a series of repetitive steps that, hopefully, permits one, to come closer and closer to the true character of some aspect of reality being encountered through experience. In effect, one feeds the results from one cycle of repetitive, methodological activity back into the next cycle of such activity in order to generate improved accuracy, understanding, and so on, over time.

On the Sufi path, recursive methodology plays a key role. One starts out by, if God wishes, cleansing, balancing and

transforming the ego or false self through repetitive cycles of prayer, fasting, charity and so on. This constitutes the first set of repetitive steps.

One takes the results from the first application of recursive methodology concerning the ego and proceeds, God willing, to purify the heart through zikr or remembrance of God. This is a second cycle of repetitive steps which builds on the accomplishments of the first cycle.

The next set of repetitive steps involves the sirr or mystery. If God wishes, through a process referred to, by Sufi masters, as emptying the sirr of other than God, the understanding of the individual is further supplemented and complemented.

A further cycle of the process of recursive methodology is encountered when, God willing, the spirit undergoes the perfection of its spiritual potential. Once again, the application of recursive methodology through a process of perfecting the spirit brings the individual, by the grace of God, to a deeper, fuller, richer understanding of different dimensions of the reality of Being.

(4) To be objective, one needs to eliminate as many sources of bias, prejudice, distortion and error as is possible. The search for truth must be freed from all forces which would compromise the integrity of that search.

Sufi masters outline two major expressions of objectivity on the mystical path. The first concerns the condition known as "fana".

Fana occurs when the false self dissolves before the Presence of Divinity. Since the false self is a major source of error and distortion, the condition of fana enhances the degree of objectivity in one's engagement of Reality.

The second source of objectivity on the Sufi path comes through the spiritual condition of "baqa". This condition occurs when the true self and essential capacity of the individual become established in a realized condition.

In a sense, baqa is a spiritual version of an unobtrusive measure. In baqa one sees by the vision of God and one hears by

the hearing of God, and so on. Consequently, there is nothing which one does which intrudes into the engagement of experience and distorts the nature of that experience, and, as a result, one is able to engage Reality according to one's spiritual capacity to do so.

In other words, while what one experiences during the foregoing states or conditions is not distorted, nonetheless, it might be limited due to the nature of one's inherent spiritual capabilities. One cannot experience or know more than one has the capacity to experience and know.

Spiritual capacity, however, does not distort or introduce error. Whatever is experienced is true and real as far as it goes. On the other hand, the spiritual experience, knowledge and understanding made possible, by the Grace of God, through the full realization of one's spiritual capacity do not exhaust what can be experienced, known or understood with respect to Divine realities by those who have been more spiritually gifted by God.

(5) The community of expertise in modern science plays an important role with respect to considerations of methodology, evaluation, and understanding. The community of expertise establishes the parameters of agreement and degrees of freedom concerning disagreement within which the process of science is to be conducted.

There is a similar community of expertise in the Sufi mystical tradition. Unlike modern science, however, the essence of what is agreed upon by the mystical community of expertise has not changed since the inception of such a community.

The Sufi mystical community of expertise consists of all the Sufi masters of the path, both present and past. All of these masters are in agreement concerning the structural character of human beings and what is necessary in order to be able to work toward the full realization of the essential, spiritual potential of being human.

Sufi masters do not always share the same understanding in all matters. Like their counterparts in the community of

expertise in modern science, not all Sufi masters are equal in spiritual capacity. First there are the Prophets, and, then, there are those who have followed, and realized, to varying degrees, the way of the Prophets, and, then, there are those who are sincerely and actively seeking the truth and might have realized varying degrees of the truth, and, finally, there are the commonality of believers, each of whom has his or her own potential relationship with Divinity.

Nevertheless, irrespective of whatever differences in spiritual capacity exist among Sufi masters, none of this affects their agreement concerning the general character of what constitutes spiritual progress on the path. One goes from: seeking, to finding, to gnosis or knowledge, to loving, to fana (extinction), and, finally, to unity concerning the relationship between human potential and Reality (i.e., baqa) .

Different people may experience these stages in self-similar rather than self-same ways. However, the essence of Unity remains in the midst of whatever differences might be present.

(6) The issue of replication is at the heart of modern science. If the results of a research project cannot be repeated by other investigators, the original research cannot be confirmed and, therefore, lacks scientific credibility and reliability.

The procedures for setting up and carrying out a given line of inquiry must be clearly stated. This is necessary so that any qualified and competent researcher can follow those procedures and produce a result which reflects, within certain allowable limits of difference, the outcome of the original research.

The process of replication is also central to the Sufi mystical path. Indeed, the nature of the mystical path is itself the process of replication which clearly has been described by all competent and qualified spiritual researchers who have preceded one on that path.

If one follows the procedures and methods indicated, then, God willing, one will arrive at the same sort of outcome and conclusions as did the original researchers. These results are

expressions of universal laws concerning the inherent nature of the relationship between human beings and Divinity.

However, just as many scientists of the physical world work under, and with, the guidance of some senior research leader, so too is this the case with respect to the Sufi path. Until a certain point of investigative sophistication has been reached, a Sufi scientist tends to work with the assistance of someone who has achieved a certain degree of scientific advancement.

(7) Finally, although not all sciences exhibit the capacity to predict, on the basis of known principles, how certain phenomena will unfold over time, mystical science does have this capability. However, for a variety of reasons, Sufi masters often will not indulge others or themselves with public exhibitions of their God given gifts to predict how events will unfold.

There are many well documented accounts of the ability of Sufi masters and Sufi saints to tell what will happen before a given event manifests itself in the physical world. There are also well known accounts of the ability, by the Grace of God, of various practitioners of the Sufi path to be able to describe, and, subsequently, have corroborated, what is going on, simultaneously, at considerable distance from them.

For example, there was a renowned shaykh who was being visited by a woman whose son had gone away and whom she was deeply missing. She kept asking the shaykh to do something about her situation, and the shaykh kept saying that, God willing, her son would return.

On a particular day, the woman had approached the shaykh on a number of occasions concerning her son. Finally, after a number of visits by that woman on a given day, he said: "Go home, your son will be waiting for you," whereupon the woman quickly left, quite happy with what she had been told.

Later in the day, the woman returned with her son. She introduced her son to the shaykh and thanked him for his assistance.

After the woman left, one of the companions of the shaykh asked the latter how he had known that the son would be at the woman's house waiting for her given that the shaykh had not left their present location all day? The shaykh is reported to have said: "There is certainty in my prayer."

Above and beyond such favors of God, there is a precision to the predictive understanding which Sufi masters have concerning the effect on the individual of different spiritual practices, or lack thereof. This understanding comes from the light of God and allows the Sufi master to be able to guide initiates along the Sufi path, with precision, as a result of that understanding.

According to Sufi masters, there are different levels of reality. The lowest realm concerns the world of corporeal bodies. This is known as Nasut.

Next, is the realm of the souls of all created things. This is the level of Malakut.

Beyond this is the realm of Jabarut. This level concerns the Attributes of Divinity.

After the realm of Jabarut, is the level of Lahut. This concerns the fixed forms of non-existence which, if God wishes, are given reflected existence through the Divine command of creation: "Kun! (Be)".

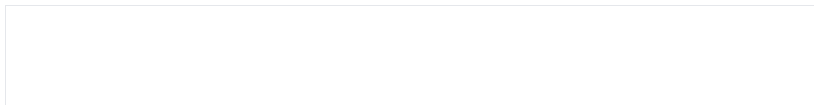
Beyond the realm of Lahut, is Hahut. This is the Divine Essence which makes all the other levels possible.

For the most part, modern science only explores the lowest realm of existence—namely, Nasut, which is the realm of corporeal bodies. Modern physical science, unlike mystical science, has no capacity to explore any of the other realms of Being.

Unfortunately, all too many physical scientists rationalize the foregoing limitation by dismissing the other realms as being irrelevant to the process of science. Mystical scientists (i.e., Sufi masters) indicate that, in a very fundamental way, such realms are not irrelevant to the process of science.

In fact, according to practitioners of the Sufi path, the very first act one must perform in order to seek the truth is to cleanse and purify the self. As such, science, of whatever kind, is, in essence, a moral and spiritual activity.

Scientific methodology has value and appeal precisely because, among other things, it gives expression to a way of trying to preserve the integrity of the scientific process and protect the results of that process from being compromised and rendered unreliable. Mystical science pursues the value and integrity of such methodology to the furthest limits of possibility for human beings.



Shari'ah

As far as I have been able to determine, the Qur'an mentions the term shari'ah just once. In Surah 45, verse 18 one finds:

"O Prophet, We have put you on the Right Way (Shari'ah) concerning the religion, so follow it, and do not yield to the desires of ignorant people;"

In Arabic, the noun shari'ah refers to a place where animals would come for purposes of being able to drink water. The related verb shar'a involves the act of 'taking a drink'. By extension, both the noun and the verb forms allude to a path, road or way that leads to the place where one might take a drink.

There is another word, shari', which is derived from the same root as the two previous words. This word refers to a lawgiver, legislator, or one who determines the law, but it also can refer to a street, path, or way.

If one combines the foregoing possibilities, one arrives at something along the following lines. Shari'ah is a way, path, or road that leads to a place at which one might drink that which has come from the One who has established the principles governing: The individual, the way, the journey along the way, the process of drinking, and what awaits the individual at journey's end.

A lawgiver need not be one who passes legal injunctions. A lawgiver might be the one who organizes a situation so that it operates according to the possibilities that have been built into a given set of circumstances. As such, a lawgiver is one who establishes the degrees of freedom within which such a set of circumstances might unfold over time.

Gravity, electromagnetism, the weak force, and the strong force establish the degrees of freedom that appear to be involved in the way the physical world is manifested under a variety of circumstances. The regularities to which these four physical forces give expression are described in terms of laws, but these are laws concerning the nature of the ordered character of the physical realm ... they are not legal injunctions.

One needs to take such regularities into consideration when seeking to pursue various possibilities, but each of the forces contains degrees of freedom that permit people to engage them in various ways. Scientists probe what is possible in this sense, and new technologies often emerge from such exploration – technologies that seek to take advantage of the properties and qualities of such regularities – hopefully, for purposes that are to the benefit of all humankind.

The same is true in the realm of spirituality. There are a variety of non-physical forces that act on, and through, human beings. These forces give expression to an array of regularities and degrees of freedom that permeate and envelop lived, spiritual existence.

Shari‘ah is a process of probing what is possible within the spiritual realm in order to be able to discover that which might assist an individual to come to an understanding of the properties and qualities to which the realm of spirituality gives expression and that might be utilized for human benefit. Just as scientific explorations of the physical world might, God willing, lead to many ways -- within certain limits -- for engaging physical regularities, so, too, a rigorous exploration of the spiritual world might lead to many ways – within certain limits – for engaging spiritual regularities and from which, God willing, human beings might derive benefit.

Some individuals distinguish two realms when it comes to the order of the created universe. On the one hand, there is that which is encompassed by what is referred to as: *amr takwini* -- which alludes to the manner in which truth or reality is given expression through the realm of existent things. In this realm, the truth and reality of what is cannot be other than what it is.

When God says:

“I have not created human beings nor jinn except that they may worship Me” [Qur’an, 51:56-57],

that is an expression of the truth and reality of one of the dimensions of existence to which *amr takwini* gives expression. As such, this truth remains a reality irrespective of whether, or

not, human beings and jinn seek to realize their God-given potential to worship Divinity.

Another expression of the truth or reality of amr takwini is alluded to in the following ayat of the Qur'an.

"The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise God and there is nothing that does not glorify God in praise, but you do not understand its manner of praise."
[Qur'an, 17:44]

All of created reality glorifies God, and this remains so irrespective of whether, or not, we are aware of this or understand that such is the case.

In fact, the whole of the Qur'an is an expression of amr takwini. Indeed, "Allah speaks the truth and guides to the way." [Qur'an, 33:4], and the way to which Allah guides those who are fortunate enough to be open to this process is that which leads to realizing the truth that is manifested through the Words that God has spoken in the form of Divine books of revelation, such as the Qur'an, or in the form of the essential realities of created existence.

The realm of amr takwini cannot be other than it is.

"The Words of God do not change [la tabdila fi kalimati Llah]." [Qur'an, 10:64]

In contrast to amr takwini, there is another Arabic term that is used by some commentators, and this is known as amr taklifi. This involves the normative realm of things, and, in fact, this realm gives expression to the manner in which people choose to acknowledge or accept the truth and realities of amr takwini, or that realm gives expression to the manner in which people choose to reject - in part or whole -- the truths and realities of amr takwini.

Shari'ah is an expression of amr takwini that has the capacity, God willing, to guide individuals in relation to the problems of spiritual navigation that characterize the realm of amr taklifi. However, having said this, one should not suppose that shari'ah is incumbent on anyone or that anyone can be compelled to submit to shari'ah.

There is no path to the truth except through truth. As such, shari'ah is a methodological set of truths that are capable, if God wishes, of leading an individual to the realization of the larger Truth of which shari'ah – in its sense as a path or way -- is but one expression.

The aforementioned set of truths cannot be reduced down to any one way of approaching the truth. At the same time, the degrees of freedom that are inherent in the nature of shari'ah are all in compliance with the Quranic guidance that stipulates:

“Go into the houses by their doors and be careful with respect to Allah, that you may be successful.” [Qur'an, 2:189]

To whatever extent an individual is able, by the Grace of Allah, to discover, adhere to, and apply the realities inherent in shari'ah, then, to that extent is such an individual able to struggle toward realizing the truths of amr takwini. To whatever extent an individual chooses to reject and/or not apply the realities inherent in shari'ah, then, to that extent will the person be kept distant, if God so wishes, from the truths and realities of amr takwini.

Some people tend to confuse the unalterable nature of the truths inherent in the methodology of shari'ah with the realm in which choices are made and proceed to try to argue that one is under compulsion to follow a given path of shari'ah. When this sort of confusion occurs, people are conflating the unalterable character of shari'ah – which is an expression of amr takwini -- with the spiritual tasks and challenges of the normative realm – which is an expression of amr taklifi – and, thereby, such people are seeking to claim that normative issues are of an unalterable and mandatory nature, as well – which is why they seek to make shari'ah compulsory.

The compulsory force that is being read into the imperative mood in certain ayats of the Qur'an often are confusing the metaphysical realities that are being alluded to through such ayats with the issue of normative choice with which God has endowed to all human beings. In other words, the Divine-ordering or determining of the Created universe gives expression to the ontological order of things and cannot be

other than it is [it has been ordained as such ... it is the truth of things], and this remains so irrespective of what human beings do or say. Nevertheless, human beings are entirely free to acknowledge, or to not acknowledge, such truths and realities.

When God says that the nature of some aspect of Created existence is such and such, then, human beings are being told something about the nature of *amr takwini* that is entirely independent of our understanding concerning those things. When God encourages or warns or urges or seeks to persuade human beings to pay attention to such realities, this is not an order, but, rather, this gives expression to guidance concerning a path that, if God wishes, might carry one to understanding the way things are.

There is a difference between a Divine decree or determination or order that gives expression to the truth of reality – i.e., what reality is irrespective of what humans say or do – and a Divine encouragement/urging to do that which is in one's best interests but that can still be resisted by a human being. The latter is a normative issue, and, therefore, it is not compulsory [i.e., it is a matter of choice], whereas the former is metaphysical and sufficient no matter what human beings might think, say, or do about the way reality is.

A person does not have to believe in gravity in order for gravity to govern what that person can and cannot do. This will remain so irrespective of whether, or not, the individual likes this aspect of the way things are and irrespective of whether, or not, the individual accepts the idea of gravity as being an expression of the truth of things.

Recognizing that *shari'ah* is the way to truth because it is an expression of the truth is one thing. Claiming that, therefore, people can and should be compelled to obey *shari'ah* is an entirely different matter and, as indicated previously, confuses the ontological realm with the normative realm.

All sin is a dysfunctional expression of the normative realm – that is, the choices we make -- concerning our engagement of the ontological realm ... in other words, the way things are. Sin interferes with the process of working toward, or realizing, or

coming to an understanding of the reality of things. Sin is problematic because of the manner in which it distorts, biases, and camouflages the nature of truth, and the path to truth, and our grasp of the truth.

“Evil is the likeness of the people who reject Our communications and are unjust to their own souls.” [Qur’an 7:177]

The communications being referred to in the foregoing ayat are not just the Divine revelations that have been sent to humankind. The communications being referred to allude to whatever words of God that might be issued through the command of “Kun” – that is, be or become – to which the Created universe gives expression.

Sin is a transgression against the Sacred Order of the Created universe in a manner that is similar to instances in which violations of the law of gravity constitute transgressions against the Sacred Order of the Created universe. There are boundaries of transgression that have been set up as the natural order of things, and if one crosses those boundaries, then, there are problematic ramifications arising out of such transgressions.

When one fails to observe the boundaries of transgression associated with gravity, then, problematic ramifications of a physical nature arise. When one fails to observe the boundaries of transgression associated with human potential and identity, then, problematic ramifications of a moral, spiritual, and epistemological nature arise as we become deaf, dumb and blind to the truth of things.

Sin is whatever gets in the way of our understanding the true reality of Being. Sin is whatever gets in the way of our ability to access certain dimensions of truth. Sin is whatever gets in the way of our doing justice to creation (including ourselves), and sin is whatever gets in the way of our doing proper service to the purpose of Creation.

Sin leaves its imprint and influence upon us, just as ignoring the law of gravity can leave its imprint and influence upon us.

Ignoring these physical and spiritual principles can lead to deadly consequences.

Sin affects our capacity to understand truth or to realize our spiritual potential and our essential identity, or to develop the stations of character that all serve as supports to the basic struggle and striving to grasp the truth of things ... to grasp the sacred order and principles of the Universe. This is the Sacred Law toward which the Qur'an is seeking to draw our attention.

Only about 500 [600 according to some scholars] of the 6,219 verses of the Qur'an have what is said to be a 'legal' element to them. Most of these 500-600 verses involve various aspects of different rituals of worship -- involving wuzu (ritual cleanliness), prayer and times of prayer, zakat (charitable giving), Hajj, fasting, and dietary restrictions. When one subtracts these ayats involving guidance concerning rituals of worship from the aforementioned set of 500-600 verses, one is left with approximately 80 verses that involve other issues such as: Contracts, marriage, divorce, inheritance, the giving of testimony, adultery, fornication, the use of alcohol, and forms of punishment.

If we leave aside the vast majority of the aforementioned 500-600 Quranic verses that concern rituals of worship and just focus on the 80, or so, verses that involve matters other than the basic pillars of Islam, one needs to ask several fundamental questions. For example, what evidence is there in the Qur'an that demonstrates that the 80 verses in question must take priority over the many other forms of spiritual guidance which are given in the Qur'an? Or, approached from a slightly different direction, what evidence is there in the Qur'an that any of these 80 verses cannot be modulated in various ways as a function of applying the many verses of the Qur'an -- which are far more than 80 in number -- that deal with matters of: love, forgiveness, patience, humility, nobility, kindness, generosity, compassion, tolerance, sincerity, respect for others, peace, harmony, wisdom, reconciliation, gratitude, and the like? Or, approached from a still different juncture, what evidence is there in the Qur'an that demonstrates that many of the specific indications being

expressed through the 80 verses in question were necessarily intended for all people, in all circumstances, across all times rather than constituting specific guidance for the people who lived in the time of the Prophet?

When God addresses people in the Qur'an with phrases such as: "O ye who believe", how do we know what the referent of "ye" is? Does it refer to just the believers in the times of the Prophet, or does it refer to all believers in all times and circumstances, and how does one know that this is the case?

Moreover, given the physical absence of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in today's world, even if one were to know which of the foregoing possibilities is true, does anyone today really have the spiritual authority to impose such directives on other human beings? How does one go about demonstrating the grounds of such alleged authority?

The spiritual authority of the Prophet in such matters is one thing. The spiritual authority of non-Prophets in such matters might be quite another issue – in fact, with respect to the latter sort of scenario, such authority might be non-existent.

Or, let's ask another question. If one wishes to treat the aforementioned 80 verses as legal injunctions that are – according to the beliefs of some -- to be forcibly imposed on human beings, then, why should one not treat as legal injunctions -- which also should be forcibly imposed upon people -- all of the Quranic directives concerning patience, love, forgiveness, tolerance, gratitude, humility, and so on? In other words, even if, for purposes of discussion, one were to entertain the idea that there might be aspects of Deen that people are to be forcibly compelled to obey – something that I believe the Qur'an clearly prohibits – why are only certain dimensions of Quranic guidance to be compulsory?

The Qur'an gives great emphasis to the importance of developing qualities of character. In fact, the Qur'an gives far more attention to the issue of character than it directs toward matters of theft, adultery, and drunkenness.

So, should one be every bit as punitive with respect to people's failure to display qualities of, for example, kindness, love, gratitude, humility, forgiveness, and tolerance in the same manner as many aspects of the Muslim community wish to do with respect to moral failings that lead to drunkenness, adultery, or theft? And, if not, then, why not -- given that the entire Qur'an gives expression to guidance?

Unfortunately, I suspect there are all too many individuals in all too many Muslim communities who might find the foregoing approach to things very enticing so that not only would one, for instance, be able to beat men if they don't have a beard -- even though nowhere in the Qur'an is such guidance given -- but such a perspective might also lead to punishing people, in some way, for not pursuing Islam in accordance with the manner in which such self-appointed experts believed that others should behave.

If someone is not kind enough, then beat that person. If someone is not tolerant enough, then give the individual 50 lashes. If someone is not forgiving enough, then stone that person.

Of course, one might want to be careful about that for which one wishes. After all, if one pursued the foregoing form of logic, then, one might have to beat the beaters because they were not being sufficiently kind. One might also have to consider giving 50 lashes to the ones administering the lashes because they were not sufficiently tolerant toward the ones they were lashing. Moreover, one might have to think about stoning the stoners because they were not being sufficiently forgiving of the ones whom they were stoning.

If someone wears fingernail polish or lipstick, or if someone does not wear hijab, then, many theologian, religious scholars, and mullahs want to punish such people. Yet, nowhere in the Qur'an does one find any authority or justification -- other than that which is invented and, then, imposed onto a Qur'an that is silent concerning these matters -- to punish people in such a fashion with respect to these kinds of issues.

One should not construe the questions being raised in the foregoing as being tantamount to advocating some form of

libertine approach to society in which people are to be free, with impunity, to be able to do whatever they like. Rather, the questions that are being raised have to do with the very complex problem of what are the permissible ways, or degrees of freedom, through which one might engage the guidance of the Qur'an.

What degrees of freedom does the Qur'an permit? Who gets to decide this, and what is the justification for doing things in one way rather than another?

What is entailed by the issue of Deen and what is entailed by the regulation of public space or the commons? Are the two necessarily the same? Is shari'ah primarily a matter of Deen, or is shari'ah intended to regulate public space so that everyone must go about the pursuit of shari'ah in precisely the same way?

Do matters such as theft, adultery, and abuse of alcohol carry problematic ramifications for society? Yes, they do.

Does the Qur'an specify what might be done in conjunction with such behavior? Yes, in the case of theft and adultery but not in the case of alcohol consumption.

Is one obligated to follow the specific punishments that are indicated in the Qur'an for theft and adultery? Not necessarily, since there might be other approaches to such issues that could be developed using principles of guidance that not only are communicated through the Qur'an but that tend to permeate the vast majority of Quranic teachings.

During his lifetime, the Prophet observed certain principles and made certain kinds of judgment in relation to the guidance communicated through the Qur'an. However, do we necessarily know that if the Prophet were physically amongst us today that he would continue to do things in precisely the same way as was done more than 1400 years ago, or would the Prophet – due to changes in circumstances, conditions, capacities, peoples, and times – choose to give expression to the guidance of the Qur'an through different ways of seeking to resolve issues?

The Prophet was given authority by God to judge various occurrences and events that took place in the surrounding community *if* he were called upon to do so.

“Surely we have revealed the Book to you with the truth that you might discern between people by means of that which Allah has taught you [or has you see] and be not an advocate on behalf of the treacherous.” [Qur’an, 4:105]

However, one is making a rather substantial inferential jump to suppose that such authority has been delegated to anyone in the Muslim communities of today.

Furthermore, people might be confusing two different issues. On the one hand, the Prophet has a role that, among other things, involved communicating and explicating the nature of shari’ah. On the other hand, the Prophet had a role that involved certain responsibilities – including the authorization of punishment -- concerning the regulation of public space in a particular set of historical circumstances.

The latter responsibilities – that is, the regulation of public space -- do not necessarily have anything to do with the former responsibilities – that is, the delineation of shari’ah. Yet, many people assume that the regulation of public space and the pursuit of shari’ah are one and the same or that the regulation of public space is but a subset of, or entailed by, shari’ah.

I do not believe the regulation of public space is an expression of shari’ah. I do not believe that the regulation of public space is a subset of shari’ah.

By pursuing shari’ah in a sincere fashion, one might, if God wishes, develop the sort of character traits (such as honesty, patience, forbearance, kindness, integrity, compassion, and so on) as well as spiritual understandings that might enhance the quality of what transpires in public space and could constructively shape what occurs in that public space or commons. However, the regulation of public space is tied to Divine guidance in a totally different way than the manner in which shari’ah is tied to Divine guidance.

One should not infer from the foregoing that what is being proposed here is that nothing should be done when problems and conflicts arise in the public space. Instead, what is being suggested is that there are serious questions of credibility or legitimacy surrounding the claim of any person in today's world indicating that he or she has been delegated the authority – either by God or the Prophet – with respect to the imposition of certain kinds of punishments in relation to various kinds of problematic behavior.

Why roughly 80 Quranic verses have come to totally dominate, color, and orient the understanding of so many Muslims with respect to how one should engage and approach the totality of Quranic guidance concerning the regulation of public space is an interesting question. There are likely to be many forces – historical, cultural, social, gender-related, philosophical, theological, and political – that are at work and that have helped to bring about the present state of affairs.

Unfortunately, the bottom line in all of this is that shari'ah has been made into a public issue when, in fact, it is a private matter. Spirituality has all too frequently been subordinated to systems of theology, power struggles, and what can only be described as a pathological desire to control and, thereby, oppress, the lives of other human beings. With only a few exceptions -- limited mostly to the Prophets and, possibly, a few others -- there ought not to be any system of leadership that seeks to have influence over, or to make impositions upon, the spiritual lives of human beings.

In fact, the prophets, themselves, did not seek to control the spiritual lives of anyone. Instead, they gave the good news, and they conveyed the warnings:

“And We do not send emissaries but as announcers of good news and givers of warning, then whoever believes and acts aright, they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.” [Qur'an, 6:48]

Guidance is not a set of legal injunctions that must be obeyed. Guidance is not a demand for obedience but is an

attempt to draw one's attention to a path that travels through, toward, and by means of truth, justice, identity and purpose.

Spirituality has become legalized in the sense that it has been reduced to being a function of legal dogmas and rules that tend to oppress spirituality rather than serve as a means of realizing and unleashing the rich potential of spirituality. Spirituality has been made a matter of obedience when, in truth, spirituality is entirely at the opposite end of the spectrum from matters of obedience.

Spirituality is about honoring – through realizing and fulfilling – the amana or trust that has been bequeathed to human beings. Spirituality is not intended to be a process through which one cedes one's moral or intellectual authority to others.

Spirituality is about coming to understand what it means to be a servant of God. Spirituality is about becoming one who creatively serves the responsibility of being God's Khalifa on earth and, by doing so, gives expression to worship in everything one does.

It is not possible to realize the amana or trust through obedience to authority. Doing things in accordance with obedience to authority removes the active and dynamic element of personal responsibility, commitment, and on-going intellectual and moral choice that is necessary for the struggle entailed by spirituality.

The intention with which one pursues spirituality should not be to satisfy authority, qua authority, but should be directed toward seeking, according to one's capacity to do so, the truth concerning oneself and one's relationship with Being and to do justice in accordance with that truth. The inclination toward obedience, qua obedience, is an expression of a person's desire to get out from underneath the burden of having to constantly be engaged in the spiritual journey in which one travels, God willing, from: What is less true and less just, to: What is more true and more just.

Sincere spirituality requires one to stand alone before God and strive to affirm [through understanding and action] the nature of one's relationship with God ('Am I not your Lord?') in every facet of life. This affirmation is not done out of, or through, obedience but is, rather, an expression of one's understanding concerning the way things are with respect to the natural order of the Created universe and one's place in that universe.

In the Qur'an, one finds the following:

"No soul can believe except by the Will of Allah, and He will place doubt/obscurity on those who will not understand."
(Qur'an, 10:100)

According to one sense of the foregoing Quranic ayat, those who choose to not believe in the truth will have doubt or obscurity placed upon them. This is one of the possible consequences that might follow from such a choice ... but God knows best.

However, one might also want to give some consideration to another possible sense that might resonate with the foregoing verse of the Qur'an. More specifically, if one fails to understand that "no soul can believe except by the Will of Allah" and, as a result, one seeks to compel people to believe in, and conform to, a certain theological or religious perspective, then, one runs the risk that doubt and obscurity about many matters concerning spirituality might be placed on the one who insists on compelling the obedience of others concerning matters of Deen.

Understanding shari'ah is rooted in direct knowledge. Understanding is not rooted in the imposition of external directives.

As the saying goes - "to those who understand, no explanation is necessary, and for those without understanding, no explanation will suffice." One can allude to the nature of shari'ah, but the only proper way to understand this sacred realm is through direct experience ... to have God take one by the hand and lead one to the place where one might drink, God willing, from the waters of Truth.



“So, they found one of our abds [abdan min ibadina] on whom We had bestowed a Mercy from Us, and We taught him knowledge from Our presence [ladunna]” [Qur’an, [18:65]

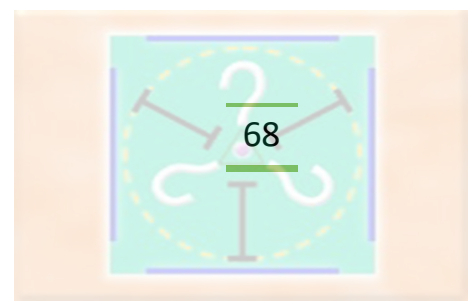
The hukm – that is, the governing authority and principles or reality – of shari’ah is with Allah. The hukm of shari’ah does not reside with aql or intellect or the manner in which the public sphere is regulated.

In fact, the way in which the public space is regulated could be totally corrupt or oppressive or embroiled in turmoil. Nevertheless, none of what goes on in the public space can prevent an individual, God willing, from pursuing and, if God wishes, even realizing the truth of shari’ah – although, certainly, what takes place in the public space can place difficulties and obstacles in the way of the person who wishes to seek the hukm of shari’ah.

What goes on in the realm of public space can problematically or constructively affect an individual’s pursuit of shari’ah, and, in addition, the extent to which an individual sincerely pursues shari’ah can constructively or problematically affect what goes on in the public space. However, the pursuit of shari’ah entails activities that are entirely independent of the sort of activities that are entailed by the regulation of public space.

Divine guidance provides insights concerning both the activities of shari’ah as well as the activities of regulating public space. Moreover, there are degrees of freedom inherent in the Divine guidance that permit both shari’ah and the regulating of public space to be approached and engaged in a variety of ways even as certain principles are kept constant.

| A Sufi Synopsis |



States, Stations, and Stages

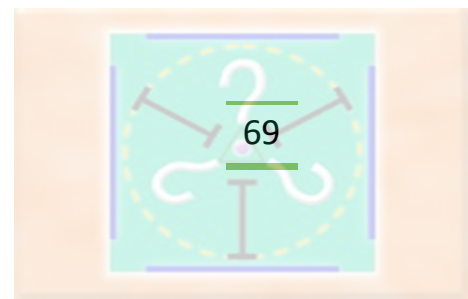
To borrow a phrase from fractal mathematics, the Sufi path tends to be 'self-similar', rather than 'self-same', when considering the experience of different individuals. In other words, since every human being is unique, even while sharing in the general set of properties which differentiate human beings from other species of being, and since the tajalli of Divinity (that is, the descent or rupture of Divine modalities into manifested form) do not repeat themselves in any self-same manner, one cannot necessarily speak of suluk, or spiritual travel, as consisting of a linear sequence of states (hal) and stations (maqam).

Different individuals have outlined the path in varied ways which reflects their own experience of suluk rather than necessarily reflecting some set of hard and fast steps which must be taken in a 'just so' order. Thus, some people say the Sufi path consists of 'x' number of states and 'y' number of stations, while other commentators say that tasawwuf entails 'r' number of states, and 't' number of stations.

In addition, there are, sometimes, disagreements about whether a certain stage of spiritual travel involves a hal or a maqam. Again, such variation in opinion are more indicative of the differences which people bring with them to the path than such opinions are necessarily reflective of 'truths' independent of human engagement of reality.

Generally speaking, a hal is characterized as a temporary spiritual condition in relation to which intentional effort of striving has not been expended or directed, and, therefore, comes as a gift of Divinity. Maqam, or station, on the other hand, is often characterized as more permanent than are hal, and, as well, are said to be spiritual conditions for which struggle and striving must be exerted in a concerted manner. As such, a maqam tends to be described as spiritual conditions which must be earned, while hal are not necessarily earned, per se.

However, since spiritual effort does not cause spiritual progress, but is, at best, a necessary condition, then, whether one is talking about states or stations, these are both gifts of God



and could not be experienced or sustained without Divine succor. Moreover, although there are instances in which individuals who are not on any particular spiritual path are recipients of Divine Grace in the form of this or that manner of hal, the likelihood of undergoing one or another spiritual hal tends to be increased when one is actively and sincerely pursuing the mystical path under the guidance and care of an authentic shaykh.

Yet, one might keep in mind that the Qur'an stipulates: "If Allah were to take humankind to task for their wrong-doing, God would not leave here a living creature, but God reprieves them to an appointed term." (16:61) So, again, whether one is talking about hal or maqam, neither is deserved but comes by the Grace of Allah.

Finally, some expressions of hal are longer lived than are other manifestations of hal. Therefore, whether one believes one is talking about a condition of hal rather than maqam may be somewhat arbitrarily decided.

Spiritual conditions share some of the same qualities as dreams. This is especially so in the sense that both dreams and spiritual conditions require the presence of insight by an experienced guide or knowledgeable and Divinely supported individual in order to properly appreciate the nature of what is transpiring through either the dream or a given spiritual condition.

Najm al-Din Razi (may Allah be pleased with him), in his book: *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return*, uses the example of fire to illustrate the complexity of the problem. Someone who is traversing the path of tasawwuf may see the attribute of fire and -- depending on the nature of one's spiritual condition -- this attribute will have a different meaning in different states and stations.

For some, the appearance of fire is an indication that the quality of anger is dominant. For others, the presence of fire may signify the light of zikr or the individual's ardor for the spiritual quest. For still others, the fire may exemplify the presence of guidance as with the Prophet Moses (peace be upon

him), or it may give expression to the quality of devilry as with Iblis. And, for still other individuals, the quality of fire may symbolize the condition of gnosis or love or witnessing. There also are additional modalities of fire which indicate the presence of other manner of states and stations.

The attribute of fire is but one of many, many qualities which might emerge within an individual's experience and serve as a tell-tale sign of a person's spiritual condition. However, as with dreams, insight is needed to understand the significance of the presence of a given quality.

Similarly, when an individual passes through stations involving the attributes of clay, water, air, fire, firmaments, heavenly bodies, the malakut (or soul) of the planets and the stars, animals, and a thousand other realms, different kinds of tajalli may be manifested according to circumstances and an individual's spiritual condition. Just as there is no reliable book of dream interpretation in which all one has to do is scour the index for a given dream and, then, proceed to the page with "the correct interpretation", so, to, there is no standard dictionary of spiritual states and stations which always are manifested in the same way across individual experiences.

I recall, once, when my shaykh talked about such matters. He indicated that in very special cases --- and he referred to such instances as being among the most supreme of spiritual conditions -- an individual may traverse the journey of suluk and not have even one 'mystical' or anomalous, non-ordinary experience. These are individuals from whom God has kept secret the nature of their own spiritual condition.

Many people speak about the alleged great differences between, say, the doctrine of Wahdat-i-Shuhud (the Unity or Oneness of Witnessing) and Wahdat-i-Wujud (the Unity or Oneness of Being). In fact, great controversies have been instigated on the basis of such differences of approach to the hermeneutics of experience, and, yet, again, I remember that my shaykh said that after all was said and done there really wasn't much difference between the two.

I might add a brief note at this point to indicate that my spiritual guide wrote his doctoral dissertation on the life and teachings of Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him). The latter shaykh was a champion of the doctrine of Wahdat-i-Shuhud. One of the examiners for my shaykh's thesis was no less an authority than A.J. Arberry who considered my future shaykh's thesis to be the best exposition of the Sufi path to be written in the English language up to that time.

Following many of his 40-day seclusions, my shaykh would set about revising and improving his thesis on the basis of what had been experienced and disclosed during the previous period of seclusion. In many ways this was a life-long project for him that never saw the light of day - that is, it was never released to either the general public or even to his mureeds.

Among other things, the process of constant revision in the light of subsequent experience is a hallmark of the path. This process of: Needing to continuously revise understanding, represents one of the reasons why a person should refrain from speaking about the path as if it were a static thing in which one can sum up its components in some simple, linear fashion.

When I first stepped onto the path, more than 50 years ago, I must confess that my head was filled, to a certain extent, with ideas of 'wondrous' deeds, powers, exalted, non-ordinary states of consciousness, and other such artifacts of ignorance. My spiritual guide had an interesting way of dealing with such nonsense.

To those who came to the path from a very conceptually-laden direction - treating the Sufi Path as if it were just another species of philosophy about which one could read, learn, and debate - my shaykh would assign some treatise of one, or another, Sufi luminary which was of such a difficult nature that the individual would soon come to the realization that he or she didn't really know much of anything, irrespective of how much that individual had read. To others, such as myself, whose heads were preoccupied with other-worldly states and stations, he would assign the book *Introduction to Islam* by Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah (may Allah be pleased with him) which was quite



excellent, but very down-to-earth, dry, and rooted in practicality rather than anomalous states, stations, and wondrous experiences.

Many people are familiar with the following prayer of Rab'ia of Basra (may Allah be pleased with her). "O Lord, if I worship Thee out of desire of Paradise, then, deny me Paradise, and if I worship Thee out of fear of Hell, then, throw me into Hell, but if I worship Thee out of love for Thee and Thee alone, then, grant me Thy vision."

Without wishing to criticize this great saint - because I really am not fit to carry her sandals (if she had any) - nevertheless, I do have a question. Why make the last part of the prayer conditional?

Is not Divinity present in the state and/or station of sincere love? Is not Divinity present in every aspect of experience, and, indeed, experience is not possible without giving expression to the underlying play of Divine Names and Attributes which makes such experiences possible and provides them with their structural character?

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "This world is prohibited to the people of the next world, and the next world is forbidden to the people of this world, and they are both forbidden to the people of Allah."

Seekers are seeking what? They are seeking something beyond what they believe to be present, and, yet, what they are actually seeking -- as a poem of Hazrat Mu'in-ud-din Chishti (May Allah be pleased with him) points out -- "God is with us night and day" ... hiding in plain sight. And, yet, we go seeking - from horizon to horizon -- for what is already present.

Instead of seeing Divinity, we see veils. The veils, of course, mark the presence of Divinity, as well, but we want an unveiled look at Divinity, when, in truth, we can only see what God has given us the capacity to see at any given time or instance.

All practices -- from: Shahadah, to: Prayers, zikr, fasting, seclusion, fatiha, hajj, contemplation, meditation, sacred turning, various forms of charitableness, service to the shaykh, and the

performance of good deeds -- have one thing in common: namely, the realization and expression of truth. Each kind of practice engages the truth, reality, Haqq from the perspective of its own form and character.

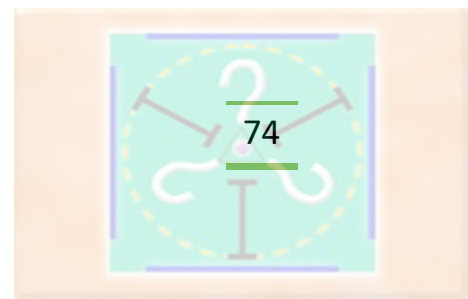
When we exclude practices, then, we cut ourselves off from ways of engaging different facets and dimensions of the truth. As one friend of Allah said, "there are many keys to spiritual realization; if one key does not work, then, try another" -- and one might add, if it is not already implicit in what has been said in the foregoing observation, one should not just try a given key once but on many different occasions, because one never knows when all the tumblers will fall into place and be receptive to the use of a given key.

Similarly, each state and station serves as a locus of manifestation for the kind of truth to which such a state or station gives expression. The truth of expansion is not the truth of contraction. The truth of patience is not the truth of repentance. The truth of longing is not the truth of arrival. The truth of love is not the truth of dependence. The truth of difficulty is not the truth of ease. The truth of chastisement is not the truth of ascension.

Yet, when one weaves together all of these different modalities of truth in the form of experiential tajalli, then, an individual approaches the fullness of truth as a limit, and in mathematics, as in life, a limit is a function which approaches more and more closely to a given point without ever reaching that point except, theoretically, at infinity. However, in the latter case, the Qur'an has something of relevance to say here: "and over every lord of knowledge, there is one more knowing." (12:76)

The truth -- reality -- cannot be exhausted. It is infinite, and, consequently, there are no set of stages, states, or conditions which can encompass the infinite.

We engage truth according to our essential capacity, fitra, or 'ayn al-thabita. We engage truth according to the condition of being veiled which constitutes our spiritual condition and degree to which our spiritual potential has been realized.



Different individuals have different capacities. The spiritual capacity of the Prophets is not the spiritual capacity of non-Prophetic saints, and the spiritual capacity of ordinary believers is not the spiritual capacity of the saints, whether Prophets or other manner of awliya. Moreover, within these different categories of human beings, there are gradations -- as indicated in the Qur'an: "We have made some of these prophets to excel others" (17:55) and, "We raise by grades (of Mercy) whom We will." (12:76)

Mind, heart, sirr, ruh, kafi, and aqfah are potentials of fitra. Consequently, these potentials cannot exceed their limits.

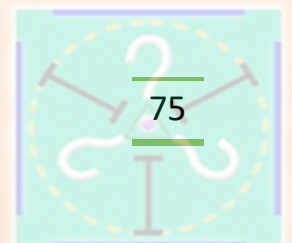
On one occasion, the son of Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him) came to the shaykh and presented to his father something of what appeared to be a conundrum to the shaykh's son. The young man indicated that he had had an experience in which he seemed to rise higher than the station of the Prophets, and, since this contradicted what was understood to be possible, the young man was confused by the experience.

Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him) resolved the problem in the following manner. He said that associated with every human being there are two points -- one marking the station of origin and the other marking the station of ascension.

He further indicated that, on occasion, the ascension of a non-Prophet might rise higher than the station of origin of a Prophet. However, in no case would the station of ascension of a non-Prophet ever rise higher or approach the station of ascension of a Prophet of God.

Thus, for each of us, the station of origin and the station of ascension are fixed within the degrees of freedom which are permitted by Divinity. Consequently, the ways in which mind, heart, sirr, kafi, ruh, and aqfah are given expression depends on the character of the fitra or fixed form in question.

Some people define heart, mind, spirit, and soul in ways which are all-inclusive. In other words, for such people, the heart constitutes our entire potential for realizing the truth, and, then, they proceed to describe different stages, states and



stations of the heart which outline the path to ultimate realization - such as: (a) breast, (b) qalb, (c) the aspect of the heart which is preoccupied with the love of human kind; (d) the fo'ad (the seat of vision), (e) the dimension of the heart which gives expression to an exclusive love for Divinity; (f) the core of the heart which involves spiritual kashf or unveiling concerning the realms of the unseen about which angels have no knowledge; and, finally, (g) mohjat al-qalb which, when realized, gives expression to the lights of Divine attributes.

Other people do this in conjunction with the nafs. For example, people speak in terms of: (1) nafs-i-ammara (the soul which commands to evil); (2) nafs-i-mulhameh (the soul which is inspired by God with knowledge of lewdness and God-fearing); (3) nafs-i-lawwama (the reproachful soul); (4) nafs-i-mutma'inneh (the tranquil soul); (5) nafs-i-radiya (the contented soul in which God is well pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with God); and, (6) nafs-i-safiya, the pure soul.

Others talk about the attributes of the spirit: (1) luminosity (with its branches of hearing, speech, and vision); (2) love (with its branches of sincerity, yearning and seeking); (3) knowledge (with its branches of will and cognition); (4) forbearance (with its branches of modesty, tranquility, dignity, and endurance); (5) familiarity or uns (which gives expression to a primordial intimacy with one's Creator and encompasses the branches of compassion and pity); (6) permanence or baqa (with its branches of persistence and steadfastness); and, finally, (7) life (with its branches of intelligence and understanding).

However one parses human nature -- and, therefore, irrespective of where in one's theoretical typography one locates such faculties as mind, heart, sirr, ruh, kafi, and aqfah -- there have been different practices which have been recommended by shaykhs down through the ages as aides to drawing out the potential of such faculties. For example, the practice of zikr is often mentioned in conjunction with the qualities of the heart -- as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "There is a polish for

everything which takes away the rust of that which is polished, and the polish for the heart is the remembrance (zikr) of God.”

Nevertheless, there are many forms of zikr, and different shaykhs go about this in different ways. Zikrs vary in length, content, whether they are open-ended (that are said as many times as one likes), or closed-ended, said aloud or quietly, as well as the time of day and circumstances in which they are said.

Moreover, the nature of zikr may not be encapsulated within a certain Quranic formula. In other words, since every event is a word in the lexicon of the All Merciful which is Self-referential, there are many ways of doing remembrance which are not necessarily tied to the saying of the phrase or ayat from the Qur'an.

Furthermore, some may suppose one can remove a zikr from the context of its spiritual ecology and the zikr will continue to operate with the same efficacy as is the case when that zikr is recited within the context of a specific spiritual ecology -- that is, having a relationship with an authentic shaykh in a given silsilah. This is not necessarily so, and one proceeds at one's own risk.

Another practice is that of muraqabah. That is described, alternatively, as a careful watching of, or over, of the condition of the heart or as an emptying out of the sirr which, when the latter is operating properly, is said to guard the heart from being receptive to any influences which are other than the remembrance of God.

Alternatively, there is the process of fana in which -- seemingly sequentially, but, in reality, these are all different variations on the same theme -- one 'passes away' in a loving awareness of one's shaykh, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and, ultimately, Divinity. There is no one way or no one set of steps which leads to the evaporation of self (small-s)-awareness.

Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him) described the process of fana in the following way. If one is outside at night on a clear evening and far from the lights of a city, one can



see the stars very clearly. But, when the sun rises, the stars are no longer visible to the naked eye due to the over-powering radiance of the sun.

Similarly, when something of the reality of one's shaykh, the Prophet, or Divinity rises in one's consciousness, then, awareness of the self disappears. Yet, the self still exists just as the stars continue to exist despite being rendered invisible by the presence of the sun.

There are many ways to help an individual to struggle toward fana. There are many ways to induce an individual to remember Allah. There are many ways to assist a person to empty the sirr of all other influences other than Allah and to keep a close watch on the condition of the heart. There are many ways to illumine the heart. There are many ways to traverse the stations of repentance, longing, dependence, sincerity, gratitude, patience, piety, and love.

How does one clean and furnish a house? One uses whatever works as long as such means fall within the code book for permissible house cleaning practices, and as long as the method of equipping the house takes into account the structural limitations of that house .

Similarly, there is no set recipe for spiritual realization, although there are a variety of general guidelines which are intended to be used in flexible ways within variable contexts. Everything depends on the nisbath or relationship between an authentic shaykh and the seeker.

Whatever is given, whatever is undertaken, the purpose is always to provide one with another opportunity to engage the Real and to revise one's understanding of the True and to act in accordance with what one knows on the basis of what has been disclosed to one through direct experience. There are many ways, God willing, of helping to transform the nafs, or purify the heart, or illumine the spirit. These ways are overlapping, reinforcing and not mutually exclusive in the sense that, for instance, what helps the heart, helps the nafs to transform, and the spirit to be enlivened, and, similarly, what transforms the nafs also has benefits for the heart and spirit, and so on.

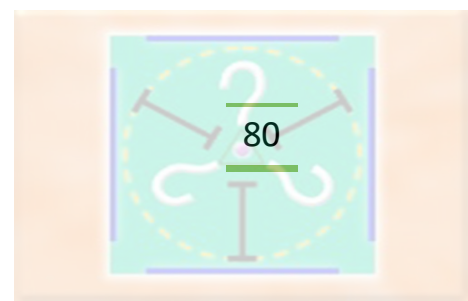
Ultimately, the only thing which really matters is the presence of Divine Grace. Talk of methodology, states, stations and stages have their place, but one should never confuse the surface phenomenon for the Realities which make such contingencies possible.

One follows the teachings and practices of a shaykh because, God willing, these have the capacity to help open an individual up to the barakah (Grace, Blessing) which courses through those practices and teachings as extensions of the presence and support of a silsilah rooted in the Prophetic tradition. These practices and teachings are the excuses which Divinity uses to extend different kinds of blessings to us, and through these blessings our understanding and behavior are affected, God willing.

Once, back in my days of even greater ignorance, I happened into a store in a rural area and, along with some friends, got an ice cream cone -- one which was hand-scooped by one of the employees of the store (an older lady). The ice cream cone I got was enormous, and I muttered words to the effect of: "Boy, I'll have to remember this place." The person behind the counter responded with: "You should remember the person who gave you the cone."

Many people think about the Sufi path as a supply depot from which one can acquire whatever one needs in the way of teachings, practices, and format in order to be able to make progress on the spiritual path. In truth, as with the ice cream story above, one needs to remember the person through whom one gets whatever one gets for it is the person who, by the Grace of Allah, makes all the difference ... not the place or the materials or the protocols to which such a place normally gives expression.

| A Sufi Synopsis |



What's In a Name?

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is once reported to have said: "There are 71 sects among Jews, and only one of them is correct. There are 72 sects among Christians, and only one of them is correct. There are 73 sects among Muslims, and only one of them is correct." Presumably, something of a similar nature could be voiced concerning: Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, many kinds of indigenous systems of belief, as well as in relation to various modalities of the so-called mystery schools.

We all want to think that whatever path we are on is the right one. However I'm not going to try to claim that my spiritual journey just happens to be fully compliant with the correct one alluded to in the foregoing.

I have tried hard to search for the truth, but Allah knows best what the reality of my situation is. Nonetheless, I can say with certainty that whatever my shortcomings might still be -- and I am sure that they are many -- my life is better than it otherwise would have been and become had it continued on the path I was on prior to becoming initiated, by the Grace of Allah, through my first shaykh.

On the other hand, as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has been reported to indicate: "The movements of nafs are more difficult to detect than the movements of a black ant on a smooth rock in the dead of night." How much does one miss concerning the truth as a result of the machinations of nafs which through a network of desires, negative emotions, problematic motivations, and impulsive, ill-considered intentions constantly creates a variety of emotional, psychological, conceptual, social, and spiritual blind-spots, if not existential sink holes?

Plus, let's add to the contributions of an individual's nafs, the forces of dunya (which is the chaos generated by the manner in which the complex dynamics of our collective nafs interact with one another to generate a dysfunctional society) and, then, mix those dynamics with the constant entreaties of the shaytans that are urging human beings to pursue what is not in our best

interests. Nafs, dunya, and shaytans are an unholy alliance constantly seeking to induce us to pursue things other than the truth concerning the essential nature of our relationship with Being, and if we are honest with ourselves, there are all too many times when we take a whipping from that alliance.

Even if we are fortunate enough, by the Grace of Allah, to win more of the foregoing battles than we lose, it has been said that the sins of the elect are the virtues of those who are less spiritually endowed. As a result, even if we believe we are doing well, this belief might only be because we have become intoxicated with a spiritual orientation which is nothing more than something which reverberates and resonates with the sins of the elect.

The foregoing consideration reminds one of the account that is associated with the life of Hazrat Rab'ia (may Allah be pleased with her) who was reported to have been walking with a Sufi of some accomplishment on the side of a hill overlooking Basra. The latter individual looked upon the city below them and remarked that most of the people of that city did not keep their fasts or observe their prayers.

The man went on to indicate that he had never missed a fast or prayer in his life. Hazrat Rab'ia (may Allah be pleased with her) is reported to have given the man a hard look and said: "Thy existence is a sin with which none other can compare."

There are those who maintain that the Sufi path is a sort of technology which entails a methodology which, if followed, leads to spiritual realization concerning, among other things, essential identity. Hazrat Bayazid Bistami (may Allah be pleased with him) indicates otherwise when he is reported to have said: "The Thing we tell of can never be found by seeking, but only seekers find it," indicating that the sine qua none of the Sufi path is God's Grace, for as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "Many are those among you who fast and, yet, gain nothing from it except hunger and thirst, and many are those who pray throughout the night and, yet, gain, nothing from it except wakefulness." Presumably, one might add that there are many who give zakat but acquire nothing but a

lessening of their bank account, or who go on Hajj and gain nothing but a trip, or who utter Shahadah and gain only the sound of their own voice.

Irrespective of what one's efforts might be, God is under no obligation to grant one spiritual realization. We are completely dependent on God's Mercy for, as the Qur'an indicates: "O people, you are the poor towards God, and God is the Independent and Praiseworthy." (35:15)

Whatever our rizq (or provision) might be, it is from Allah. We should be grateful for what comes to us, including the desire to seek the truth and worship the truths that are disclosed to us ... whether these truths be simple or profound, and whether these truths come via ease or hardship.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "All people are doomed to perish except those of action, and all people of action will perish except for the sincere, and the sincere are at great risk." As the Qur'an reminds us: "We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, being afraid thereof, and man accepted to bear it. He is, indeed, extremely oppressive and ignorant." (33:72) Again from the Qur'an: "And surely we shall test you with some fear and hunger and loss of wealth and lives and crops, but give glad tidings to the steadfast, who say when misfortune strikes them: surely to Allah we belong and to Allah we are returning." (2: 155-156). Claims to sincerity will always be tested.

There are many people today -- both within the Muslim and Christian communities -- who talk about human beings having been created in the image of God. One should ask what the nature of an "image" is for it is neither God, nor other than God.

In one Hadith Qudsi -- that is words which are uttered through the mouth of the Prophet, but which are said to be the words of God rather than those of a man and, yet, what is said does not constitute revelation -- the following statement is reported to have been said: "In the beginning, I was alone, and I am now as I was in the beginning." In another Hadith Qudsi, the

following words were reported to have been said: "I am Ahmad without meem (m)." In other words, God is Ahad.

Reflect on the foregoing. God is saying that God was alone in the beginning, and God is now as God was in the beginning. God is Ahad -- the One, the Singular, the Only, the Alone.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is said to have cautioned people to: "Reflect upon all things but reflect not on God's Essence." The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is also reported to have said: "I have been given all the Names and have been sent to perfect good behavior."

We can reflect on the Names -- that is, we can reflect on all of the different levels of manifestation made possible by the way in which Nur, Divine Light, is defracted through the prism of the Names of Allah -- but we cannot reflect on the Essence or Dhat of God. The image of God is to be found in the Names and not in the Divine Essence for although in essence we human beings might be Divine, we are not Divinity in Essence.

Indeed, as the Qur'an indicates: "God appointed for you stars that you might be guided in the darkness of the land and the sea." (6:97) The Qur'an also states: "And God taught Adam all of the Names, then, showed them to the angels, saying: Inform me of the names of these, if ye are truthful. They said: Be glorified! We have no knowledge saving that which Thou hast taught us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Knower, The Wise. God said: O Adam! Inform them of their names. God said: Did I not tell you that I know the secret of the heavens and the earth?" (2:31-33).

The Names of Divinity give active expression to the Divine Presence. Nonetheless, one cannot reduce the latter to the former, for if this were the case -- that is, if the Names and Essence were identical -- then, to reflect on the Names (which is encouraged by God throughout the Qur'an) would be forbidden since, as stipulated earlier, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said that one should not reflect on the Divine Essence.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "All of the Revealed Books are contained in the

Qur'an. And, the meaning of the Qur'an is contained within Surah al-Fatihah. And, the meaning of Surah al-Fatihah is contained in Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem, and the meaning of Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem is contained in Bismillah, and the meaning of Bismillah is contained in the dot beneath bey (b)." Look for the image that gives expression to the fitra or essential nature of human beings in the dot beneath bey in Bismillah. Names are Names, but Essence is beyond all Names even as Names give testimony to the Presence of Essence or Dhat.

Earlier in this commentary, reference was made to my first shaykh. I have had two shaykhs – the first one was authentic and the second individual was a spiritual charlatan, and while the second "guide" might have been an imposter, nonetheless, I learned some valuable lessons through my association with him.

When my first shaykh passed away in 1988 I knew that I needed more guidance, and I knew that such an understanding of my unfinished spiritual condition was a sincere assessment of my condition. However, as indicated previously, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has indicated that "the sincere are at great risk." Part of that risk is that one's intentions will be rigorously tested.

Although, by the Grace of Allah, this unworthy individual had been permitted to spend considerable time in the company of a true saint of the 20th century and, thereby, had been provided with numerous opportunities to serve God through him, nonetheless, following the passing away of my guide, I was prepared to start all over again if I were to be fortunate enough to find another shaykh. There were no expectations on my part that I would be entitled to be given some sort of spiritual intimacy with another shaykh as had been the case with my first spiritual guide. I was just ready to learn whatever I could.

After several false starts, my life was brought into contact with someone who -- on the surface -- seemed to be a genuine shaykh. That individual could quote a seemingly endless litany of appropriate Hadiths and Quranic passages at the time that circumstances appeared to call for such words, and, as well, he

could speak authoritatively on the history of the Sufi tradition and offer an endless stream of anecdotes that brought different dimensions of the spiritual journey to the attention of those who listened to him. I report the foregoing in the manner that I have because I had been listening to my first shaykh for nearly sixteen years and could see how what the second shaykh was saying reflected -- at least on the surface -- what the first shaykh had been saying, but words are like icebergs which have a small, visible portion that is rooted in a reality which lies beneath the surface and is capable of giving surface words an impetus that is a function of the properties and qualities of the kind of reality which lies beneath the surface of spoken words.

The second “shaykh” was charismatic, had a great sense of humor, and was very approachable. On a number of occasions, I witnessed the way the second shaykh was able to induce fundamentalist oriented individuals to alter their approach to Islam, and this transformation often took place within a matter of hours, if not sooner.

At a certain point, after having had the opportunity to listen to the second “shaykh”, ask him questions, and watch how he interacted with a wide variety of individuals under an array of circumstances, I sought initiation. Upon being initiated – and none of what follows had so much as been hinted to me prior to initiation – I was made a “shaykh” and informed about an important role that I was to serve in the West -- a role that my new shaykh had been instructed about (allegedly) -- by his own shaykh a number of years previously.

I began – as a result of having been assigned to do certain things by my second “shaykh” -- to give talks, initiate mureeds, and undertake different tasks in Canada, the United States, and England. There were other presumptive “shaykhs” in North America with whom I came in contact that appeared to acknowledge that my second “shaykh” was the real deal.

However, to make a longer story much shorter, after about a decade of service, I was exposed to incontrovertible evidence that the second “shaykh” who was referred to as Baba, or spiritual father, was engaged in an array of unacceptable

behaviors which were destroying people's lives -- including my own life. Among other things, the individual was a sexual predator.

Some people who hear the foregoing might ask: "Well, if your first shaykh was authentic and a saint, why didn't he step in and help you in some way." In truth, such help was extended to me several times. Once was in the form of a dream in which my first shaykh came to me and told me that I was travelling in the wrong, spiritual direction.

However, while I was quite prepared to accept the idea that I was making mistakes and needed to do some sort of course correction, I chose to ask the wrong person about what the dream might mean in specific terms. In other words, I went to the second, physically living "shaykh" and mentioned the dream in which my previous shaykh had indicated that I was journeying in the wrong direction, and, of course, the individual to whom I told the dream was a master of spinning things and spin he did. As I reflect upon that incident and, by the Grace of Allah, having gained some emotional distance from that time, the irony of that set of circumstances has not been lost on me.

In addition, prior to the foregoing incident and before I came into contact with the individual who would turn out to be a spiritual charlatan, I also had been given another warning by my first shaykh -- the one who had passed away. More specifically, there was a Sufi gathering that was taking place and at that gathering someone else who had been a mureed of my first shaykh indicated to me that he had had a dream in which our shaykh had instructed him to tell me to look out for two wolves.

I subsequently came in contact with a number of individuals who turned out to have the qualities of a wolf. Consequently, I had a little difficulty distinguishing between the wheat and the chaff when it came to identifying which of the people I met were the two wolves to which my first shaykh was trying to draw my attention. As a result, by the time I came into the company of the second "shaykh", I thought -- incorrectly -- that I already had been exposed to, and managed to free myself from, individuals who seemed to fit the description of the sort of individuals

about which my shaykh had warned me in the dream of a friend that had been conveyed to me.

Notwithstanding the foregoing missteps, and despite being a little slow on the uptake with respect to the understanding that was necessary to realize some of the truth of what was transpiring, I did come across the evidence that was needed to break free from the second, alleged “shaykh” -- the spiritual charlatan. Moreover, without going into details, the realization has gradually dawned on me over time that the spiritual charlatan had been trying to destroy me and my life for quite some time, including doing things behind my back that were intended to isolate me from my family and friends.

Although there have been many truths that, gradually, have surfaced as a result of those ten years in the spiritual desert, the learning process has been soaked with considerable pain. However, life is not just about the jamali names of Divinity -- the names of ease, bounty, beauty, and mercy, because, whether one likes it or not, life is also about being exposed to the jalali names as well ... the names of rigor, severity, and hardship.

The aforementioned spiritual charlatan induced many people to lose their faith. Yet, irrespective of whatever role spiritual charlatans play in the lives of people, the choice of what one does with the events that come into one’s life – whether one refers to them as being “good” or “bad” -- always belongs to the individual.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: “Knowledge is of two kinds: Formal knowledge which does not go beyond verbal profession. It is the evidence of God against those people who profess such knowledge, and according to it, God will judge them; and, genuine knowledge, which is deep rooted in the heart -- this is the knowledge which is most useful.”

God has provided me with bits of genuine knowledge that were derived from the time I spent in the company of a real shaykh. God also has instilled genuine knowledge in me that arose, like a phoenix, from the ashes of my relationship with the false “shaykh”.

The Qur'an informs us that: "If Allah were to take humankind to task for their wrong-doing, God would not leave here on a living creature, but God reprieveth them to an appointed term." (16:61) I have tried to learn as much as I can about the nature of my own wrong-doing in the time that has been reprieved to me by God, and both of the aforementioned shaykhs, each in his own inimical way, has helped me to become aware of my mistakes and, slowly, with the help of Allah, I have sought to move in the direction of seeking to realize my fitra and away from ceding my agency to the influence of nafs, dunya, shaytans, and a false shaykh.

Back in the late 1960s, early 1970s, I remember coming across a book and a set of records by Baba Ram Das who, previously, had gone under the name: Richard Alpert. He, along with Timothy Leary, had been professors of psychology at Harvard when I was there, and during that time they both were fired from their jobs for experimenting with psilocybin as well as a few other consciousness-bending substances. A few years later Alpert wrote a book, accompanied by a set of records, called: *Be Here, Now*.

I had listened to the recordings and was quite moved by them, and, as a result, began to explore various mystical ideas and practices. My journey traversed a different path than his did, but, I tend to think that we both have been trying to move in the general direction of essential truths.

The series of words: "Be Here, Now" trips so easily off the lips, and, yet, to really understand what it is to "Be" and what the nature of the "Here" and the "Now" are, is profoundly difficult. The depth of the significance of that statement runs into the Unseen, for, as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "Truly, the Qur'an has an outward and an inward dimension, and so on up to seven dimensions," and, therefore, to properly understand what is entailed by the notion of "Be Here, Now," from a Sufi perspective, one would need to travel to the most inward dimension - the seventh level -- of the Qur'an ... and, maybe, beyond.

As the Qur'an indicates: "... if all of the trees in the earth were pens and the sea, with seven more seas to help it (were ink), the words of Allah could not be exhausted." (31:27) Or, approached in another way, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "God has seventy thousands veils of light and darkness; were they to be removed, the Glories of God's face would burn away everything perceived by the sight of God's creatures."

We spend our lives sailing through the mysteries of those seventy thousand veils. We try to learn the intricacies of spiritual navigation that will enable us to find the way back to our essential selves and the truth of the nature of our relationship to the One Who has thrown us into the many currents of life.

At the beginning of this commentary, I referred to the Prophetic saying that includes the stipulation that: "there are 73 sects among Muslims, and only one of them is correct". The considerations put forth throughout the present commentary allude to why there are so many paths that might be followed which will lead toward, or to, one of the 72 incorrect sects, and, how although the one correct way might be steeped in considerable mystery, yet, nonetheless, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) confirmed its reality when he is reported to have said: "There are hidden gems of knowledge unknown to all but those who know Allah. If they are spoken of, none denies them except those arrogant toward Allah."

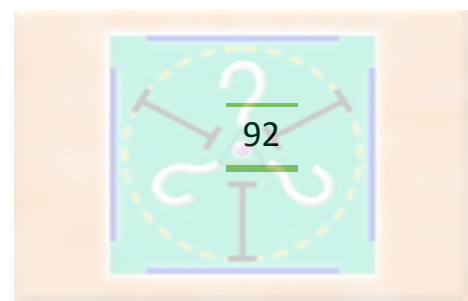
My first shaykh knew of such gems but was very guarded in his speech concerning them. My second "shaykh" -- the spiritual fraud -- did not know such gems but tried to speak as if he did, and, as a result, was thoroughly ensconced in one of the 72 incorrect ways of engaging Islam.

The present podcast will be my last in the Sufi Reverberations series -- at least for the foreseeable future. I started these presentations not because I was a shaykh but because I wanted to share whatever I could that might offer a form of remembrance and support for whomever might happen

onto the presentations while travelling through the darkness which is growing all about us. Indeed, as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "Verily, God doth not take away knowledge from the hands of Divine servants, but taketh it by taking away the learned, so that when no learned people remain, the ignorant will be placed at the head of affairs. Causes will be submitted to their decision, and they will pass sentence without knowledge, and they will err themselves, and lead others into error." These are the times in which we live.

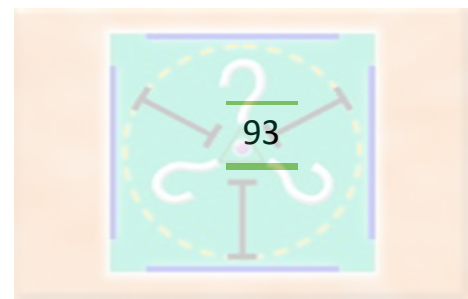


| A Sufi Synopsis |



| A Sufi Synopsis |

Synopsis 2: Vignettes from the Journey



How does one thank people who have, by the Grace of Allah, changed one's whole life in innumerable ways? Just as the letters BC and AD, or the more religiously neutral notation of BCE and CE, are intended to make reference to historical eras that differ in certain ways, so too, the character of events prior to meeting my spiritual guide and the sorts of events which ensued following that meeting make reference to two periods of time in my life that are, in many ways, very different from one another.

What follows is really just a series of surface vignettes that allude to deeper themes because, for the most part, the two people to whom I am referring, are, at least for me, very much like icebergs in which one sees a certain amount of what is visible above the water line of phenomenal experience, but beneath that line of visibility lies a vast realm of reality that gives expression to much more of the truth concerning the individuals being considered than can be captured by a few experiences here and there. Yet, those few surface experiences have a resonance about them which radiate something of that which is unseen, and as limited as such experiences might be, mentioning them is a way of saying thank you because sincere gratitude is present in what is being remembered here.

Let's begin with an account of how I came to meet my spiritual guide or shaykh. A couple of years prior to the aforementioned event, I had graduated from college and decided to migrate to Canada to protest the war in Vietnam.

During the two-three year period prior to meeting my spiritual guide, I became interested in mysticism and began to read widely in the subject. There was a bookstore specializing in such materials that was on College Street, just off Spadina Avenue, not too far from the University of Toronto.

The bookstore was owned by a husband and wife who had become committed to the Buddhist spiritual tradition and, initially, the bookstore featured mostly books concerning various dimensions of Buddhism. Eventually, however, the store branched out and began to offer material from just about any sort of mystical or spiritual tradition one cared to mention.

The reason why I began visiting their establishment had to do with my search for books by, and on, Gurdjieff that, sometimes, were available through the store. Occasionally, I might peruse the establishment's several rooms that were filled with an amazing array of books and buy this or that volume that appealed to me but were not connected with Gurdjieff.

At some point I found out about a Gurdjieff group that existed in Toronto and made contact. Soon, I was attending some of the meetings and, at one session, got to listen to, and interact a little, with Madame Walsh who, along with her physician husband, had been associated with Gurdjieff when he lived in France.

On one of my many trips to the aforementioned bookstore, I came across a book entitled: *The Teachers of Gurdjieff* by Rafael Lefort, a person of uncertain provenance because the name was a pseudonym, and there were different theories about who the author actually might be. Putting aside the issue of the identity of that individual, I read the book and discovered that among the teachers of Gurdjieff were some individuals known as Sufis.

The term was unfamiliar to me. As a result, I went back to the previously indicated bookstore and began to look for materials concerning the Sufi path.

There was very little that was present on the store's shelves concerning this topic. I bought what I could and began to read.

Although some of the books I engaged indicated that Sufism was a spiritual discipline that could not be tied to any particular religious tradition, there were other books I purchased which described the Sufis as proponents of the mystical dimension of Islam.

I knew almost nothing about Islam. In fact, the only memory I had that might be connected with Islam involved a job that took place one summer between college semesters at a psychiatric facility just outside Boston. Among the individuals who stayed at the facility where I worked was a Muslim.

The only thing I remember about him -- I had no direct interaction with him -- is that he often seemed to be very clean

and seemed to wash up fairly frequently. I subsequently learned that this latter characteristic had to do with the process of ritual ablution.

As I began to read more about Islam and the Sufi path, I was still attending the weekly meetings sponsored by the Toronto Gurdjieff group. Although I wasn't unhappy with what was transpiring in conjunction with the group and even though I had made a few friends through the group, nevertheless, gradually my mind and heart seemed to be becoming more inclined toward some of the ideas that I was encountering in the books on Islam and the Sufi path that I was reading, and, as a result, eventually, I began wondering about how one might go about meeting a Sufi, or better yet, a Sufi spiritual teacher.

Going back in time a little while continuing with the story of how I met my shaykh, I should note that a couple of months after I had migrated to Canada I was hired to be co-director of a house that was intended to offer services – including room and board – to homeless street youth, as well as teenagers who were, or had been, detained in one way or another for past legal problems. The job lasted for about six months, or so, before the funding ran out, and, as a result, I had to go in search of another form of gainful employment.

Through one means or another, I found out about a possible position that was similar to the job that had just ended. The agency running the operation, however, was set up in a city just outside of Toronto.

I contacted the people running the program and received an interview appointment. When I showed up, there were quite a few people who were in line waiting to be interviewed.

While waiting for my name to be called, I started talking with a high school-aged young man who was sitting nearby. He was a really smart kid and knew an amazing amount about a variety of issues, including both Gurdjieff in particular and mysticism in general.

We talked for quite some time before my name was called for my interview. I didn't get the job, but, eventually I was able

to find a job within the Counseling Center at York University where I did some research, helped out with a reading program, did a little counseling, and helped conduct a few sensitivity training groups.

I later applied to, and was accepted, by the psychology department at York. In addition, I became a don at one of the colleges and taught a tutorial in transpersonal psychology.

However, some promises had been made to me about what I could do within the graduate psychology program in which I was enrolled, and when those promises were not honored subsequently, I withdrew from the program. I finished out my responsibilities as a don and tutorial instructor and, then, began working in the bookstore at York University.

I started out as just a clerk stocking shelves and running errands. Eventually, I became a textbook buyer for humanities courses that were being offered at the university.

Although I could – and, sometimes, did -- order books through my place of employment, I still liked to visit the spiritual-oriented bookstore in downtown Toronto and enjoyed browsing through the latter store's selection of materials. I had been visiting that bookstore for several years, usually on a weekly basis, was somewhat familiar with the people who owned the store as well as those who worked there, and sometimes became engaged in conversations with those individuals, and some of the other customers, about different aspects of spirituality.

The store was not that big, consisting of just a few rooms of books. There was a desk in the main room where part-time clerks or one of the owners sat, ready to answer questions or to look after the financial transactions arising from purchases by customers that occurred from time to time.

Oftentimes, there were 6-10 people in the store, milling about, looking for books, and/or carrying on conversations about books that they had read or discussing topics in which they were interested. Approximately, six months after my unsuccessful, aforementioned job interview, I decided to visit

the store on a Saturday, which, normally, was a high-traffic day for people looking for something to read.

When I went into the store, there was no one present except a clerk sitting behind the desk. The person who normally sat behind the desk on the weekends was someone with whom I was familiar and with whom I often chatted, but, on that occasion, he was not present – which was a rarity.

Instead, sitting in the chair was the young high school student with whom I had such an interesting conversation some six months earlier in another city outside of Toronto. I remembered him, and he remembered me.

We began to talk, and one of the first questions I asked is: Where was the guy who normally works in the store on the weekends? I was informed that the individual who usually manned the desk was called away on some sort of task but had made arrangements for the young man to fill in for him.

We began to talk about other issues. I indicated to him that I had been reading about the Sufi mystical tradition and was wondering how to go about finding someone from that path with whom to talk. He asked me if would like to meet a Sufi teacher, and I said I would.

He jotted down a phone number as well as a name on a piece of paper and handed me the information. We talked awhile longer, and, at some point I left.

I had been frequenting the store for several years. I used to go into the store on different days of the week, and at different times of the day, but I had never seen the young man in the store previously.

After that occasion, although I continued going to the store on different days and at different times, I never saw the young man at the store again. Nonetheless, I did follow up on the lead with which he had provided me and called the number that had been written down for me, and when someone at the other end picked up the phone I asked for the name of the person that had been given to me earlier.

Unfortunately, the person I was trying to contact was off traveling in some other part of the world and, apparently was no longer pursuing the Sufi path. However, the person with whom I was speaking indicated that there was another person I could call who might be relevant to my quest and gave me a number to phone.

I later called the new number and indicated to the person who answered the phone what the call was about and how I had acquired his phone number. A meeting was arranged.

I went to the person's house at the time and date indicated. We engaged in a four or five hour discussion, most of which had to do with me listening to my host speak about Islam, the Sufi path, and his own experiences in that regard.

During the conversation, his spiritual guide called. At some point in that phone exchange, my host made reference to my presence and how I had expressed interest in meeting a spiritual guide.

A meeting with the possible guide was arranged. I was invited to have supper with him and his family.

Up until that time, my interests in food had pretty much been governed by bland tastes. I found the food being served to me to be very spicy, hot, and very unsatisfying, but I had picked up enough pointers on etiquette during the course of my life to understand that I should try to be polite and, under such circumstances, one glosses over, as best one can, whatever problems might be entailed by the food.

If my stomach was deciding matters, I might have disengaged from any considerations concerning stepping onto the Sufi path after that meeting. Fortunately, my curiosity and the attractive forces that were tugging on my mind and heart won out, and, eventually, I learned to really enjoy, among other related things, such foods.

Another meeting was arranged with the spiritual guide. This time, the get-together would be in the only mosque that existed in Toronto at the time.



The occasion, I believe, took place sometime during the last ten days of Ramadan, the month of fasting. After talking with one of the individuals who was in the mosque and who was a student of the spiritual guide or shaykh, my future guide took me to an isolated area in the middle of the main floor where we sat down and he gave me instructions on how to do a certain zikr or form of remembrance.

He led, and, then, I followed. Soon, we were doing it together.

After a very short period of time, I began to experience something rather intense spread throughout my body and awareness. This went on for a period of time.

At some point, he brought the zikr to an end. The intense nature of the condition which had descended on me continued on for a time following the cessation of doing the zikr.

A little while later, at my request and not his, I asked for permission to leave. He asked me if I was sure I wanted to leave, and I indicated that I was.

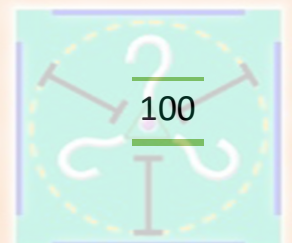
To the best of my recollection and understanding, I never gave any hint – either verbally or behaviorally -- that anything had been going on within me while we were doing the zikr. Quite frankly, I didn't know what had been happening or how to interpret that experience.

On the one hand, I was intrigued by what had happened. On the other hand, I was mystified by it as well and, as a result, I was having difficulty processing its significance.

What occurred on that occasion never took place again. For whatever reason, I didn't ask the teacher what the experience meant until, maybe, a year or two later.

At the later date, I described what happened on the foregoing occasion. He told me what the experience meant.

I believe that the aforementioned meeting in the mosque took place on Christmas Eve. It was the best Christmas present that I have ever received.



My teacher never asked me why I hadn't said anything to him at the time of the actual experience, nor did he inquire about why it had taken me such a long period of time to broach the subject. However, I theorized -- although I never asked him to confirm my hypothesis -- that when we finished the zikr and, at some point, I sought permission to leave, and he asked me whether, or not, I was sure that I wanted to go, he knew what had happened, but he let me deal with the situation in my own way.

One of the reasons why I developed the foregoing hypothesis had to do with something else that my shaykh once said to me at a later time. This took place during a conversation in which he was talking about how he had come to be a shaykh (and this will be discussed a little later on).

He indicated that once, by Allah's leave, his own shaykh had conferred the responsibilities of being a spiritual guide upon him, my shaykh would be walking down a street, and if he happened to look at someone who was walking along the street coming toward him, the whole spiritual nature of that individual would be opened up to my shaykh. As potentially unsettling as such a possibility might be to me as an individual -- given how much human beings like to keep the unseemly dimensions of our private lives private -- nonetheless, why would one want to seek the counsel of a spiritual guide if that guide couldn't see into one's soul and understand what was present -- both good as well as problematic -- and, therefore, have a direct and intimate knowledge concerning how to help a person struggle along the spiritual path?

Looked at in another way, the foregoing considerations, also hint, to some extent, at some of what is woven into the character of spiritual guides because, oftentimes, the way in which a shaykh interacts with a seeker involves a combination of how overt phenomena camouflage what is hidden. For instance, I am reminded of a Sufi story about a fairly famous shaykh who had a woman as an initiate, and, on one occasion, the latter individual passed wind in an audible fashion while in the company of the shaykh.

The shaykh pretended to be hard-of-hearing, as if he had not heard what was clearly audible and kept asking the woman to speak a little louder because he was having difficulty hearing her. Moreover, during subsequent encounters with that same woman, the shaykh continued on with the pretense of being hard-of-hearing so that the woman would never feel embarrassed by what had happened and, as a result, be tempted to shy away from wanting to be in the shaykh's presence.

My shaykh gave an account of an incident from his life which also tends to hint at how Sufi shaykhs seem to be aware of much more than they let on ... that there is often both an overt and a hidden dimension to the way in which they interact with those around them. The incident in question took place when my future shaykh – who was not a spiritual guide at the time -- was visiting his shaykh in Ajmer, India.

My guide's teacher was walking down a narrow lane, followed by a number of initiates. At various places along the lane, there would be beggars, asking for money.

As my future guide walked down the lane, he was thinking to himself that many of the beggars seemed quite fit and healthy. He wondered why such individuals didn't go out and seek gainful employment.

No sooner had these thoughts gone through the mind of my future guide, then, his teacher stopped, turned around and addressed my future guide. He said: "Dear one, some of these people are very great ... very great," and, then, he turned around and continued walking down the narrow lane.

What a shaykh knows about his or her charges is cloaked in secrecy. Yet, irrespective of whatever unpleasantness and problems concerning the seeker's condition might be entangled in such secrecy, the shaykh never treats the seeker with anything but compassion, love, and friendship.

Nevertheless, despite the manner in which tolerance, forbearance, compassion, and acceptance flow through an authentic shaykh, one should not suppose that, on occasion, lessons can't be made in pointed ways. For, example, my

spiritual guide once told a small group of initiates about how his own shaykh once taught a difficult lesson to one of his teacher's initiates.

More specifically, there are hills which border on the city of Ajmer in India. Having gone up some of these hills, I can attest that despite the presence of trails and paths, the hike requires some effort.

Apparently, my teacher's guide had wanted a young follower to climb one of the hills and either complete a task of some kind or obtain an item that the shaykh needed. The request was delivered to the young man – either directly or indirectly -- on a number of occasions without being acted upon.

At the time of the foregoing incident, my shaykh's guide was elderly. He suffered from some of the same problems that many older people experience.

On one of the hottest days of the year, the shaykh climbed up the hill and performed whatever task it was that he had been asking the young initiate to perform. After he returned to his residence, the matter was never spoken of again, but, of course, the young man came to find out what happened and not only felt ashamed for having been so impervious to his shaykh's entreaties, but, as well, was quite upset with himself that his own failure to act as requested had resulted in his elderly spiritual guide having to undertake a taxing journey under difficult climatic conditions.

The foregoing incident resonates with something that happened in my own life. I had written a lengthy report for my shaykh that critically explored a book being used as a text at the University of Toronto as well as a number of other universities and which contained a number of essays concerning Islam and various parts of the Muslim world that had been edited by one of the professors who worked in the same Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies as my guide did.

A number of articles that appeared in the foregoing book were written by various members of the aforementioned academic department, including the individual who had edited

the book. While my shaykh was occupied with a period of seclusion lasting 40 days, I wrote a report of several hundred pages that was critical of many of the essays that were in the foregoing textbook.

A short while – measured in days -- after coming out of seclusion, my shaykh informed me that he was quite happy with the report that had been written, but he also wanted to add a few things to its contents. In addition, at some point, he told me that I should remove whatever material which was in the report that concerned a particular Palestinian professor who was a member of the Department where my shaykh worked.

My spiritual guide indicated that while the latter individual usually sided with the other members of the Department who had sought to make academic/institutional life difficult for my shaykh (including trying to have his tenure removed as well as, for years, denying him the annual financial increments that by contract, were due to him), nonetheless, that man – unlike the other members of the Department, -- always had been a gentleman when interacting with my spiritual guide, and, as a result, my teacher didn't want the man's name to appear in a document that documented the anti-Islamic biases, historical ignorance, and empirical errors which were present in the said textbook.

I reviewed the material in the report and took out references to the man's name about whom I had been informed. I provided the updated version to my spiritual guide.

A few days later, I met with my shaykh. He was quite upset.

He said words to the effect of: 'Didn't I ask you to take out references in the report to such-and-such a person's name?' I acknowledged that he had.

He, then, proceeded to show me several remaining references in the report that still mentioned the individual at issue. I had been sloppy in attending to my spiritual guide's request, similar, in a way, to the manner in which the young man about whom my shaykh had once told me had been sloppy in attending to his shaykh's request.

Just as having one's guide express happiness with something that one might have done is like an exhilarating, sunny day with just the right amount of warmth and gentle breeze, so too, to have one's shaykh's find fault with something that one has done is like a stormy day filled with a fierce, numbing wind that cuts to the bone. Over the next 16 years, or so, I experienced both kinds of days on a number of occasions.

Another incident that involved the foregoing sorts of mixed elements might be relevant here. By the term "mixed elements" I am making reference to a set of circumstances that gave expression to different facets of a learning experience in which, on the one hand, my shaykh had entrusted me with a responsibility about which I felt positively, but, on the other hand, sometimes something happened that led me to reevaluate my intentions, attitudes, focus, or behavior.

For example, from time to time, there were occasions when I was selected from amongst the members of the group to carry out a certain task. More specifically, sometimes single women expressed an interest in the Sufi path and would be invited to attend various Fatihah sessions, and when this happened, my shaykh would ask me to accompany certain women to their place of residence in order to make sure that they got home safely.

There was one young lady from Turkey who was a participant in such an exercise on a number of occasions. The young woman didn't speak English well, and, as a result, I tried to make her feel at ease by keeping whatever conversation took place light.

Several days after one such instance of chaperoning took place, I met with my shaykh. He indicated that the young lady was unhappy with what took place when I accompanied her back to her residence because she felt that I was making fun of her at some point during the journey, and he asked me what had taken place.

I indicated that I had tried to keep things light and, consequently, there might have been a few instances in which I tried to tease her in a good-natured manner, but I certainly

wasn't trying to make fun of her. Upon hearing what I had to say, I was told that in the future I should appropriately adjust how I went about such interactions.

Again, a sort of sloppiness had entered into my way of going about things. I might have been well-intentioned when I tried to be light and gentle with the young woman. Unfortunately, I had failed to consider the possibility that what was light and gentle to me might not be received and perceived in the same way by someone else.

The foregoing events are not earth-shattering in their essential nature, and, yet, they are the sort of everyday occurrences that do have a problematic impact on people's lives and through which one has the opportunity to make people's lives – including one's own – better or worse. Adab or spiritual etiquette requires that one begin to, among other things, pay more appropriate sorts of attention to the way in which one is interacting with people and to struggle toward refining the quality of those interactions.

Serving as counterpoint to the foregoing sorts of disappointments involving one's mistakes and capacity for being error prone, there were other experiences that took place which were constructively informative but in very unexpected fashion. One such instance occurred following my shaykh's first major heart attack.

He was in intensive care. Only family members were permitted to see him.

Another initiate and I were worried about our shaykh's physical condition and went to the hospital to try to find out what we could. Despite the family-only restriction with respect to who was permitted to see him, somehow, my friend and I were ushered into the intensive care unit and had an opportunity to spend a little bit of time with our spiritual guide.

We didn't stay long. However, before leaving, we mentioned something about the family only restriction to him and indicated that it seemed strange how we were permitted to see him, and,

in response, he said words to the effect that we were part of his spiritual family and that things had worked out as they should.

A few years later, our shaykh had a second heart attack. After he returned home and was recovering from that heart attack, he engaged in a rigorous period of seclusion lasting 40 days in which he fasted during the day, broke the fast with nothing more than bread and water, kept the night vigil, and slept no more than a few hours a day while constantly being engaged in remembering his Lord.

A few years later, he had a third and final heart attack which proved to be fatal. Subsequently, I was told that prior to passing away, my shaykh engaged in a rather strange set of behaviors – something that he had never been observed to do previously – when he went about his house and made sure that all of the windows were closed.

Although I can't be certain, I am of the belief that such behavior was another indication that he knew that death was near. In some ways, it resonates with my shaykh's behavior when he was on sabbatical and not due to return for another four months, or so, and, yet, when he had a spiritual experience indicating that his work was done, he immediately came back to Canada and spent the last month of his life with those whom he had initiated and for whom he had been serving as a spiritual guide.

The foregoing scenario also sort of spiritually resonates in its own way with an event that took place when my shaykh's spiritual guide was near his own death several decades before. As I understand the situation, the shaykh, at some point, had been given an amulet by his own spiritual guide, and, apparently, the effect of the amulet was reported to be that if one swallowed the amulet as one was dying, then, death could be put off for a certain period of time.

Someone in the shaykh's family placed the amulet in his mouth as he was near death. The shaykh spit the amulet out and proceeded to pass on to the next world not too long after that.

Both my shaykh and his shaykh seemed to understand that death was at hand. Both of those individuals did what they deemed to be appropriate in preparation for what was about to happen. Both of them, each in their own fashion, accepted what was advancing toward them.

As indicated previously, my spiritual guide was not given to displays of wondrous deeds to which many people are often drawn and which various alleged books on the Sufi path like to dangle before their readers. This is not because such a dimension was necessarily absent from his God-given spiritual capabilities, but because, instead, he just did not seem to be inclined toward such things.

What he taught had to do with discipline, etiquette, character, and spiritual aspiration. And, as far as I understand the situation, he seemed to mirror the way his own shaykh used to go about his own life.

My shaykh was a professor at the University of Toronto. He taught courses on different facets of the Islamic spiritual tradition and the Sufi path.

Year after year, there were more students enrolled in his courses than in the courses taught by the rest of the Departmental faculty combined. His student evaluations were uniformly positive, and, yet, nonetheless, most of the other members of his Department sought to oppose him because he spoke up for Islam and refused to kowtow to the many biases that have tended to shape Western, colonial, imperialistic, and exploitive approaches to the Muslim world.

Due to my future guide's competence in his area of expertise as well as his skill as a classroom teacher, there were an increasing number of students showing up in his classes who were looking for something more than an academic way of engaging the Islamic tradition. As a result, he wrote to his shaykh about the growing interest – this was back in the mid-to-late 1960s – and invited his shaykh to come and engage these individuals, but the shaykh indicated that he was too old and would not be able to undertake such a journey.

Time passed and more students expressed interest in pursuing something beyond university courses. Again, my future shaykh wrote to his spiritual guide and asked if, perhaps, an individual who had taught Persian – someone who was not only a Sufi but a spiritual guide in his own right and someone whom my future shaykh loved and admired – might be sent to Canada.

The answer came back that, for various reasons, what was being asked was not possible. The shaykh said words to the effect of: “Let us see to whom God assigns this responsibility.”

Some time passed before a further letter was received by my future teacher from his spiritual guide. The letter said many things, but one of the noteworthy items present in that communication concerned how my future shaykh (may Allah be pleased with him) was being given the responsibilities of serving as a spiritual guide.

Almost immediately, he began engaging in periods of seclusion. Every year for twenty, or so, years, he undertook a 40-day seclusion during the summer recess and, then, often supplemented that practice with an extra 19- or 21-day period of seclusion during the Christmas break.

From time to time, my spiritual guide would mention the many letters that he had received from his shaykh over the years. My guide also said that as the years passed and he re-read those letters, more and more he appreciated the teaching and wisdom that were present in those letters.

Moreover, points in the letters that might have escaped notice by my shaykh initially, or which might not have been fully understood, eventually became clear. He recognized what a treasure-trove of insights into the nature of the Sufi path had been gifted to him in those letters.

There were not many written letters that my shaykh ever sent me during the 16, or so, years that he was on this Earth. I do recall a brief postcard that I received from him, and, an even more prized communication that was sent to me while he was in

seclusion that provided me with some instructions concerning some things that needed to be done.

What I did receive from my shaykh was years of interaction during which I often was called into his presence on, sometimes, a daily basis. While, occasionally, such interaction might involve a movie (usually Indian or Pakistani) or an invitation to supper, more often than not the interaction had to do with various projects and programs that were being pursued.

I learned more about the world, academia, the media, government, education, people, myself, and the truth during that period of time than I ever learned at university. I had attended two of the world's best academic institutions (Harvard and the University of Toronto) and, yet, what those facilities had to offer was child's play compared to what, by God's Grace, was being offered to me through the mind, character and example of my spiritual guide.

The following scenario refers to a set of events that took place at the University of Toronto which afforded me an opportunity to see how various kinds of social institutions work in reality rather than in theory. These events involved the professor – who was alluded to earlier – that had edited a book of essays/articles concerning (allegedly) Islam as well as the Muslim world and about which I had written a report that was critical of that would-be textbook.

A little while after the publication of the foregoing report, my shaykh indicated to me one day – and this is where his incredible memory surfaced – how he seemed to recall having read some books which contained material that might have been plagiarized in several of the articles that had been “authored” by the individual who also had edited the textbook in question. He gave me a few leads and asked me to see what I might be able to find in this regard.

I began a search for the indicated material and, as well, took a look at some other related books along the way. After a certain amount of reading, I began to come across sentences, and, sometimes, paragraphs in several of the books that I had signed out of the library which had been lifted from those original

works and placed in two of the articles that had been written by the editor of the textbook that had been critiqued in our report as if the sentences and paragraphs had been written by the editor of the textbook rather than having been the work of someone else.

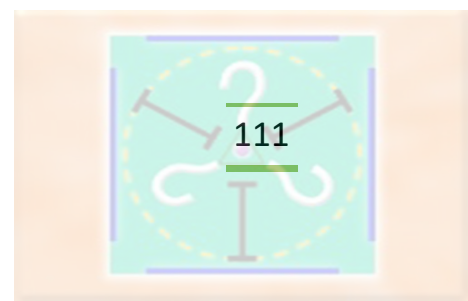
Two of the articles that, supposedly, were “authored” by the editor of the foregoing textbook contained a fairly extensive amount of material which had been plagiarized. The extent of the pilfered words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and ideas in the two articles was such that it could not be rationalized as being just a simple mistake or unintentional oversight of some kind.

A newsletter, of sorts, was put together that placed sections of the editor’s two articles side-by-side with material from the original sources. Those comparisons were followed by several pages of commentary related to the issue.

The newsletter was distributed to both students and professors in different parts of the campus of the University of Toronto. In addition, a copy of the newsletter along with a covering letter went to the president of the university suggesting that perhaps the university administration should look into the matter.

While waiting for a response from the president, copies of the newsletter were sent out, along with a questionnaire that asked recipients to state their opinion as to whether the evidence in the newsletter adequately demonstrated whether, or not, plagiarism had taken place. The packages were mailed to professors of Islamic studies at different universities and colleges in North America.

Over the next several months, the Sufi Study Circle of the University of Toronto – of which I was chairman and which was the student group responsible for the newsletter’s publication and distribution – received 25, or so, responses back from different professors in North America. While there were a few professors who said that there was no plagiarism which had been committed and that the members of our student group should be ashamed of themselves for having undertaken such a



project, nevertheless, the vast majority of the responses to our questionnaire indicated that, without doubt, the evidence of plagiarism was glaring and undeniable.

One professor from a New York university even provided additional information. More specifically, this professor indicated that he, himself, had come across other articles written by the person who was being featured in our newsletter that also contained plagiarized material.

All of the foregoing material was written up and put in a second newsletter that was published and distributed to students and faculty members at the University of Toronto. The newsletter also indicated that the president of the university had previously been notified about the situation but had failed to address the issue properly.

The second newsletter was also sent to a number of media outlets in Toronto. Some of these recipients were newspapers, while others involved radio stations and a number of television stations.

Initially, all of the media outlets were quite excited about the contents and implications of the newsletter. One national newspaper even wanted to be accorded an exclusive on the issue.

However, as time passed, nothing happened. Through various means our student group discovered that members of the university had intervened on behalf of the beleaguered professor and fed the media a story that our student group was nothing more than a bunch of Muslims who were unjustifiably trying to create trouble on campus and attack the reputation of an esteemed member of the faculty.

Rather than examine the substantial evidence which had been provided to them in the form of: (1) not only the side-by-side comparisons of sections from the professor's two articles and material from the original sources, but, as well, (2) the data from the questionnaires which had been sent out to professors in different parts of North America, and instead of rigorously questioning the university's administrative leaders about why a

professor was being permitted to commit plagiarism with impunity, the media simply looked the other way. They chose to hold on to their prejudices concerning “dangerous Muslims” who could not, possibly, be telling the truth (and this took place in the early 1980s) rather than do their (the media’s) job by searching for the truth of the matter and informing the public accordingly.

The story, however, does not end here. Although no steps were taken by university officials or the media to treat the case of plagiarism as it ought to have been treated, the professor in question was dealt with in a most interesting fashion.

More specifically, he was made the head of a university committee that was responsible for investigating, evaluating, and penalizing possible student violations of the honor code, which includes issues involving plagiarism. I don’t know the extent, if any, to which the other members of that committee were aware of the travesty of justice and academic standards that had been perpetrated by university officials when, knowingly, they appointed someone who was guilty of the very infractions that he was, now, responsible for adjudicating.

Interestingly, a number of months later, a story appeared in some of the local news media which concerned a doctoral student at the University of Toronto. I’m a little vague as to the details of that story and whether the individual had received a doctorate or was near to having completed requirements for a doctorate, but in either case, the individual was found guilty of having plagiarized material in his or her thesis and, as a result, was expelled from the university.

In addition, my shaykh once told me about another case of plagiarism which he had discovered at a certain point in time. He had been exploring a particular topic concerning the Sufi path and his research took him to another university in Canada.

While rummaging through the stacks of a library housed at the academic institution he was visiting, he came across a doctoral thesis in which substantial portions of his own dissertation – which had been written in England – appeared in the dissertation of someone who had obtained a doctorate in

Canada. When asked what he did in response to his finding he said: “Nothing. The person who wrote the dissertation had to eat as well.”

There was at least one difference between the professor at the University of Toronto who had committed plagiarism which had been pursued by the student group of which I was a member and the individual who had obtained a doctorate at another institution that was based on work other than his own. More specifically, the latter individual had done something that he ought not to have done because he didn't have the necessary competence and/or confidence – at least in part -- to pursue his own, unique research and modes of critical reflection but, at the same time, he was not trying to engage in some sort of project that was seeking to hurt Islam or its adherents as the aforementioned professor had been busily engaged in trying to do for years.

Returning to the latter case, I was the chairperson of a student group that had brought charges of plagiarism against a faculty member of the university – charges which were ignored – and despite the fact that said student group was also responsible for bringing the matter to the attention of the media as well as university professors across North America and, in the process, had tainted the reputation of the University of Toronto, nothing was done – at least overtly – to any of the members of the student group.

Furthermore, our student charter was not revoked. In addition, there was no official disciplinary action which was taken against any of the members of that group.

The term: “official” was used in the preceding paragraph because action was taken against one of the members of that group – namely, me. One day I was milling about in the department through which I was seeking to obtain a doctorate when my thesis advisor approached me and wanted to know what I was up to.

He informed me that the Minister of Education for the Province of Ontario had called up the Director of the Institute in which I was enrolled as a doctoral candidate and, in effect,

wanted to know why I was being allowed to remain as a student at the university. I wasn't officially thrown out, but, the powers that be had another way of handling the situation which would have the same sort of impact.

My thesis advisor went to great lengths to avoid having to meet with me and discuss my dissertation. We would arrange to meet at a certain date and time, but, at the last minute, the meeting would be cancelled or I would show up at the appointed date, time, and place only to be told by the departmental secretary that my thesis advisor had been called away on one emergency or another.

The foregoing sorts of events went on for a sufficiently long enough period of time that certain members of the university were able to run out the clock on my official status as a graduate student. I was forced into lapsed candidacy which stipulated that I had no rights within the university – including access to the libraries, faculty members, or services normally accorded to students -- but should I ever finish my dissertation, then, a decision would be made about whether, or not, to re-instate me as an “active” candidate.

One side-note with respect to the foregoing is that despite a complete lack of co-operation from my thesis advisor, I had gone ahead, on my own, and written a dissertation. When I tried to pass that written document in prior to the official cut-off date, the department refused to accept it.

Virtually everyone, if not everyone, in my department knew what was going on, but chose to do nothing about the situation. So that they wouldn't be able to forget me, I managed to obtain a key to a student office in my department from someone who recently had received his doctorate and was about to depart from the university and, then, I proceeded to use that office for the next seven or eight years, making my continued presence in the department a very visible issue throughout all of that time, and, yet, during this extended period of academic “squatting”, no one with any authority within the department or the Institute or the University ever approached me and asked for the return of the office key along with the key to the department, nor did

anyone tell me that I had no right to be using university office-space, despite the fact that such space was at a premium within the department.

My guide once related an incident about someone who was an initiate of his own shaykh. For reasons unknown to me, and, perhaps, my shaykh, on some occasion, the aforementioned initiate became frustrated and upset with something involving his spiritual guide, and, as a result, the man got up and left the assembly.

At some point, the shaykh looked about the gathering and not finding the person whom he was seeking asked about the whereabouts of the person who, unknown, to the shaykh, had previously left the gathering and was returning to his own residence. When informed that the person had become upset with something that was taking place and, as a result, had left, the shaykh sent someone to bring the individual back to the assembly.

After a certain amount of time passed, the individual who had left returned to the gathering. The shaykh motioned for him to come and sit with him.

The person did as requested. When the individual had become settled, the shaykh said to him: "Yes, you can leave me, but I cannot leave you."

During the many years of walking about in an academic wilderness, my shaykh never left me. Nonetheless, he never asked me – not even once – about what was going on with my dissertation or told me that I should do this or do that.

He wasn't oblivious concerning the situation. He knew exactly what was transpiring – in part, because I kept him updated on some of the events.

Nonetheless, he simply permitted things to proceed as they were intended to and, in the meantime, he looked after me in various ways while I was trudging through an academic wasteland. My ability to keep using a departmental office for so many years despite having a status of persona non gratia within the university, was, by the Grace of Allah, just one example of

such support, and when times were especially financially difficult because the provincial government was no longer willing to extend me student loans to help cover the costs of my education, my spiritual guide also, by the Grace of Allah, made arrangements that helped me out in this regard as well.

The sorts of difficulties which plagued me during graduate school actually resonated with experiences that my shaykh had to endure when attending graduate school in England. Although the natures of the difficulties were somewhat different in our two cases, nevertheless, ultimately, we both were confronted with the active expression of bias and prejudice concerning our affiliation with the Islamic religious tradition.

In addition, my shaykh's ability to be able to exit his graduate program successfully was also hindered by issues of racism because of his Indian/Pakistani background. Such differences notwithstanding, we both took between 13 and 15 years to gain our release from academia.

Quite frankly, this is about the only aspect of our respective situations in which, academically speaking, we were on a par with one another. As indicated elsewhere in this book, an individual -- who, at the time of my shaykh's defense of his dissertation, was considered to be one of the preeminent scholars in the West on the topics of Islam and the Sufi mystical tradition -- was the external examiner for my shaykh's dissertation and his judgment of that work was that it was the best thing which he had ever read on the Sufi path in the English language, whereas one of the examiners for my dissertation (there is more to this story to relate later on) indicated that he had never read a dissertation like mine before and hoped to never do so again, but, despite his statement, voted to accept the dissertation.

There is another resonance of flickering similarity between my shaykh's life and my own beyond the difficulties we both encountered while trying to obtain our respective doctorates. More specifically, my shaykh told me about a time when he was working on his thesis and also was the editor of what was, at the time, a well-regarded magazine entitled *Muslim News*

International which was published in, and distributed from, England.

Muhammad Ali had come to England to fight Henry Cooper. For whatever reason or reasons, prior to that exercise in fisticuffs, Muhammad Ali had either decided to visit the offices of the magazine or had been induced to do so, and when he arrived at the magazine's headquarters, my future shaykh was present.

My shaykh told me about some of the misunderstandings that Muhammad Ali voiced during the aforementioned meeting concerning the general nature of the Qur'an. My spiritual guide also related some of what transpired concerning the ensuing discussion which introduced the famous boxer to a different perspective concerning such topics.

Later in his life, Muhammad Ali was reported to have taken an interest in the Sufi path. I never knew if my shaykh's earlier interaction with him might have contributed to such a change in direction.

While I might not know the answer to the foregoing mystery, it does help provide a good segue into my own encounter with Muhammad Ali many years later and several years following the time when my shaykh had passed on from this life.

I had become part of a group that was working on a proposal for a television program concerning Islam and Muslims that would be aired on a cross-Canada television channel that provided people in Canada with an opportunity to learn about different spiritual traditions. We had reached a point in our work when we were ready to put on a dinner to try to raise money for our proposed program, and I had written a screenplay for a documentary on Islam that was going to be shown at the dinner.

We began to consider various candidates who might be invited to the dinner and, thereby, serve as drawing cards that might help generate a good attendance at our proposed fund-

raising event. I suggested Muhammad Ali, and the group followed up on the suggestion.

Graciously, despite experiencing considerable disability because of his Parkinson condition, the former world boxing champion agreed to come to Canada and attend the dinner. When he showed up at the designated date, time, and place, he had brought with him one of his previous opponents, George Chuvalo, a former Canadian heavyweight boxing champion with whom Muhammad Ali had had several tough fights.

At one point during the evening events, there was an opportunity for people to meet Muhammad Ali. He couldn't speak much, but he was willing to meet with people and say hello in his own fashion.

I ended up in the room where he was greeting people. For a time, I stood just a foot, or so, in front of him, as if we were facing off with one another to promote a coming boxing match.

I was too shy to say anything, and, so, eventually, I left. In retrospect I wished that I had said something about there being a bond in common between the two of us – namely, my shaykh – and mention something of Muhammad Ali's time at the offices of the *Muslim News International* magazine prior to his fight with Henry Cooper.

My failure to communicate aside, I find it quite amazing that both my shaykh and I, through completely independent means – at least on the surface of things – both were able to interact (my shaykh more than me) with Muhammad Ali. Both my shaykh and I shared a fondness for the boxing icon, and, of course, although the former Gold Medal winner went about things differently than I did, we both protested the war in Vietnam.

If I had talked to him, I might have told him about a time when I was not Muslim but had been working as an orderly at a hospital in Boston. I had night duty on the evening that he -- Muhammad Ali, then, known as Casius Clay -- was facing off against Sonny Liston, for the first time.

I picked Clay/Ali to win in the seventh round. Since Liston's corner decided not to send their fighter out for the seventh round, the fight went as a seventh round TKO.

If I had been a betting man, I could have made a lot of money at 8-1 odds. However, per usual, I was broke – indeed, the job I had, only paid me about \$32.00 a week in take-home money, barely enough cover my expenses during the week.

Before moving on, I might note in passing, that my shaykh also had met and interacted with Malcolm X who had been a friend to, and mentor of, Muhammad Ali. The meeting took place in Canada, not too far from the US-Canadian border.

During the meeting, Malcolm X (who had taken the name of el-hajj Malik el-Shabaz following his trip to Mecca and Medina while carrying out requirements associated with Hajj) indicated that he was a hunted man who, very likely, might be assassinated in the near future. Only a few weeks after the foregoing meeting took place, Malcolm X/Malik el-Shabaz was assassinated in New York City.

Just as Malik el-Shabaz had gone from being part of the Nation of Islam to becoming a Sunni Muslim following his life-altering experiences during Hajj that are recounted in Alex Haley's book *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (a book that I had read before stepping onto the Sufi path and before becoming Muslim in the process), so too, my shaykh also related a few details involving his life-changing, initial experiential encounter with his own shaykh. My shaykh recounted how he had been invited to the house of a friend, and two of them were engaged in a conversation covering all manner of topics.

My guide's future teacher – who also was visiting with members of the same household -- was in an adjacent room. As my future shaykh carried on with his discussion, his future shaykh leaned back in his own chair, and through the open doorway separating the two rooms he caught the attention of my future shaykh and said words to the effect of: "You drink from too many pools," then, leaned forward in his chair and continued on with whatever was taking place in the room in which he was in.

I don't know what happened after my future shaykh was told by his future shaykh that he drank from too many pools, but I do know that the interaction obviously left a deep impression on him because here he was, decades later, repeating the incident. My future shaykh was a very talented and highly intelligent individual with a near-eidetic memory who did extremely well in school, and, yet, in the simplest of terms, he was, in effect, being informed that an adjustment needed to be made in the way in which he went about life, and my future shaykh took the comment to heart.

I never asked my guide many, if any, questions about how he had come to the path or about possible experiences that he might have had along the way. I would usually wait to pick up whatever gems might be offered without being prompted – something that happened frequently in the hours of discussion, story-telling, and chai (a special, spicy form of tea) that used to follow our Thursday night Fatiha gatherings which usually extended into the wee hours of the morning ... extended gatherings from which the participants were never asked to leave by their host but eventually each of us did so out of respect for the shaykh and/or because we had to get some sleep before engaging our own responsibilities involving the fast-approaching daylight hours.

On one of the foregoing occasions, he talked about someone who was interested in stepping onto the Sufi path but was uncertain as to whom to approach about seeking initiation into a Sufi order or silsilah. At some point, the individual spoke with my shaykh's spiritual guide.

After spending time with the shaykh and asking a variety of questions, the man indicated that if the shaykh were amenable to the idea, then, the seeker would like to be initiated. The shaykh told the man that initiation was possible but he also indicated that instead of proceeding with initiation, perhaps, the man should speak with another individual before making a final decision and, then, gave the man a name and an address, instructing him not to indicate to the man to whom he was being directed to see that the seeker had been sent by the shaykh but,



rather, the man was to just indicate that he was thinking about seeking initiation with that shaykh and had heard that the man to whom he was being sent might have some relevant information on the subject.

The individual seeking initiation left and went in search of the person to whom he had been directed. When the former individual arrived, he introduced himself and stated his reasons for knocking on the door.

The owner of the residence invited the man in. Once they had seated themselves, the host began to talk about the shaykh, and what was said was quite negative.

The visitor listened politely to the host's words. When his host seemed to have finished what he had to say, the visitor left and returned to the shaykh.

The shaykh asked the man about what had transpired during the visit. The man gave his account of the event.

After he finished, the shaykh asked the man if he were still interested in becoming initiated. The man confirmed that, yes, he still was interested in becoming initiated but asked why he had been sent to see an individual who had nothing good to say about the shaykh.

The shaykh is reported to have responded along the following lines. "I thought you should have the opportunity to be exposed to a second opinion before making a final decision concerning initiation."

Many people who have only a little knowledge about the Sufi path often associate the notion of karamat, or wondrous deeds, with the shaykhs of the way. While such deeds do sometimes occur, they are not what the mystical path is actually about which, in simplified terms, has more to do with the realization of one's essential potential or fitra with respect to the task of coming to understand the nature of one's relationship with Divinity via spiritual states, stations, insights, unveilings, and the acquisition of character qualities such as: honesty, integrity, humility, compassion, nobility, love, forgiveness, repentance, perseverance, courage, tolerance, patience, and so on



My shaykh was very reserved in such matters. From time to time, however, he did mention certain events concerning his own shaykh.

For example, he told of one incident in which some people in Ajmer, India were using animal dung as fuel for some kind of commercial set-up which featured a tall stack which carried smoke away but in the process of doing so also was scattering elements of dung over an area which included a burial site of one of the shaykhs of the silsilah to which the shaykh belonged. He sent someone to inform the operators of the foregoing set-up about what was happening and requested those individuals to alter how they were going about things so that the remnants of the animal dung would not fall on the burial sites or on people who lived in the area.

The request was ignored. Several more requests were made, but each request was ignored in turn.

Finally, the shaykh made arrangements to visit the offending operation. He is reported to have raised a walking staff which he used when walking about and motioned the stick in a way that went from the top of the smoke stack to its base, and, as he did so, the smoke stack split in two and fell to the ground.

In addition to the foregoing account, the person to whom I alluded previously and with whom I interacted for a period of 4-5 hours, learning about Islam and the Sufi path prior to being provided with an opportunity to meet my future shaykh in person, also, once told me of something that happened with him and his wife when they went to India to visit with the shaykh of our shaykh, the same individual that was being referred to in the previous anecdote.

During the aforementioned visit, the Canadian couple and the shaykh attended the movie: *The Ten Commandments*. When the movie had reached a certain juncture, the shaykh turned to the couple and told them to watch the screen carefully.

Although I was never told what appeared on the screen, the couple whose story I am relating said that they were no longer seeing the movie but something else entirely. The experience,



whatever it was, went on for a while, and, then, they were returned to the regularly scheduled program or movie.

About the closest my shaykh came to indicating his own involvement in such possibilities was when he once informed a small post-Fatiha gathering why he had returned home much sooner than expected from a sabbatical leave. In fact, we were not expecting him to return from his trip for another four to five months.

The time was Ramadan. We were about two-thirds of the way through the fast when we were told that our shaykh had returned with his family and that we were being called to attend a Fatiha session that evening.

After the session ended, tea and sweets were served. As usual, discussions of one kind or another began.

During the ensuing discussion, our shaykh indicated that he had a spiritual experience while in Ajmer, India. Something secret had been revealed to him about the shrine in Ajmer and, as well, he was informed that his spiritual work had been completed.

I don't think any of us who were attending the meeting when we heard the foregoing account – or, certainly, this was so in my case – understood the significance of what was being said. Our shaykh spent the last ten days, or so, of Ramadan as well as the 'Eid celebration with his spiritual initiates, and following another 19 days after the month of fasting had been completed, he passed away.

When he was informed that his Earthly work had been completed, he knew that his days were numbered. He could have chosen to stay in India and be buried there, but, instead, he returned to Canada to be buried far from where he had been born, and this was one of the many kindnesses that he extended to those who had been initiated by him as well as to the members of his immediate family.

There are several incidents that occurred in conjunction with my shaykh and which some of those who will read the words that give expression to those incidents might consider to

be iffy” sorts of candidates to qualify as mystical anomalies of some kind, but, I will recount the stories anyway and let people make up their own minds as to the possible significance, if any, of those events.

For instance, prior to the passing away of our shaykh, there was a conversation about Hajj that took place following one of the Fatiha sessions. I seemed to remember saying something about how if I got the opportunity to go on Hajj, I would prefer to go when the weather in Saudi Arabia was cooler because I didn’t do well in the heat.

I remember my shaykh looking at me in a rather strange sort of way. There was a certain, hard to describe expression on his face, with a hint of a smile.

Approximately, a year, or so later – after he had passed on to the next world – I got a call from a friend of his who was the head of the Saudi educational delegation in Ottawa, Canada which, among other things, looked after the needs and problems of students from Saudi Arabia who were doing graduate work in various Canadian universities. He said: “I’m sending you on Hajj.”

He, personally, was not paying for the trip, but, rather, in his capacity as an employee of the Saudi government, he had nominated me to be among the 30, or so, individuals from North and South American, who would be sponsored by the Saudi government for the upcoming Hajj.

I told my shaykh’s friend that I was broke and couldn’t even afford to get to Washington to pick up the round-trip airplane tickets and Hajj visa. He said ‘not to worry that everything would be looked after’.

When, inadvertently, money for the trip to Washington, D.C. did not materialized, somehow, enough money was scrounged together to enable me to get to the Saudi embassy. But, at that point, I had virtually no money in my wallet, and I had no credit card.

Once I got the visa and plane tickets, I was told I would have to travel from Washington, D.C. to New York City and board the



plane for Saudi Arabia in the latter city. I told them I had no money to make such a trip.

I was told to wait, and they would let me know what decision was going to be made with respect to the situation. Everybody else who was being sponsored had already left for New York, and time was running out for me to be able to make the New York plane in time for which my ticket had been booked.

Finally, I was summoned to an office in the embassy. The door to the office was opened just a crack and a hundred dollar bill was jiggled through the opening. The money would be enough – I hoped -- to cover a taxi to the Washington, D.C. airport as well as a flight to New York, with, maybe, a little left over.

I reached New York on the last shuttle from Washington, D.C. that would be able to get me to my flight in time. Unfortunately, when I arrived in New York, I discovered I was at the wrong airport.

I would need to cross New York during rush hour to get to JFK International. I had, perhaps, just enough money left over from the hundred dollars that I had been given to cover the cost of a cross-city taxi trip.

To further complicate matters, there was a tremendous rain storm that hit New York at this time. Some roads were getting flooded, making travel in some parts of New York very difficult, and I was a little concerned because the road on which I was traveling in a taxi was going through pools of water that were, maybe, a foot or more in depth.

By the Grace of Allah, I managed to make my flight. I was one of the last people that boarded the plane just before it was ready to taxi down the runway and prepare to take off.

There were many wonderful and interesting things that happened during the Hajj. However, for present purposes, the one thing that sticks out is that the temperatures during the Hajj were amongst the highest recorded for quite some time – even

local Saudis were being warned to be careful about spending too much time outside.

I recalled how, when the topic of Hajj had come up when my shaykh was still in this world, I had said that if I was permitted to go on Hajj that I would prefer to go when the weather was not likely to be all that hot because I didn't do well in heat. I remember the strange smile and look that appeared on my shaykh's face when I said these words.

There are many other events in my life that induce me to reflect on what actually happened and what role might have been played by one's spiritual guide as an expression of God's Grace. Let me give just four possibilities in this regard, all of which took place after the time when my shaykh passed away, but I believe that each of the set of events that are to be described give expression to the following verses from the Qur'an:

“Think not that those who are slain in the way of Allah, as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord, they have provision: Jubilant (are they) because of that which Allah hath bestowed upon them of His bounty.” (3: 169-170)

And, jubilant am I because, by the Grace of Allah, some of the sort of bounty being mentioned in the foregoing Quranic verses had been lent to me, through my shaykh, to: Help make possible, provide support with respect to, and/or guide me through various problematic circumstances.

For example, at one point in time, I had been working in the library system within the University of Toronto, and I also had been working on writing a second dissertation, hoping, that when it was finished I might be able to discontinue the lapsed candidacy status that had been governing certain aspects of my life for the past seven or eight years and be readmitted to graduate school so that I might an opportunity to give an oral defense of my dissertation. The focus of the work involved developing what I considered to be a sort of field theory of

understanding which was unfolding across chapters dealing with hermeneutics, epistemology, relativity theory, quantum mechanics, gauge theory, mathematics, holographic theory, chaos theory, chronobiology, morphogenetic fields, and a few other topics.

One might well ask why I would still be interested in struggling toward obtaining a doctoral degree which, under the best of circumstances, seemed a very iffy proposition. There were two major reasons for continuing on with trying to prevent the good ship dissertation from disappearing into the dark depths that were, thanks to a number of officials within the Ontario Ministry of Education and the University of Toronto, calling out to me.

First, despite the many difficulties surrounding my relationship to the University of Toronto, and notwithstanding the fact that my shaykh rarely talked to me about the situation (and I rarely talked to him about it except, on a few occasions, in a very general sort of way), my spiritual guide had been the one to suggest that I go to graduate school and also had been instrumental in helping me to be accepted into a graduate program, and, as well, wanted me to continue on with the struggle because if this were not the case, he would have said as much.

Secondly, I didn't care for the stance of the people who had been instrumental in helping to create my academic difficulties. I had done quite well in all of the course work, and, so, the resistance toward me by certain members in the university – both administrative and professorial – was rather arbitrary, and I was not about to give in to that sort of bullying and abuse of power.

The dissertation was nearing completion. However, even when the dissertation was completed, getting re-admitted was going to be a tricky prospect because, among other things, I no longer trusted anyone who had been on my thesis committee, especially my so-called thesis advisor, and, then, serendipity entered my life.



For three, or so, years following the passing away of my shaykh, I often went to Ottawa to engage in various co-operative projects that were arranged by a fellow initiate of the spiritual path who lived in the capital city of Canada. Many of these projects had to do with speaking engagements that were given at either Carlton University or the University of Ottawa.

My friend in Ottawa had arranged for me to give a talk at the University of Ottawa. The topic was: ‘Science and Mysticism.’

I gave the talk. Afterwards, I was engaged by a few of the people who had attended the talk, and while I was talking to those individuals, a man came up to me, handed me several articles and said I might be interested in the material.

I thanked the gentleman, briefly looked at what had been handed to me, and continued on with the discussion that had been taking place prior to being handed the articles. A little later, people had departed, and I returned to my friend’s house where I was staying for the weekend.

The hour was late and so everyone retired to their respective rooms. When I sat down on the bed in my room, I looked at the papers that had been handed to me a little more closely and realized that the author of the paper was a physicist whose work I had been reading for a number of years.

The books of his that I had read were about science, quantum physics, and the nature of reality. I found his writing very interesting and recalled that the author also had been working with David Bohm in conjunction with an alternative approach to quantum physics involving something known as the “implicate order” along with the idea of a pilot-wave model that was part of a perspective that was sometimes referred to as the de Broglie-Bohm theory.

David Bohm was a leading light amongst an earlier generation of physicists who had written what many considered to be a bible-like work concerning the principles of quantum mechanics. In addition, he had an association with many of the famous names associated with the revolution in quantum



mechanics that took place, including Albert Einstein and Richard Feynman, both Nobel laureates.

Bohm had run into difficulties because of his political orientation. For a time he was forced to flee to Israel, Brazil, and, finally, England before, eventually, returning to the United States.

After looking through the several articles that I had been handed following my talk, almost, immediately, a plan for resurrecting my moribund dissertation prospects bubbled to the surface of my consciousness. I talked about the idea with my friend the next day and told him that I wanted to get in touch with the author of the papers – a fellow by the name of Dr. F. David Peat – and see if he might be interested in being an external reader for my dissertation.

Eventually, arrangements were made to meet with the Canadian physicist. I brought a copy of my dissertation along just in case he might be receptive to what I was about to propose.

During our meeting, he said that he found my talk on mysticism and science very interesting and that I had touched on a couple of topics during the talk that relatively few people knew about. He was someone who was interested in both science and spirituality, and, in fact, he and David Bohm had been collaborating on precisely these sorts of issues.

Eventually, I outlined the idea that, subsequently, had bubbled to the surface when I saw the name on the articles which had been handed to me following my talk. He said he would look at my dissertation and let me know.

After a week or two had passed, David Peat let my friend in Ottawa know that he was positively disposed toward helping out in whatever way he could with respect to my dissertation. Arrangements were made to meet once more when I next came to Ottawa.

In the meantime, I set about approaching a number of professors at the University of Toronto to see if they would be

interested in coming on board with respect to being a part of my thesis committee.

One professor from whom I had taken several courses -- who had expertise in philosophy of science as well as had a background in medicine -- agreed to become my nominal thesis advisor ... nominal because the dissertation had been written already and was ready to be defended. He suggested that I should consider taking on a certain individual as a prospective committee member -- and he introduced me to this man as well -- a biophysicist who was a professor in the Department of Physics at the University of Toronto.

After a bit of a rough start -- caused by me -- progress was made when the biophysicist agreed to join the dissertation committee. Although things were beginning to take shape, I still needed a few more individuals.

Following a few false starts, I finally was able to interest a professor in the Department of Philosophy in becoming involved in my plan. He had expertise in philosophy of science and quantum mechanics.

One of the issues that nearly scuttled the foregoing arrangement was the length of the dissertation -- which was somewhere in the vicinity of 800-plus pages. Fortunately, the philosophy professor and I came to an arrangement concerning how to proceed in this regard.

When I met with David Peat again in Ottawa and brought him up to speed with what had been happening, he informed me that he had contacted a professor of linguistics about the dissertation and that the individual, who lived and taught in Montreal, had expressed interest in joining the project. David and I went to Montreal and met with the professor, discussed the issue over dinner, and, secured his agreement to be part of the dissertation proceedings.

When I returned to Toronto, I informed my new thesis advisor about the developments in Montreal as well as the new recruit from the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto. In return, he informed me about how he had contacted

someone who was a professor of adult education who had agreed to be part of the oral defense proceedings.

There still were some administrative hoops to jump through, but my new thesis advisor looked after these requirements. Dates were set for my re-instatement into the graduate program at the University of Toronto and the oral defense of my dissertation.

On the night before the day of my oral defense, my thesis advisor and other members of the committee thought it might be best if we all got together to discuss whatever needed to be considered before the forthcoming defense date arrived. The meeting was set for 7:00 p.m., but I was having a busy day and part of the activities entailed by such business had to do with my desire to go to the grave of my shaykh and offer Fatiha.

The cemetery was empty when I arrived and rain was threatening to fall at any moment. I went to my shaykh's grave site, said Fatiha, and left to go to the bus kiosk that was located just outside the cemetery fence in order to wait for the bus that would take me to the subway system that, in turn, would take me to the University of Toronto where the aforementioned early evening meeting had been arranged to take place. No sooner did I step into the kiosk, a terrific storm descended and pelted the kiosk with such heavy winds and wind driven rain that I thought the kiosk might be in danger of being removed from its foundations with me in it.

After a time, the rain and wind died down. I was alone in the kiosk and I was getting concerned because there was no bus in site and, yet, the time of the meeting was fast approaching and I had a lot of miles to cover in order to get to the meeting. As I waited, wondering what -- if anything -- could be done, a car approached the kiosk heading in the direction of the subway system.

The car slowed down and stopped next to the kiosk. The car window on the passenger side was rolled down, and the driver asked me if I wanted a ride to the subway.

I accepted the offer with considerable relief. When I got in, I asked him why he had stopped, and he said: “You looked like someone who needed a ride.”

I didn’t have much time to spare when I got to the subway. However, things went well, and I made the meeting just in time.

The next day, the oral defense of my dissertation took place. Prior to going to the designated location for the oral defense process, I had gone to my academic department for some reason, and my old thesis advisor spoke to me and said that many people had tried what I was trying and that they all had failed.

I departed from those words without comment and went to defend my dissertation. The vote in favor of accepting my dissertation was 7-0, and when I returned to my department and ran into some of the professors there who knew about my defense and informed them of the vote, their jaws visibly dropped in disbelief ... a dynamic that was quite satisfying to me after all of the years of difficulty.

I later met with my new thesis advisor who congratulated me on what had been accomplished. He said that what took place took a lot of guts, mostly mine, but that a number of people had come together to make such an outcome possible, and I was, indeed, grateful to every member of that committee who had decided to work with me in relation to the dissertation.

He also indicated that there were some people on the orals committee who expressed a certain amount of skepticism concerning the whole enterprise prior to the orals. However, apparently, they were won over by the quality of my oral defense.

A year, or so, later, David Peat, my external examiner, invited me to participate in a three day gathering at the Fetzer Institute in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The purpose of the meetings was to bring together scientists from the West and individuals representing different indigenous nations and peoples in order to discuss different approaches to the issue of reality.

I'm not sure which side I was supposed to be part of because I wasn't really a scientist nor an indigenous person, but David thought it might be interesting for all involved if I attended the sessions as someone who operated out of a Sufi mystical perspective. David Bohm, the famous quantum physicist mentioned earlier, was going to be attending the gathering, and I have to admit I was nonplused when one of the people who, for whatever reason, had decided to greet me at the airport was David Bohm.

I thoroughly enjoyed the sessions, especially the talks and presentations given by some of the indigenous peoples. I also had a chance to talk with David Bohm on a few occasions over the weekend.

Thinking back over the 16 years, or so, that were required to obtain my doctorate, there were many difficulties and hurdles to overcome. Yet, despite what seemed to be overwhelming odds against my ever getting my doctoral degree, in the end, by the Grace of Allah and through the support of my shaykh, all of those difficulties were resolved.

If readers wish, they can say that the foregoing account was just a series of random events that happened to work out in my favor. For me, on the other hand, there is no way to consider what happened without having considerable reason for maintaining that, by Allah's leave, my shaykh was with me throughout the entire series of events, despite the fact that the foregoing, incredible sequence of events concerning the dissertation saga took place after my shaykh had passed away from this world.

There was another, separate Ottawa-related event that, at least for me, indicated that I was the recipient of what would be difficult to explain as being anything else but spiritual support in relation to on-going activities. I forget the reason why I was in Ottawa, but, usually, my presence there had to do with some sort of program which had been arranged by my brother-traveler and fellow initiate of the Sufi path, and, presumably, I had been requested by him to play some sort of role in the planned program.

The sequence of events began as I was beginning to get prepared to go to the Ottawa airport to catch a flight back to Toronto. At that point, my host received a call from someone from Saudi Arabia we both knew who was living in Ottawa at the time and who was a friend of the head of the Saudi Education Mission who had been a friend of my shaykh and who, as previously noted, had played a role in helping me to go on Hajj via a program that was sponsored through the Saudi government.

The gist of the call was that the man wanted me to drop by his residence and speak with a group of people about the Sufi path. The man was informed that I was about to return to Toronto, but the individual said that he would be very thankful if I would take some time before I left to return home to speak to the group of people that were being assembled.

There were a few degrees of freedom concerning how much time was available to me before I absolutely had to be at the airport. So, we indicated to the man that we would come but there might come a time when the gathering would have to be terminated because of my need to make my flight home, to which the man was agreeable.

We followed the directions which had been given to us toward the end of the aforementioned phone conversation and arrived at the designated destination. We were ushered into our host's home and were introduced to about six or seven individuals from different parts of the Muslim world.

After a little conversation, I came to understand that these people were what might be termed "fundamentalist-oriented" individuals (and I don't say this as a criticism) who were well-educated, appeared to be in their mid-forties, early fifties, knew Arabic, and were familiar with the Qur'an and the hadith literature. For whatever reason, they wanted to engage me in conversation concerning the Sufi path, and I was never really sure if the motivation was to help me to come to understand the error of my ways or if they were genuinely interested in the nature of the Sufi path and simply wanted to be able to ask

questions of someone who had been associated with that tradition.

At some point, our host outlined the starting point for the conversation. It had to do with the nature of Divine guidance, but, for me, the starting point was problematic because what was said was being said in a way that presupposed that I knew Arabic.

I know enough Arabic to say my prayers. I also know a certain number of Arabic technical terms, but I don't speak or read Arabic.

Consequently, the conversation started out in a way that was difficult for me to understand. Rather than end the conversation before it had a chance to get going, I just waited and listened to what was being said, hoping that something might be revealed in a way which would enable me to grab hold of and through which to enter the discussion.

After a short while, such an opening afforded itself. And, for me, the gathering began to feel like another edition of the Sufi Study Circle of the University of Toronto that my shaykh had asked me to do for more than a decade and to which people – sometimes students and sometimes people from the general community – would come and have an opportunity to ask questions about Islam and the Sufi path.

For the next hour and a half, questions were directed toward me from each of the people who had been gathered together for the assembly. The answers that I gave to those individuals were variations on a theme involving the responses that I gave to people who came to the weekly edition of the Sufi Study Circle which were based on my understanding of what I had been told by my shaykh over a period of time.

The people who were participating in the pre-airport gathering had heard many things about the nature of Islamic mysticism. As a result, they had concerns about whether, or not, it was possible for one to be able to reconcile mystical teachings with the sorts of non-mystical teachings to which they had been

exposed for much of their lives, and the various questions that they directed toward me were tinged with those concerns.

Question after question was asked, and question after question was answered, by the Grace of Allah, in a way that seemed to quiet their concerns. When my friend indicated to the gathering that I really needed to leave for the airport, they wondered if there were some way in which the conversation could be extended, but, unfortunately, I had to go to work the next day and, therefore, had to return to Toronto.

Before leaving, I told them what they were hearing from me was not me, but my spiritual guide. Whatever was correct in what was being said was because of him and not me, and upon hearing those words, my host said, to the approval of the others in the gathering, that I was a very fortunate individual because I had been taught very well.

Indeed, I was a very fortunate individual to have had the opportunity to spend so much time learning from someone who really could both talk the talk and walk the walk. However, I am not in any way trying to say that I am a sparkling reflection of my shaykh but, rather, that whatever might be of value that is said through me is, by the Grace of Allah, due to the efforts, discipline, kindness, support, character, and spiritual aspiration of my shaykh.

In many ways, I am a poor student of the spiritual path, slow on the up-take with respect to many facets of life. Yet, notwithstanding my many faults and shortcomings, nevertheless, by the Grace of Allah – which is manifested, in part, through my spiritual guide – somehow, mysteriously, the concerns of people who knew more about, among other things, Arabic, the Qur'an, and hadiths than I did had been quieted and resolved.

There was another 'incident', so to speak, that had an Ottawa-connection which also took place a year or two after my shaykh had passed on from this Earthly life. My usual host in Ottawa and I were on our way to some sort of occasion when he was notified that someone who was supposed to be a featured speaker at the annual Muslim dinner in Ottawa was unable to

attend the function due to some sort of last minute emergency or illness.

The person who had notified my friend indicated he had heard from someone that I was visiting in Ottawa at the time and wondered if I might be available to sub for the speaker who was unable to speak at the dinner. The dinner event was scheduled to start in 15-20 minutes.

Although I had given a number of lectures or talks in Ottawa over the last several years, I wouldn't consider myself a good speaker. While, by the Grace of Allah, I might have been able to get through such events relatively unscathed, I often needed several weeks to prepare for those sorts of occasions, and, here I was being asked to give a talk with just 15-20 minutes of notice.

The challenge with which I was being confronted was unsettling. Yet, the people who were organizing the dinner appeared to be in a fairly difficult spot as well.

The invitation was accepted, and my mind and heart began to try to figure out what to say as we travelled to the venue where the dinner was being held. Soon, we had arrived at our destination, and I still was trying to figure out what to say.

We were escorted inside the building, and I was brought to a table that was positioned on a raised platform a little distance from hundreds of tables around which people sat. There must have been several thousand people present, and, quite frankly, I hadn't anticipated that I would be talking to as many people as were currently in the building.

The people attending the dinner were all Canadian citizens, but they had migrated from a wide variety of racial, ethnic, and geographical backgrounds. I felt a little foolish because the vast majority of the people in the room likely had grown up in Muslim communities – whether in Canada or elsewhere -- and I didn't feel like I might have much to offer them since I had not grown up in those sorts of environments.

I was sitting next to someone whom I recognized as being the Imam for the main mosque in Ottawa. The thought crossed

my mind that, perhaps, he might have been a better candidate than me to give a talk at the dinner.

My talk wasn't long, and I believe my shaykh would have appreciated this dimension of things. He was a gifted speaker – someone to whom one wanted to listen to for long periods of time and, yet, almost always he kept his talks relatively short ... not wishing to impose himself on his audience.

The themes of my talk were all taken from what I had heard from my shaykh over the years. The last part of the talk told a story that was appropriate to the season that was rapidly approaching because the month of fasting was going to begin in a week or two.

I related an account that is recorded in the hadith literature about a man who had begun the month of fasting but, at some point during that period of time, he apparently had felt very hungry and, as a result, broke the fast. He went to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) for advice about what he should do to make amends for his mistake.

The Prophet told him that the Qur'an indicated that if one fasted for two consecutive months that this would serve to expiate such a sin. The man responded to this counsel by saying that he couldn't even keep the fast for one month, so, how would he be able to fast for two consecutive months?

Upon hearing the man's comment the Prophet recommended that the man might provide food to the hungry. This would be another way to cancel out the spiritual debt that the man had incurred.

The man said that he was poor and didn't have the financial or material means to feed other people. When the Prophet heard what the man had to say in this regard, the Prophet arranged for food to be brought from the community stores and given to the man so that he could distribute the food to those who were in need.

When the food was collected and delivered to the Prophet, the man indicated to the Prophet that in the surrounding area there was no one who was poorer or in more need of food than

his family. The Prophet responded to those words by telling the man to take the food that had been collected and use it to feed his family, and this would serve to cancel his sin.

After finishing the foregoing account, I ended the talk with the following words. "This is Islam."

I sat down. However, the entire audience immediately stood on their feet and gave a long standing ovation.

The talk was very simple and straightforward. None of it had anything to do with my ideas or thoughts but was, instead, just a voicing of things that, by the Grace of Allah, had been learned from my spiritual guide.

The things that were said in the talk were themes that had been said at one time or another by my shaykh and had touched my heart. Apparently, what had touched my heart still carried the barakah or blessing which had been transmitted to me when I heard my spiritual guide relate the foregoing story and, as well, had also touched the hearts of the people attending the dinner. How else does one explain the foregoing overwhelming response to such a simple, short talk from someone who is not that good a speaker and who really doesn't know all that much.

In addition, perhaps the crowd was reacting to the fact that a convert was giving voice to something that they all felt was at the heart of the Islamic religious tradition. More specifically, Islam provides a multiplicity of ways to enhance the quality of one's relationship with one's Lord.

In the end, however, what we all rely upon is God's mercy and forgiveness. Those two qualities are exemplified in the story related in the hadiths about a man who had broken the fast of Ramadan but was provided with opportunity after opportunity to make amends for his mistake.

Ultimately, what saved him was Allah's mercy in the form of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Qur'an indicates:

“O Humankind! There has come to you a direction from your Lord, and a healing for the diseases in the hearts, as well as a guidance and a mercy for the Believers.” (10: 57)

And, again:

“We have not sent you (Muhammad) except as a mercy to all the worlds.” (21:107)

The final entry in the series of events to which I alluded earlier and which naturally lend themselves to induce one to wonder about the nature of different facets of our lives and how those facets seem to be entangled in arrangements that are far above our spiritual pay grades had to do with a trip to India.

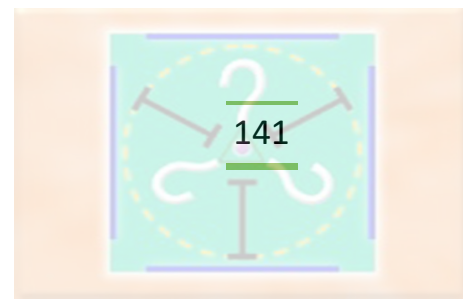
I never wanted to travel. I never wanted to see the world. All of my efforts, woeful though they might be, were directed to just trying to put one foot in front of the other and somehow make it from local point A to local point B.

I’ve gone overseas five times now. Two of the journeys were with my shaykh; one of those journeys was for Hajj; one of them involved a trip to England which has been something of a mystery as to why it ever took place, and the fifth trip was to India.

None of those journeys was something I ever envisioned actually being able to do. To be sure, I knew that I had a responsibility to go on Hajj if I could afford to do so.

However, I was always so impoverished and devoid of funds that while I might think about the possibility of Hajj in the abstract, I wasn’t sure that an actual opportunity would come into my life. Yet, as previously indicated, the pillar of Hajj became a reality by virtue of a set of strange and unanticipated circumstances that, in retrospect, my shaykh seemed to be aware of prior to his passing away from this life.

Similarly, the thought of actually being able to go to Ajmer in India never really entered my mind. Ajmer is where one of the



primary spiritual luminaries is based – namely, Hazrat Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti (may Allah be pleased with him) – which shines through the Sufi silsilah or order to which I belong, and, as well, it is the place where the shaykh of my shaykh is buried and where my shaykh was born and lived until his family moved to Pakistan at the time of partition.

Someone I knew wanted me to go to the south of India for a particular purpose and was willing to loan me the money for air fare and a few other accompanying expenses in order to pursue the indicated purpose of the trip. I wasn't keen about going on the proposed mission, but I agreed to do so.

Although the trip was initially focused on journeying to a part of India that was at the opposite end of the country from Ajmer, I felt that if I was going to travel such a long distance for one purpose, then, I wanted to try to combine that purpose with a visit to a variety of spiritual shrines in different parts of that country, including Ajmer, and pay my respects – something that I never dreamed I would ever have the opportunity to do.

Eventually, by the Grace of Allah, I did travel to Ajmer, as well as to a number of other locations where spiritual luminaries of the Chishti spiritual order have been laid to rest. In fact, I was fortunate enough to stay in a room that was immediately adjacent to the mosque and shrine that had been built in remembrance of Hazrat Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti Ajmeri (may Allah be pleased with him).

As well, I was able to climb up a hill near Ajmer where, about half way up that incline, exists a hollowed-out rock where over the centuries some of the great spiritual luminaries used to observe the discipline of seclusion within its confines. I was given an opportunity to spend just a short period of time within that hollowed-out space.

There was a young man who was within the hollowed-out space when I arrived. As far as I knew, the man did not understand or speak any English, and, as a result, everything had to be run through my companion who spoke both English and the local language.

After spending a small amount of time in the space within the rock, we left. The young man who served as our host stayed behind.

When we were a little distance removed from the foregoing rock, I addressed the older gentleman who had accompanied me up the hillside and proceeded to ask some sort of question about the place we had just visited. No sooner were the words out of my mouth, then, the young man who, after we left, had remained in the space that had been hollowed out, quickly came out of the interior area of the rock and answered the question in Urdu/Hindi that I had been asking in English, and his response was transmitted to me by way of translation.

I have reflected on that incident a number of times over the years. I have come to feel that the young man who spent lots of time in that location was the real Sufi and I was just a struggling, error-prone pilgrim.

After the foregoing incident we continued to climb the hill and at the end of our climb there were a number of shrines that were located in different locations on the hill top, including the shrine of my spiritual guide's shaykh. I said Fatiha (a form of remembrance and giving thanks) at his grave site, and we went back down the hill.

Years after meeting a man – my shaykh -- who had told me stories about the individual at whose grave site I had just said Fatiha, and thousands of miles distant from where I had first heard about that man, I had been granted an audience by the shaykh of my shaykh to spend a few moments at his gravesite. I do not believe I ever would have been permitted to come if an invitation had not been extended to me for such a purpose in the guise of a strange set of circumstances that, on the surface, seemed to have nothing to do with my shaykh, or his shaykh, or the Sufi path.

After Ajmer, I traveled to Delhi. I visited a number of shrines in that city and paid my respects.

At one of these locations, I asked about how I might find the Mosque of the Jinn that I had been told was nearby. The man,

who was one of the caretakers of the shrine I was visiting, looked at the sky and, then, back to me and asked me what I knew.

I said: "Not much." He factored in what I had said and, then, stated that because it was getting late, going to the mosque at this time of day might be risky, he suggested that I not go.

I accepted his advice. I have often thought since then that when I said I didn't know much, I might have been flattering myself.

My shortcomings and error-prone qualities notwithstanding, I had been provided with an opportunity to visit places of great spiritual import. The original purpose for the trip eventually turned out to be a disaster, but, quite possibly, the alleged, overt reason for the journey was just the means or Divine pretext through which the real reason for the journey was being given expression and through which, by the Grace of Allah, I had a chance to pay my respects to the memory of individuals who have had a very important role in my life – a chance that – given my financial circumstances -- seems very unlikely to have been possible in any way other than the manner in which it took place.

We often believe that we know why things happen the way they do. However, I am of the opinion that we might not know as much as we might like to think we do as to why the events that take place in our lives actually take place, and I tend to feel that whether physically present, or spiritually present, my shaykh has, by the Grace of Allah, been involved, in one way or another, in many, if not all, of the events that have taken place in my life over the last 50 years.

To follow up on the foregoing point about how we often don't know why things transpire in the way they do or what the significance of such events might be, there is another set of events that is apropos to that perspective. The following account begins with the fact that when my shaykh passed away, a number of difficulties entered my life.

Due to a complex set of circumstances, I found myself jobless and without a home. For a number of reasons, the situation in Toronto had become untenable.

I ended up moving to Ottawa and staying with my friend and his family for a period of time. While staying there, a number of events took place which, eventually, led to my moving, first, to a place in upstate New York, and, then, to New Jersey.

I did have a doctorate, but despite applying to a lot of universities, nothing was working out. In part, this state of affairs was because the 17 years which were needed to obtain a Ph.D. kind of undermined the likelihood of being able to establish any sort of career path in academia, but I applied for other work possibilities as well and couldn't seem to gain much traction on any of these fronts.

Eventually, I ended up moving back to Maine, where I had grown up. After a time, my older brother overcame his reservations about not only whether an individual with a Ph.D. would work as a lowly clerk in an insurance office but would actually be able to do the job in the desired manner and, consequently, decided to offer me a job in his business, which I accepted.

A year, or so, later my brother sold his insurance business and retired. He had made arrangements for me to stay on with the new owners but three or four months down the road the new owners decided to downsize and laid me off, and, so, once again, I found myself without a job and semi-homeless.

Just prior to losing my job, I had placed a small classified ad in a local newspaper which indicated that a weekly meeting concerning the Sufi path was going to take place in an office that I was renting which was down in the basement of the same building where I was working in the insurance office. A week, or so, later, a woman showed up in my basement office indicating interest in the proposed meetings.

She said that she had just finished participating in a women's group retreat of sorts and that on the final day, one of the exercises had been to outline what each of the participants

wanted to try to do in the coming year that was different and would help them explore new horizons. At the time, she had been reading a book that consisted of different writings of Jalal-ud-Din Rumi (may Allah be pleased with him), and when her time arrived to let the members of the women's group know what she wanted to do, she indicated that she would like to find out more about the Sufis.

When she returned home from the weekend retreat, for some unknown reason, she had picked up a copy of the local newspaper that contained my classified ad about a proposed discussion group concerning the Sufi path. She rarely read the paper in question, but on this occasion she had obtained a copy (they were free) and came across my ad in the classifieds.

We chatted for awhile, and, then, without telling her that I was the author, I showed her a book I had written about the Sufi path. As had been my policy for some time, I offered the book and said that she was under no obligation to buy the book but, if she wanted, she could take the book, check it out, and if she liked what she read and wanted to keep it, then, we could talk about a purchase price, otherwise she was free to return the book no questions asked and no hard feelings on my part.

She took me up on my offer. When I talked to her on the phone a week, or so, later, she indicated she had been reading the book which I had given her and that she was enjoying it and wanted to keep it, but it was only later on that she was able to make the connection that I and the author of the book were one-in-the-same.

A couple of weeks later, the weekly discussion meetings concerning the Sufi path began, and a few people began to come to those gatherings. One of those individuals was the woman to whom I had given the book.

Over time, this woman sought me out to talk about different issues, some of these having to do with her life. As a result, sometimes we would go to a local sandwich shop and talk and sometimes we would just have a conversation at my one room office.

On one of these occasions, she had an experience. Although she had never seen a picture of my shaykh, during one of our talks she saw the image of an individual behind me while I was talking with her.

The experience unnerved her. However, she didn't say anything at the time, and it took a while before she broached the topic in one of our subsequent talks.

At some point, she saw a picture of my shaykh. The individual that she had seen behind me in my office previously turned out to be the same as the picture she was looking at.

Some months later she had a dream in which she came upon a house in which my shaykh was present. Although she knew nothing about how traditional Muslim families live, she was ushered into a room in which men were sitting about the same table as my shaykh was sitting and women were carrying on activities separately in another part of the house.

The dream came at a time when she was wrestling with the issue of whether to marry me. There were some factors that seemed to favor such a possibility, but there also were a lot of factors that stood in opposition to such a choice.

I hadn't asked her to marry me. Rather, things had been stated in such a way that a number of possible, future paths had been outlined to her, and I had told her that I would support whatever choice she made concerning those possibilities.

Although no words were said during the dream, the woman got the distinct impression that my shaykh approved of the marriage possibility, and, then, the dream ended. She later told me – and continues to confirm this – that the dream is as vivid today as it was when she originally had it.

The foregoing resonates with a set of circumstances that took place in conjunction with my shaykh concerning a marriage of his own – a set of circumstances that I never related to the aforementioned woman until much later. More specifically, my shaykh was inclined toward a marriage but was uncertain whether he should proceed.

He asked a friend – in non-specific terms – if he would pay attention to his dreams and let my shaykh know what he dreamed. A few days later, the man he had asked to pay attention to his dreams came to my shaykh and said that he had a dream in which the shaykh of my shaykh was pairing people up for marriage and among the people that were paired was my shaykh and the woman for whom he had feelings – someone who the man who had the dream also knew.

Later on, the woman who had the aforementioned experiences and I did marry. We are still married some 23 years later.

When I first arrived back in Maine and prior to meeting the woman in question, I had rented an apartment from a fellow who was the head of the psychology department at a local college. I told the man that I had a doctorate and explored with him the possibility of teaching psychology in his department but, at the time, he was not interested.

Later, following my being laid off by the individuals who had purchased my brothers insurance business, my future wife told me about an ad she had seen in the papers concerning the need for adjunct professors who could teach psychology. The college was the same one whose psychology department was headed by the individual who had turned me down previously.

She encouraged me to apply. I did so, and I was hired.

Over the next six or seven years, I taught a variety of courses in psychology, diversity, life-span development, as well as a special tutorial course for a young woman that was enrolled in the Criminal Justice program. Eventually, a time came when I decided to retire from academia and turn my attention to full-time writing which is what I have been doing for the last 13 years, including the present work.

There is a notion within the Islamic worldview that is known as “rizq.” It has to do with the issue of provision in relation to food, goods, material circumstances, and the like.

Life can be seen as a series of rizq transactions. We are moved about by God through the dynamics of life in which we

engage others and are engaged by others to serve as loci of manifestation for a series of rizq transactions in which we provide other people with certain materials and, in turn, are provided with certain materials by still other individuals.

Like a pawn on a chessboard, I had been moved about from Toronto, to Ottawa, to New York, to New Jersey, to Maine. During this time, I had gone through periods of joblessness and homelessness but, by the Grace of Allah, had managed to survive sufficiently well to place some ads in a local newspaper that brought me together with a woman who was not Muslim but who was interested in the Sufi path and had certain spiritual experiences which helped lead to our getting married.

Prior to the foregoing dynamics, I had been moved from Colorado, where I was born, to a number of different locations in Maine where I went to school, and, then, to Massachusetts, where I went to university and had a variety of jobs. Finally, I was induced to go to Canada

All of the foregoing series of events were a sequence of rizq transactions which were moving me from place to place and circumstance to circumstance. Some of the choices that I made were in furtherance of such transactions even though, at the time such choices were made, I was not aware of the full nature or significance of the transactions that were taking place.

My shaykh once said that human beings have free will. However, he added that we don't have as much free will as we might think.

The foregoing perspective reminds me of a fairly well-known story involving a man who had been told that as long as he stayed away from the city of Samarkand he would be able to continue to live. Consequently, the man arranged his life in a manner that was designed to keep him far from the aforementioned city.

One day, however, he saw Death in his vicinity and Death gave him a very strange look. The man panicked and began riding blindly just to get away from Death.

Somehow, he ended up in Samarkand where Death was waiting for him. Before Death took him away, the man asked about the strange look that had been on the face of Death when the two met in another city, and Death replied that since he had a fast-approaching appointment with the man in Samarkand, he was surprised to see the man in another city.

My appointment with Death is also fast-approaching. However, I am thankful to God that I have been induced to make some of the choices that I have and which have enabled me to serve my shaykh in a variety of ways and to do so in which I have tried to leave everything that I have to offer – including, unfortunately, my mistakes -- on the playing floor of life.

The Prophet has said that the mind-set of a believer is to be evenly split between fear and hope. God is the oft-forgiving, and in this I have hope, but my nafs is still in the process of being reformed and, consequently, I can't be sure what my spiritual status will be on the Day of Judgment, but one thing I do know is that if not for Allah's Grace in the form of, among other things, the opportunities for service that I was provided through the agency of my shaykh, my life would have been much more impoverished.

My shaykh taught me about life. He provided me with many experiences concerning academia, the media, government, the Muslim community, the Sufi path, and myself that have led to insights and understanding that likely would not have been realized otherwise.

For the period of some 16 or 17 years that I knew him when he lived in this world, I witnessed a man who, with discipline and exemplary character, gave everything that he had to offer while engaging in ceaseless activities of prayer, service, remembrance, and worship concerning his Lord. While I have not come anywhere close to mirroring his example, nevertheless, whatever is present in the mirror that I am trying to polish which is of a constructive nature, then, those elements are present because of, by the Grace of Allah, his example, as well as the example of his shaykh, and the example of all of the great saints of our silsilah leading back to the Prophet

Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the rest of the prophetic tradition beginning with Adam (peace be upon him) which have inspired and informed the last 50-plus years of my life.

I will end this section of the book by relating just a few, short, additional episodes involving life with my shaykh. Many episodes could have been selected, but the following ones were chosen.

The song: “To Sir with Love” sung by Lulu and which was the title song for the movie of the same name starring Sidney Poitier has the line: “How do you thank someone who has taken you from crayons to perfume?” Discounting the perfume aspect of things, my shaykh did take me from the children’s crayons with which I had been thoroughly preoccupied before meeting him and struggling toward much more adult activities.

For example, I had written essays in university. However, I had never written an essay or a report on a topic about which I felt so woefully inadequate as the first report that my shaykh asked me to write concerning the issue of textbook bias toward Islam that was contained in the materials that were being used to teach grammar school and high school students in the Province of Ontario.

The foregoing report was written only a year, or two, following my introduction to my spiritual guide. I can vividly remember my shaykh’s response after reading my initial effort (which was only a few pages long) concerning the foregoing topic as a certain look came across his countenance and, simultaneously, he made a gesture with his hand, and, together, the two expressions concerning the report seemed to say – ‘Come on, you can do better than this’ -- even though nothing was actually said.

I grasped the gist of what was being communicated to me, and I went back to work. Hopefully, a better effort would be forthcoming.

Time passed and a new edition of the report was handed over to my shaykh. It was about five times longer than the original offering, and it was much more to his liking than the

previous “effort” because, after a few changes here and there, the document was released to the Ministry of Education in Ontario, the Canadian media, the University of Toronto, and the Muslim community.

The report created quite a stir. It generated ramifications that unfolded over the next eight or nine years, including, eventually, the provincial government asking our organization to participate in a program that would try to come up with a set of guidelines concerning bias in education not only with respect to Muslims and Islam but also in relation to an array of other religious, racial, ethnic, gender, and cultural issues.

After the foregoing foray into report writing, a number of other reports ensued, and as I went through the process of completing those documents, I picked up some knowledge, understanding, and competency in a variety of areas. Nonetheless, there is no denying the fact that the aforementioned first effort was little more than a symbolic expression of someone who was working with using children’s crayons to color the complexities, depths, and nuances of life and my shaykh, by the Grace of Allah, had helped to move me in a more developed and mature direction.

What was true in relation to the foregoing report dynamic also applied to what happened during the next fifty years in an array of other areas of my life. Indeed, “how does one thank someone who has brought you from crayons to perfume?”

The textbook campaign began to take on a life of its own. At a certain point during that campaign, an indoor rally had been organized which would be followed by a march through downtown Toronto that would end up at the government buildings for the Province of Ontario that were located in Queen’s Park.

A professional film maker had offered to cover the march and provide footage for a documentary that was in the planning stages. The documentary would, then, be taken to a number of countries in the Muslim world (including Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, Lebanon, and Turkey) and be shown to officials in those countries as part of our attempt to get their

support for the textbook campaign that was being conducted in Ontario, Canada.

I was part of the 1975 delegation that travelled to the countries listed in the previous paragraph. However, when the time came to show the finished documentary to people during our trip, we didn't have a projector with which to show the film and none of our hosts seemed to have a suitable projector either.

When we were in Mecca, my shaykh asked me to go to Jeddah, a nearby port city which was commercially oriented, and see if I could find a projector with which to show the documentary that we had produced. The only problem was that we had no money to purchase such a machine, and I didn't speak Arabic.

Several local Saudis who had befriended us offered to drive us to Jeddah to search for a projector. When we arrived at the main commercial area for the city, we were eventually able to locate a store that sold film projectors but the person running the store was having difficulty understanding what I were trying to say about having no money with which to purchase a projector, and, therefore, took us to another building where the owner of the store had an office.

Fortunately, the man to whom we were introduced spoke English. I explained who we were and what we were trying to do and provided a little background concerning the textbook bias campaign that was being conducted in Canada, and, as well, I also explained our lack of funds.

After listening to me, the man gave instructions to the person who had brought us to the store owner to take us back to the store and let us have whatever we wanted. He agreed that we could pay him back when we returned to Canada, and the matter was settled with a handshake and words to the effect that now the matter was between Allah and us – “us” being the people to who trust was being extended.

Quite frankly, I have difficulty envisioning the possibility that if someone from Saudi Arabia showed up in Canada, unable



to speak English, and went into a store in downtown Toronto asking to be given a projector without being able to pay for that device that such an individual would be able to leave the store with said projector. In fact, if that person wasn't careful, he might even end up being labeled a terrorist due to such strange and suspicious activity.

The textbook bias campaign continued on for a little over a decade. A few years after our initial foray into the Muslim world to inform them about the issue, another trip was planned.

This time we were going to take thousands of petitions to the Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Switzerland that concerned the textbook bias issue. The petition forms had been designed, printed, and distributed by our group and had been signed by Canadian Muslims, mostly from the Province of Ontario.

The petitions had been taped together by connecting the bottom of one petition with the top of the next petition. The linked-together paper petitions were wound around a wooden, hollow tube that connected two, large, circular disks which, in an earlier life, were used to contain layers of wires or cables that had been wound around the aforementioned tubular center-piece, and when standing by itself looked sort of like one of the Galactic Imperial fighter vehicles that appeared in the first Star War movie

The contraption was not small, and it held thousands of signed petitions. Together, the wheel-like wooden holder and the petitions weighed a fair amount, but this is what we took to Switzerland, and, as well, this is what we rolled into, and left at, the offices of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations.

We had started the foregoing trip toward the beginning of the month of Ramadan. After we finished our business at the UN, we waited for a third member from Toronto to catch up to us before moving on with the rest of the journey.

Although we had not fasted during the first couple of travel days or during our one day in Switzerland, nevertheless when

we began the first leg of our trip to the Muslim world, our shaykh indicated that we should keep the fast even though it was not incumbent on us to do so because of our journey. As a result, we had the opportunity to see what fasting is like in Muslim countries that often are a lot hotter than the conditions under which fasting is observed in Canada.

We had been in Saudi Arabia for a couple of weeks, keeping the fast, when our shaykh was taken ill. We went to a hospital in Medina and were waiting for a doctor and/or nurse to look after our guide.

We were all seated waiting for someone to assist our shaykh, but our guide seemed to be on the verge of passing out or slipping toward unconsciousness. Yet, all at once, in a very forceful way, the sounds of a zikr began to come forth from him.

Given how ill he seemed to be, I was dumbfounded that such a rigorous form of zikr was issuing forth from him in such an audible way. Nobody was in the area where we were sitting and, so, what was taking place was not drawing the attention of anyone.

The zikr went on for a period of time, and, then, came to a halt. Shortly after that, some hospital staff came and moved our shaykh to a room where he was examined, and, then, a determination was made to admit him to hospital. The person that had joined us in Switzerland and I retired to the hotel where we had been staying.

The next day we got word that our shaykh's condition was not good and that it was a bit of 'touch and go' concerning his prognosis. However, our shaykh had forwarded instructions for us to continue on with our intended itinerary to Kuwait, and, then, Qatar before moving on to Pakistan.

We did as instructed, meeting with government and religious figures in both Kuwait and Qatar, before traveling to Karachi. Since neither my traveling companion nor I had any money (just our already paid-for plane tickets), finding living accommodations was a bit unnerving and tricky.



In fact, at times I thought the two of us might end up in prison. Yet, by the Grace of Allah, our hotel bills were paid for by the Kuwaiti and Qatari governments, and as a result we were able to eventually travel to Pakistan.

Before leaving Kuwait, the two visitors from the West were interviewed by a local, but prominent newspaper. Our pictures were taken as well.

The following day an article about the textbook bias issue in Canada was published in an Arab-language newspaper with our pictures above the text. Both the text and the picture were given a prominent place in the paper's format.

We were later told that our story had temporarily upstaged coverage of the war in Lebanon. Normally, the front page of the newspaper had been given to the war that was unfolding in Lebanon, but on that day, the Canadian textbook bias story, along with our photos, had been given priority.

A day, or so, after arriving in Pakistan, we received word that our shaykh had recovered and would be arriving in Pakistan soon. He came on the day of 'Eid which marks the end of the month of fasting.

We celebrated the occasion. Then, we traveled to Hyderabad, Pakistan where our shaykh's family lives and observed Fatiha.

The bus ride to Hyderabad featured dueling buses traveling at high speeds while the respective drivers played leap frog with one another as they sped down the highway and nonchalantly kept turning their heads around to talk to people who were sitting in seats just behind the drivers as those two warring pilots -- like cloned versions of the Red Baron of the First World War -- engaged in risky passes in an attempt to out-maneuver the other bus driver, and all of the foregoing was accompanied with ear-splitting Pakistani music that filled the bus.

I thought crossing the desert between Medina and Mecca by car while fasting during an incredibly hot day was a jaunt in the park compared to the bus ride to Hyderabad. The chaos of the bus ride seemed to mirror the raging mood of the huge river

that ran along next to the highway because those rampaging, storm-fed waters seemed to be almost out of control and ready to flood the areas bordering its banks ... including the possibility of enveloping the two buses and their inhabitants in even more dynamic turmoil than already was the case.

The kamikaze-style of bus driving was not unique to individuals in Pakistan. I would encounter the same sort of extreme daring-do when I traveled by bus on Independence Day in India as the driver, while traveling at a pretty good clip of speed, twisted and turned the steering wheel to avoid crowded streets filled with people, motorcycles, donkey-driven carts, other buses, potholes, and cows while talking to the individual who was seated just behind him.

The episode with which this section will end has to do with the time that I accompanied my shaykh when we met the Oil Minister of Saudi Arabia during a time when OPEC was at the height of its powers and, as a result, was both feared and reviled practically everywhere in the West. Our shaykh had heard that Dr. Ahmed Zaki Yamani was going to be visiting Toronto, Canada for some high level meetings with government officials and various corporations.

My shaykh thought: Nothing ventured, nothing gained, and, therefore, he made contact with the people who were running interference for the oil minister and sought an audience with the latter individual in order to talk about the textbook bias campaign in Canada. We were surprised when word came that we could meet with the oil minister, but we were told that the meeting would be very brief because there were a lot of important meetings that had been scheduled for the day.

We were given a date, time and place for the appointment. When we arrived, the RCMP and the rest of the security team that were guarding the proceedings seemed to wonder who we were and what we were doing there because we neither looked like government officials nor corporate executives.

Three initiates of the Sufi path, of which I was one, accompanied our shaykh to the meeting. We waited for a bit of time and, then, were called forth and sort of prompted to make

it quick as we were led into the room where the Oil Minister was waiting.

Initially, things were a little awkward. However, when the Oil Minister discovered that we were Sufis and lovers of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) everything changed.

Our shaykh and the Oil Minister began to talk about many topics, including the textbook bias campaign. The Oil Minister also related some interesting experiences that he had, one of which almost ended his life. He also indicated that it was habit to observe I'tikaf during the last ten days of Ramadan and disappear in the mosque of the Prophet for that period of time.

He poured and personally served each of us tea. He presented us with some gifts, and invited our shaykh and my two fellow-initiates to come to Saudi Arabia, all expenses paid (I was unable to go at the time of the trip), and when the three invited guests did go to Saudi Arabia a number of months later on, they were each given several thousand riyals to spend as they wished.

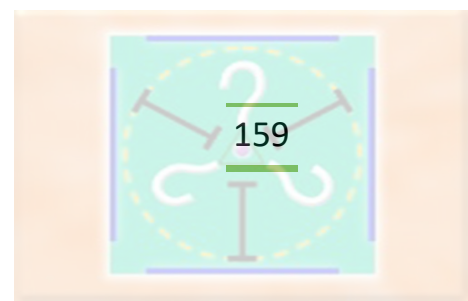
The meeting, which had been scheduled for only a few minutes, ended up running nearly an hour. When we exited the meeting, the RCMP and the rest of the security who had been impatiently waiting outside of the meeting room had a whole different attitude toward us than when we first arrived, but they still didn't seem to have any clue as to what was going on.

This brings us to the end of my synopsis of some of ways in which my shaykh played an important role in my life both when he was physically in this world as well as after he had left this physical world but, as indicated in the previous Quranic verses, he had not died but was alive and enjoying a bounty from his Lord – some of which was, by the Grace of Allah, shared with me.

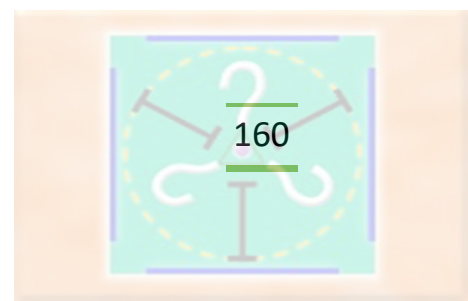
Many other events could have been included in the foregoing collection of episodes. Nonetheless, I feel that the accounts which have been discussed in the foregoing pages will provide the reader with not only a synoptic sense of what my shaykh and his shaykh were like, but, as well, provide a synoptic

| A Sufi Synopsis |

indication of just how fortunate I have been, by the Grace of Allah, to have been brought into his sphere of spiritual influence.

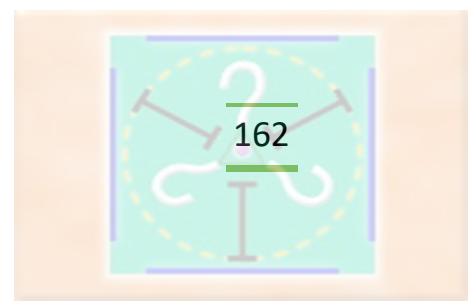


| A Sufi Synopsis |



Synopsis 3: Poetical Sketches -- A few rhythms and rhymes that help summarize, in poetical form, different themes of importance concerning my spiritual journey. The following poems are not on the qualitative level (either spiritually or literarily) of someone like Hazrat Rumi (may Allah be pleased with him), but they are all: Sincere, from the heart, and offer – I hope -- a variety of considerations upon which to reflect.

| A Sufi Synopsis |



States: The Usual Suspects

With strands of sleep still twined
About consciousness, I
Search, checking to see what
Feelings are present to
Meet the day.

Hung-over from events
Of yesterday, one is
Not sure what residues
Will have endured through the
Night, to filter what is,
Yet, to come.

Memories are screened by
Some wired projectionist
With a random bent and
A real attitude to
Vent, giving an edge to
The virtual scenes blinking
On and off inside of me.
I would like them to stop, but
The whole thing is beyond
My control.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

Rummaging through closets
Of emotion, looking
For clothes to suit a mood,
Considering this and
That possibility
To convey who I am,
At least for today.
Nothing seems right. In haste
I pull whatever is next
Off the rack.

Rituals of life have
Begun, and before the
Day is done, I will have
Run through variations
On an array of Habits
Which color existence
And consume time. Traffic
Lights of Being that tell
One when to stop, and where
One should go.

Appetites of one kind
Or the other start to
Flow in different parts
Of my body ... They push
Me here or pull me there.
Forcing one to know, when
To say: "Yes", when to say:
"No". Like an inductee

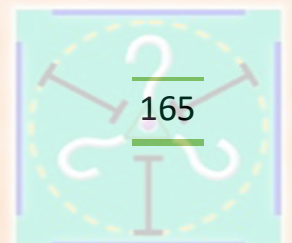


| A Sufi Synopsis |

In an army of the
Living dead, hungers haunt
My being.

Ideas wash up on the
Shores of awareness like
Flotsam from ships lost at
Sea. As I sift through what
Seems like endless debris,
I salvage items of
Worth, but the process goes
Slowly, and my light is
Variable, and there
Are shadows with which I
Must contend.

Likes and dislikes flow through
Me as a northeaster,
Full of fury, driven
Rain. Moved by forces that
I do not understand,
Wet and chilled to the bone,
I wonder when the next
Front is due to pass this
Way. Life seems to be trapped
In endless cycles of
Sunny storms.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

Rhythms of night begin
To ascend as day's end
Slowly slips toward darkness.
Thoughts of what might have been
Flicker in the twilight;
Choices made; chances missed.
Questions of right and wrong
Stir the air as I drift
Off to sleep, where dreams wait.
Soon, the soul's challenge will
Start again.



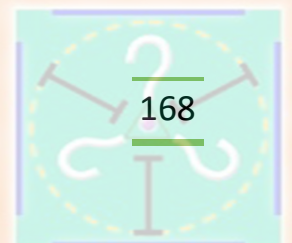
The Gift

Earlier, a gift was given to me --
Beautiful, fragile but a mystery --
Whose nature and purpose I did not see.
Its delicate features gave off a strange
Light, as if powered deep from within. A
Bright glow illumined the surrounding night.
Mesmerized by its possibilities,
Awareness parted like ancient Red Seas
As suddenly it seemed to question me.
“Do you know who I am or why I’m here?”
Embarrassed, perplexed and beset by fear,
My soul was in chaos, I strained to hear.
Yet, nothing was spoken. Instead I heard
Thoughts thundering across my heart, like herds
Of unicorns ... unique, unreal, absurd.
First, faith, love, and, then, generosity
Arose within, followed by empathy,
Acceptance, openness, and simplicity.
Forgiveness appeared, humility too,
Friendship, trust, peace – each second something new.
Honesty, purity ... the thoughts ran true.
Strength, nobility and integrity
Marched by. A quiet came that was eerie.
The thoughts had stopped, but I did not feel free.
What value should be assigned to this event?
Did a fleeting visit mark my descent
Into madness or was something else meant?
Reflections ceased when the gift seemed to speak:
“You don’t recall me? Perhaps you’re too weak



| A Sufi Synopsis |

From that game with yourself called hide-and-seek.
Or, maybe memory has been dulled by
Years of seduction, just one lie after
Another until it's time to die. You
Have needed my help every day of
Life, but there are others whom you obey.
So, Alas! You have lost touch with my way.
I am the portal through which you must go
To reach the truth of your being, to know
Who, in essence, you are. I'm not your foe.
Yet, you resist and ignore my presence.
Those thoughts heard within your heart are my scents.
Reminders from God, I'm your innocence.



Rhythms of Spiritual Longing

I miss You like waves without Ocean,
Like seeds without earth,
Like faith without devotion,
Like life without birth.
Oh! What is this secret coursing
Through me, this gently raging surf?

I miss You like desert without sands,
Like bodies without souls,
Like drummers without hands,
Like beggars without bowls.
Shall I find an oasis of
Truth or a mirage in my soul?

I miss You like books without an end,
Like races without a start,
Like curves without a bend,
Like paintings without art.
Will You disclose to me why I
Am and the essence of my heart?

I miss You like courage without fears,
Like flowers without rain,
Like prayers without tears,
Like mirrors without a tain.
Will You whistle past my stop like
Some distant, midnight phantom train?

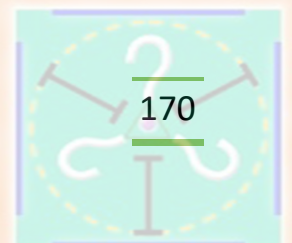
| A Sufi Synopsis |

I miss You like knowledge without depth,
Like vision without sight,
Like length without breadth,
Like spectrums without light.
Will you show me how love is like
A butterfly's chaotic flight?

I miss You like sin without Mercy,
Like wings without the sky,
Like locks without a key,
Like addicts without a high.
If Your wide door opens to me
Will there be a smile or a sigh?

I miss You like wars without strife,
Like letters without stamps,
Like nature without life,
Like bridges without ramps.
Will trumpets play taps for souls lost
Through treachery of their own camps?

I miss You like gnosis without bliss,
Like needles without thread,
Like lips without a kiss,
Like the poor without bread.
What meaning can be given when
A life hangs between hope and dread?

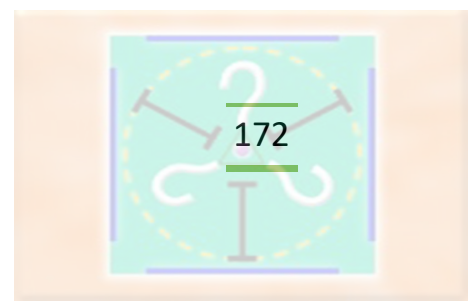


| A Sufi Synopsis |

I miss You like ships without the seas,
Like planets without a sun,
Like forests without trees.
I miss You when all is said and done.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

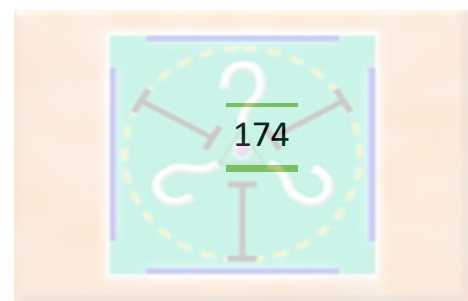


The Way Home

Choice is a space with many rooms,
Yet, with just two ways to go. A
Maze into which we are born with
Limited time to know how to
Proceed. Our life is torn between
Lower and higher entreaties
That caress our hearts. Callings to
Which we aspire. Potentials that
Set us apart, in journeys which twist
And turn among stark fates that mark
Boundaries within which we move
And learn like lowly ores in dark
Foundries ... fragile, easy to break.
Each soul needs work and Grace to bring
Out its value ... a high-stake quest
Which takes flight on the wings of time,
Like a mid-wife who delivers
From darkness to light through which we
Struggle to gain sight of our core
Self, and why we are, and all that
These truths entail. Take warning! The
Web of free will is subtle and
Spreads its tale across cosmic-like
Filaments ... vibrating human
Intentions that form testaments
Brought forth by Divine conventions
On a Day that we all must face.



| A Sufi Synopsis |



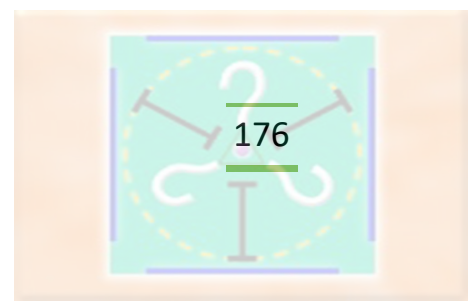
Life: A Work in Progress

Echoes of death lap the shores of my being.
Harbingers of a tide that is yet to come
When negation rolls in and life ebbs away.
Time stalks me, haunts me, taunts briefly and, then, is
Gone ... an undertow which lures and sweeps me
Along according to a purpose that is,
Yet, unknown. Transformations mark stages of
Becoming along chaotic paths that seem
To disappear in mists of incompleteness,
Leaving no trace to find. Deep within I feel
A mystery ... not clearly, but in colored
Shadows which move like owls in the night, asking:
"Who, Who are you?" My spirit yearns to see what
Is calling to me from behind life's veil of
Anonymity, to know why I am or
Not at all. Caught between forces of give in
and go on, while waiting for the first light of
Dawn, my heart fights back tears laced with the salt of
Earthly fears. Beauty weaves a melody which
Mingles with my soul ... harmony flowing through
God's Grace against counterpoints of discord from
Me. Alien places, inviting and, sort
Of, vaguely familiar, reach out through strangely
framed symbols glimmering through life's surface hues.
Winds of loneliness swirl about me nightly,
Bringing the chill of freedom to mortal bones.
I wrap my cloak of friendship tightly, as doubt
Kindles flames of smoldering uncertainty
And questions boil in a cauldron of living



| A Sufi Synopsis |

Possibility. Answers whisper secrets
In measured tones of subtlety. On the edge
Of a truth, much remains to be revealed.

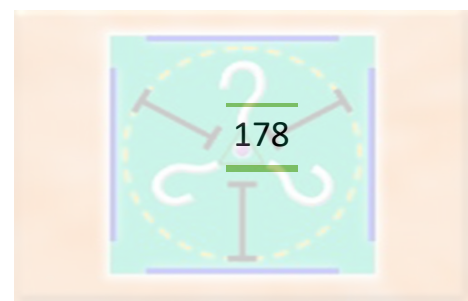


Aspirations

In ignorance, ambition flew to the highest
Realm, stating, "I wish to be Divine". Closing
A door creaked with laughter, in a gentle way and
Politely, yet firmly, I was sent packing, back
To a lower world, much less sublime.
Still foolish, but a little wiser, I offered
To be a prophet, which at the time, seemed a quite
Reasonable stand, but, then, I learned, and this took
A while, that if I did my very best, even
Then, my condition would be less than the station
In which their lives began, and far below the plane
Which destiny had set for their spirit's ascent.
Chastened, my goal was recast: How about saints I
Asked – any openings there? The answer came through
Silence. I began to sense the vast difference
Between the friends of God and the whims of nothing
But a mystical fraud. So, humbled, I started
To live in a simple way, with just a single
Hope that some fine day my heart might find release from
The cocoon which had been spun with the fabric of
Desire. Peace came to me slowly after many
Years of work, and I forgot about the vain goals
Which marked the folly of a youth filled with the "stuff"
Of emptiness. Then, one night, in the quiet of
My soul, a light appeared that made things very clear.
If I will try to be my essential self, I
Might realize the Divine Presence within me,
Where God remains as He Is, and I'll do the same.



| A Sufi Synopsis |



Allah Hu – God Who Is Here

Oh our Lord, we have sinned.
This we do confess.
Hear our cries, cleanse our lives,
Relieve our distress.

Oh our Lord, tears of shame
Fall with each desire.
How do we learn to will
For what is higher.

Oh our Lord, Paradise
Seems so far away.
Then, again, all too soon,
We will face Your Day.

Oh our Lord, we feel lost,
like ships run aground.
Send us faith, keep us safe,
Help us when we're down.

Oh our Lord, let us find
The rope from your door.
Give us strength to hold tight
So we may endure.

Oh our Lord, we do not
Understand Your way,
We can do nothing but
Seek Your help each day.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

Oh our Lord, we are blind
To this gift we live.
We are deaf; we are dumb,
Yet, You give and give.

Oh our Lord, everywhere
Are signs of Your Grace.
We long for the time when
You unveil Your Face.

Oh our Lord, You are not
Found in time, nor space.
But You said, that our hearts
Contain such a place.

Oh our Lord, we do fear
The loss of Your Light.
Without You, darkness rules;
Day is veiled by night.

Oh our Lord, You have sent
Mercy to mankind.
May Your Peace be on him
Till the end of time.

Oh our Lord, who are we
To receive Your Breath?
Perhaps this mystery
Will be known through death.



Muhammad (Peace be upon him)

The Qur'an described the Prophet as just a man,
While this is true, this is like saying glass is sand.
The latter is lowly, opaque, and needs to be
Subjected to fire so as to gain a degree of
Purity, through which, God willing, one might see the
Truth of what is visible through life's window. The
Glass-maker took the potential of a clay lump,
Twisting and twirling it for, some say, just a Day
Between Fingers of Mercy as it became a
Jewel of beauty through which creation came, via
The Breath of Qun, and began to voice the message
Of how to become the mirror's tain. "Die before
you die", he said, was a central seed to instill
In our hearts ... a deed, God willing, that takes root like
A selfless plant of piety with fruits of: Love,
Prayer, faith and sincerity that become blessings
For all humanity if we are ready to
Abandon hypocrisy. He counseled us to
Pray without ceasing ... to be perpetually
Recalling Divinity, to realize the
Need for humility and modesty before
The Lord of Majesty ... to know that the root of
All prayers requires renouncing the world of earthly
Multiplicity and affirming the One. He
Is reported to have said we are asleep, and
When we die, we awake from the haunting, deep dream
Of life as we come to intimately know there
Is no reality but God ... that we owe our
Existence to Divinity ... the One Who sows



More blessings into our lives than oceans have drops.
He has warned us that we may reflect on all things,
But not on Allah's Essence, for this surely brings
Nothing but ignorance and arrogance to minds
And hearts that depart from the clearly given signs
Concerning human capacity and inclines
One towards the whispered sweet-nothings of devilry.
"If you love your Creator, then love creation
First" are words of value for people of stations
Simple and complex since faith's completion will not
Take place till we love one another as he taught.
Belief won't be perfected unless we have sought
Sincerely for others what we wish for ourselves.
He has told us the Qur'an has an outer sense
Yet also has levels of hidden meaning. Hence,
One should not be too quick to dismiss mysteries
That might only be known by those servants who see
By the Light of Divinity to the depths of
Being's Sea and bring back to the beach-dwellers pearls,
Of wisdom that can answer all that we beseech.

The Last Sermon

A poetical rendering of the last sermon or khutbah of Hazrat Khwajah Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti Ajmeri (may Allah be pleased with him), a Sufi saint of the twelfth/thirteenth centuries.

With your whole self, daughter and son,
Try to love all things and hate none.
But mere words of peace will not do,
Nor will talk of God see you through.
For in each of us is a gift
A seed of pure Grace that can lift
One up from roots of lowly Earth
To the heights of our timeless worth.
Produce your fruits of joy and peace
Go share with all and never cease
To send perfumes of love that seep
Gently toward souls not, yet, complete.
Stroke in your hearts, truth's blazing fire,
Let it consume all your desire
So through this will come peace that heals
And soothes the hurt which lives conceal.
Use the light of your soul to dispel
Darkness that seeks to sound your death-knell.
Dissolve storm clouds laden with war;
Be kind to the weak at your door.
Do not ask for favors from kings,
Nor take what a courtier brings.
Do not seek help from any but One,
The One through Whom all things are done.
Yet, don't turn the needy away.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

Exchange laughter for their dismay.
Bless the poor and the ones cast out;
Like the orphan who's filled with doubt.
Bless the new widow who has lost,
And, now, must pay what fate has cost.
This is your goal, your life's true task,
To serve all as you have been asked.
Know your duty, learn to be strong,
Honor that to which you belong.
Guard deeds you do before you die,
So from our lips will be no sigh
Of shame when you finally say
Farewell to Earth on Judgment Day.



Remembering Hafiz (May Allah be pleased with him)

A poetical rendering of some of the teachings of a Sufi saint whose spiritual guide once assigned the young seeker the spiritual task of writing a poem every day during a certain stage of the young man's spiritual journey.

If a person is seeking reward, stay away
From the path of lovers since such thoughts spoil the play.
Love must not be contaminated by desire,
And all intentions will be tested in life's fire.
Become content with risking everything for love.
Don't be concerned with hell below or heaven above.
People have gone mad while pursuing worldly dreams.
Become mad with love for things are not as they seem.
When young, we forget that youth will soon disappear
Into the lowly depths of a time we all fear.
Love is eternal and will stay beyond life's end.
So, give up your delusion and embrace the Friend.
Some think that strength and power are all one needs
The armor of seekers is made from loving deeds.
The wail of separation comes from deep within.
Who will hear one's lament amidst this worldly din.
We are all consumed with our own lonely affair.
Yet, there is One Who listens and is always there,
Waiting and watching and pouring the secret wine
Into a cup of love that is marked with a sign
That will be known by those who are willing to drink.
Depart from your obsession with having to think.
Our senses are clogged with residues of the day,



As food, sleep, feeling or comforts all have their say.
The heart, soul, and spirit have all been swept aside
While being inundated by a worldly tide.
Take passage on love's ship and become a deck-hand,
For work, not money, is what transports you from land.
Glide through true waters through reefs of falsity.
Wash down the ego's deck, lower the flag of 'Me.'
Don't worry about your reputation on shore
For complaints are often made about those who may soar.
Drown yourself in the ocean of Divinity.
Don't fear what awaits in waters of mystery.
Swim toward the light-filled depths and forget surface waves.
Explore the treasures that lie waiting in love's caves.
Do understand that the molecules of the sea
Are bound together by forces of purity.
Love's attractive nature makes the waters as one
Mirror that reflects endless beauty from the Sun.
And, Love's Presence is what holds together one's life
When the soul is buffeted with the winds of strife.
Storms, placid seas, and rolling waves are all part
Of the tale that discloses meanings to your heart.
The journey does not go from worldly place to place,
But, rather, guides one through stations of inner Grace.
Our cups are made from elements of Adam's clay,
Yet, the wine which it holds comes through Muhammad's way.
Thoughts are cast in the mold of Hafiz's adab
But they are expressed through the colors of Anab.

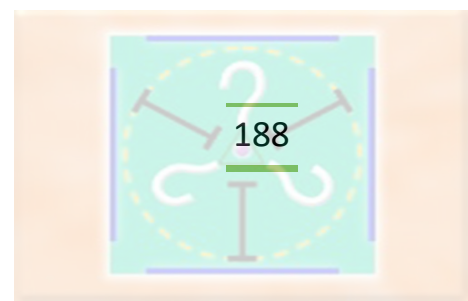
The Spiritual Charlatan

Horizons seem to expand into lands that
Dreams are made from as past disappointments fade
Toward forgetfulness. Possibilities fuel
My heart's soul with high-octane hope that helps
Me cope with doubts that like vampires feed off the
Night. Moonbeams lead down a strange way to spaces
Where some say the light of the Sun seems to rise
In reflected, human form. Prepared to
Abandon all that preceded this moment,
A sought-for future calls me to embrace new
Uncertainties. Yearning haunts the halls of time
Where I have learned to deal with the problems when
Real men taunt my desire to transcend.
Shallow surfaces deceive. Misdirection
Is a key to magic that is spun around
One's eyes, ears, and mind. I only ask for the
Truth, but my hosts are ruthless with words which wrap
Events in pretty packages, like bait on
Hooks. My fate wobbles in between what is said
And done by those fully mesmerized with one
Who remains a mystery. "We write our
Own stories," he said, which makes me wonder why
Someone would betray one's essence in such a
Calculated way. "I never lie," is a
Phrase that falls from his lips like the quips of a
Politician who rarely speaks with simple
Honesty. Wishing that the myth had been more
Than empty promises, my heart spins on with



| A Sufi Synopsis |

The task of addressing questions that it asks.



Freedom Came Today

Freedom came today for Iraqis
In a measured display of shock and awe
That bestowed gratuitous wounds
On thankful souls who'll line the streets
And greet us as compassionate heroes.

Freedom came today for six hundred
Thousand innocents which, of course, we deny
As being far too high a figure based on data
That do not keep track of dead Iraqis.

Freedom came today for poor Sami --
Who was looking for safety
but found some kindness
Which blew him away, so let us play taps to mark
When he became part of America's dream.

Freedom came today for journalist Ali --
Thrown in jail for, possibly, thirty years
Because he didn't have the sense to write lies
Rather than truth about ruthlessly forced liberty.

Freedom came today for 'Aisha who was raped by
Those who set her free. This sort of special gallantry
Is, of course, an anomaly since they normally
Stick with search and destroy.

Freedom came today for unlucky Hassan
Who was trying to see his family, but ended up
Naked in Abu Ghraib, with dogs growling
Devoid of shame at his dignity.

Freedom came today for Rab'ia who was caressed
By white phosphorous which made her feel
All warm and fuzzy inside, right down to her small
Little bones. Surely, her cup runneth over.

Freedom came today for the masses who can,
Whenever they like, turn on faucets empty
Of water, or switch on lights with no electricity
To illumine tyranny's just end.

Freedom came today in such neatly
Wrapped packages of hypocrisy
And lies ... democracy at its best, sold as a
Capital idea to people hungry for sovereignty.

Freedom came today to greedy ones, who,
Out of duty, lobbied their way to no bid, cost-plus
Contracts, made in the secrecy of self-serving facts
That enriched only non-Iraqis.

Freedom came today in uncivil ways,
One brother, against another,
Locked in malignant enmity,
Set loose by U.S. magnanimity.
O' beautiful with rapacious eyes.

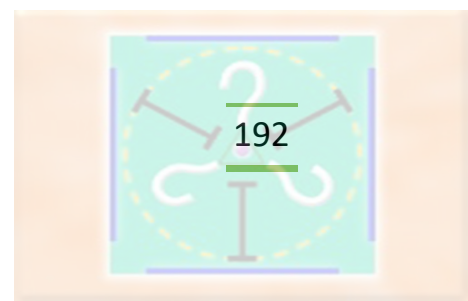
Freedom came today for bands with plans for
Restless hands ready to kill sand-dwellers
So wars will not wash up on homeland shores,
And mangled lives can be sanitized through illusions.

Freedom came today when night-vision goggles
Found opportunity in their sights, and those who
Never saw it coming were liberated.
Strange how we see their bodies but not their hearts.

Freedom might come today if the good old USA --
Despite a touch of delusion about it's assumed
Place in God's space - would attend to the
Ten Commandments and leave Iraq alone.

Freedom might come today if knowledge
Took hold in citizens' souls about democracy's
Decay through abuse of power which shackles
Conscience amidst fears of created demons.

| A Sufi Synopsis |



Some Teachings of Attar

(May Allah be pleased with him

A poetical rendition with some words
reflecting another's rendition of such
teachings

Oh those who have been consuming the fruit of life
While neglecting the deeper root, this is like the
False dawn that captures one's vision leading one to
Believe the sun is close to rising when this is
Not so. We have become immersed in games of no
Worth, where we dream of scoring winning goals as we
Forget basic truths about losing our souls. Like
Children, we chase after bubbles that glitter but
Elude our grasp or burst flat with emptiness when
Caressed by our touch. Soon we will lie down at death's
Door with such regret, sensing that we've been chasing
Wind as we leave the world behind and begin the
Real life, knowing that we have not prepared for what
May come but spend precious time ensnared with worldly
Affairs made of vanity. We carouse markets
Of inanity and insanity, squandering
Our life's potential while playing the ego's fife.
The world is a hydra that must be fed, yet no
Matter how much we give each head what it desires
There are still further cries generating still more
Unsatisfied sighs, like a greedy, rich fool who
Prays to God to increase wealth and does not find this
Odd. Remember Pharaoh whose claims were so bold or
Qarun whose heart was obsessed with gold. History



Is elusive, like blowing sand that buries our
Memories of facts. The world is a prostitute
Dressed with lurid lures to trigger the body's quest
To embrace the attractions which clothes hide if we
Will just throw discretion aside. Or, perhaps we
Will be seduced by lusts for worldly glories to
Be found in the stores of rich and powerful kings
As we are hypnotized by the illusion of
Things, where banners of fortune change with the wind and
Are hoisted on ropes woven from finest sin. The
Temptations of this life are the threads through which a
Worldly kind of spider spreads sticky filaments
On the path that trap heedless humans and suck from
Them the sap of purpose and leave their carcass to
Rot on flimsy strings of desire that have brought them
Each to an unfashionable end where they will
Have nothing to send on to the Master with the
Broom Who's ready to sweep corpses from the room. All
That we have sought and thought are creations of the
Divine and not our own. God made the atoms that
Rebelled, then, to the truth, would become compelled. From
The Divine comes stories of sin, contrition, and
Retribution owed as well as the condition
Of forgiveness. God is the seeker, way, and
Knowledge masked by the struggle of clay. The triumph
You believed to be your arrival, is not but
God at God's door. We're but tain on a mirror from
Which we are able to reflect Divinity
So lost atoms may regain the wisdom that might
Unite the scattered lights cast by Allah's prism.

Salaams (Seeking Peace and Blessings on the Prophet)

The meaning of the names being used to address the Prophet are given in parenthesis.

Oh **Kahmil** (The perfect one), crown jewel of Love's design.
Oh Reason for the command of Qun (Be, the sound of creation),
We look to your fair example.
There can be no doubt you are God's sign.

Oh **Tayyib** (one who is fragrant), rose with roots of insight.
Oh **Sah-bihq** (one who precedes), sweet seed of creation.
Oh **A-heed** (protects from hellfire), we yearn for your cool touch.
Protect us from nafs (seat of rebellion), shield us with light.

Oh **Maa-hee** (Destroys heedlessness), come into our darkness.
Oh **Taa-hir** (one who is pure), cleanse our lives of misdeeds.
Teach us secrets of the goodly loan (Qur'an, Surah 73:20)
Pray that we will be granted success.

Oh **Jaa-mee** (One of gathered knowledge) our cups are so empty.
Oh **Hah-fee** (Gives true answers) please pour us a few drops.
Oh **Muh-ye** (revives dead hearts with faith), rekindle our desire.
Help us find our way back to the Sea.



Oh **Haa-dee** (one who guides), you're harith (hungry for the good fortune of others) toward the poor.

Oh **Um-mee** (one who is unlettered and has no teachers among humans), your life is eloquent.

Oh Holy alchemist of dross souls,

We are just beggars at **Faa-dhil's** (one who is superior in generosity) door.

Oh **Shaa-fee** (one who cures illness), we seek your saving cure,
For you are the key to healing Grace.

Oh **Shah-feeq** (compassionate), you reflect God's kindness.
You were sent to help us be pure.

Oh **Wah-heed** (unique one), there is no one like you,
On the Earth, nor in all the heavens.

Oh **Wah-lee** (friend of God), what joy your closeness brings.

Oh **Wah-sool** (a uniter), our Lord binds hearts through you.

Oh **Shaa-hid** (witness), we bear witness that "la" (negation, no),
Is the act that precedes all your deeds.

Oh **Say-yid** (master of humans), king of a future day.

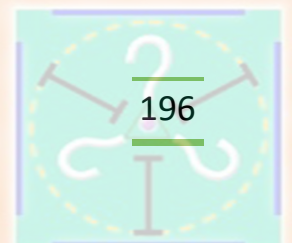
Oh **Shah-heed** (matyr), you gave all for Allah.

Oh **Sih-raaj** (torch of the path), please guide us through the night,

For Iblis (Satan) lies waiting near us all.

O steady flame of **Muh-tah-wak-kil** (places all trust in God),

Train us as martyrs for the inner fight.



Oh **Moun-jee** (delivers from sin), we long to be set free.
Oh dear one wrapped in God's loving care,
Oh owner of rights to intercede,
Humble, yet rich, is your poverty.

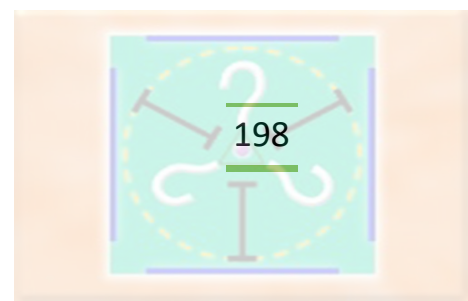
Oh **Kah-reem** (generous), what could we have done
To deserve your generosity?
All we have to offer are our faults,
But, praise God, you're the accepting one.

Oh Allah, please make our faith complete.
Oh Lord, bring forth the bloom of love
For Your most kind and noble servant.
Let us be dust at the Prophet's feet.

Oh you are **sih-raat-muhs-tah-qeem** (the straight path).
You are the fountain of God's **ya-queen** (spiritual certainty).
You are the gift of '**ayn nah-eem** (source through which God's
blessings come).
Oh **Ah-meen** (trustworthy one), you are our **mouh-hay-min**
(guardian and protector).

Oh **Qay-yim** (right and good), master of love's aadaab
(etiquette).
This poor guest seeks a favor from you.
Mus-tah-faa (Divinely elected), despite my lowly state,
Please accept the Salaam of **Ah-NAAB** (One who turns to God in
repentance).

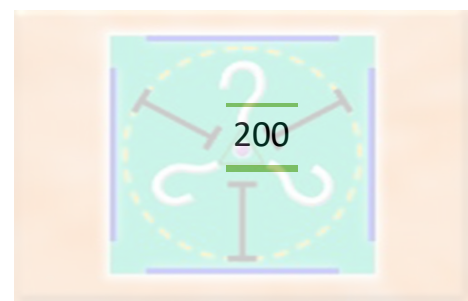
| A Sufi Synopsis |



Synopsis 4: Quranic Guidance:

The following verses do not exhaust the guidance that the Qur'an has to offer. However, for me, they have served as a form of scaffolding with which to engage a variety of constructive properties that are given expression through other teachings of Allah's Holy Book. As such, the verses that appear here are sort of a synopsis concerning many facets God's guidance. They do not constitute the entirety of Divine Guidance, but they are all, at least for me, very essential aspects of guidance that I have tried to keep in mind to help me through the day ... or night.

| A Sufi Synopsis |



| A Sufi Synopsis |

Lo! Ritual worship preserves one from lewdness and iniquity, and verily, remembrance of Allah is more important. (29:45)

Think not of those who are slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord, they have provision. Jubilant are they because of that which Allah has bestowed upon them of His bounty. And, they rejoice for the sake of those who (being left) behind them, have not yet joined them, that they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.(3:169-170)

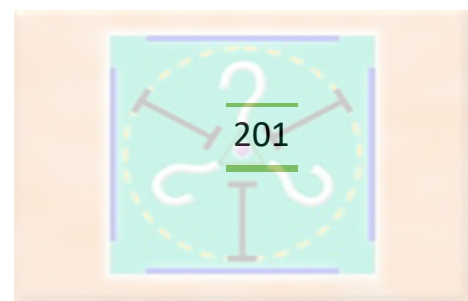
He knows the secret (sirr) and that which is more hidden (kafi). (20:7)

Only those who possess the kernels of understanding remember. (39:9)

I created man and jinn only to worship Me (51:56)

Who created not the heavens and the earth and that is between them in play (44:38)

O humankind! There has come to you a direction from your Lord, and a healing for the diseases in the hearts, and a guidance, and a mercy for the believers. (10:57)



| A Sufi Synopsis |

We sent down from the Qur'an that which is a cure and mercy for the believers. (17:82)

O Humankind! Surely you are ever toiling on towards the Lord, painfully toiling, but you shall meet him. (84:6)

And there is none of us but has a known station. (37:164)

Who has created life and death that He may try which of you is best in conduct. And He is the Mighty, the Forgiving. (67:2)

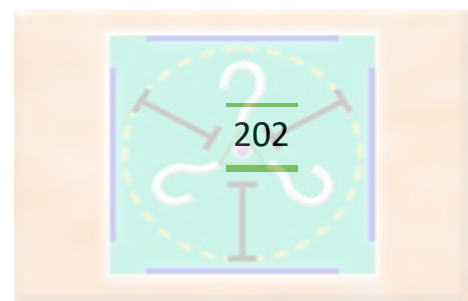
Does not man remember that we created him before when he was nothing? (19:67)

Whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good, has indeed grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold. (31:22)

Do they not see that they are tried once or twice in every year, yet they do not turn [to reality] nor do they take heed. (9:126)

Say: Surely, the Command belongs to God entirely. (3:154)

God is not the least unjust toward His servants. (3:182)



| A Sufi Synopsis |

To everyone We have appointed a law and a way. Had God willed, He could have made you one community but that He may try you by which He has given you. (5:48)

No soul can believe except by the permission of Allah, and He will place doubt/obscurity on those who will not understand. (10:100)

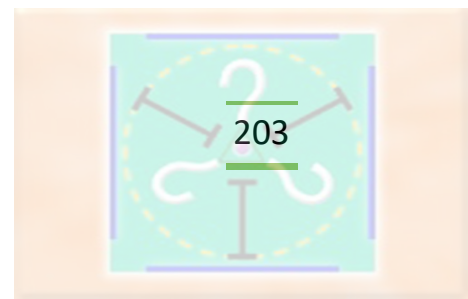
You indeed have in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern of conduct [us'wat hasanah] for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the hereafter, and who engages much in the praise of Allah. (33:21)

... and know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart ... (8:24)

But those will prosper who purify (tazakka) themselves and glorify the Name of their Guardian Lord and lift their hearts in prayer. (87:14-15)

Truly man was created very impatient, fretful when evil touches him and niggardly when good reaches him. (70:19-21)

God charges a soul only to its capacity. (2:286)



| A Sufi Synopsis |

Say: I call to God upon insight ... I and whoever follows after me ... (12:108)

If you are godfearing (taqwa), He will give you discrimination and do away your evils and forgive you. (8:29)

Be careful of your duty to Allah [have taqwa] and God will teach you. (2:282)

The most noble among you in God's eyes is the one among you who is most careful of his duty. (49:13)

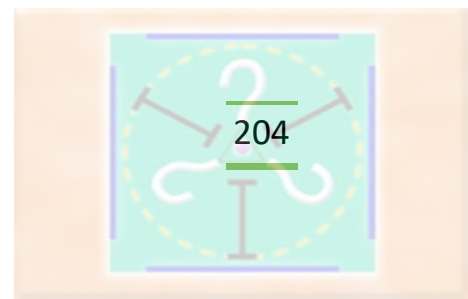
If you love God, follow me (Muhammad) so that God will love you and forgive you your faults. (3:31)

Put all your trust in God if you are believers. (5:23)

God straightens and amplifies (2:245)

You will express your desire for death if you are truthful. (62:6)

He is with you wherever you are; (57:4)



| A Sufi Synopsis |

Whithersoever you turn, there is the face of God. (2:115)

Lo! We have placed all that is on earth as an ornament thereof that we may try them as to which of them is best in conduct. (18:7)

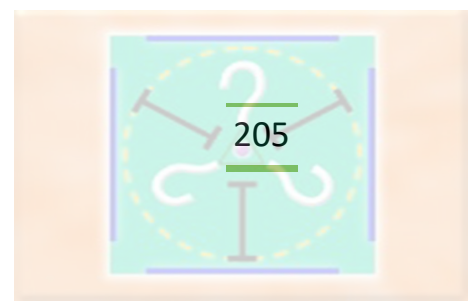
And when We desire to destroy a city, We send Our commandment to the people, who live at ease, and they commit wickedness therein. Thus Our word is proved true against them, and We destroy them utterly. (17:16)

God commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners. (4:58)

God offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, yet they refused to be unfaithful to it and feared from it. But, man has turned unfaithful to it. Surely, he has proven himself to be ignorant and a tyrant. (33:72)

Truly, the soul commands unto evil except such as my Lord has Mercy on. (12:53)

But he inclined toward the world and followed his passions, and so his parable is as the parable of the dog (7:176)



| A Sufi Synopsis |

It is not their eyes that are blind but, rather. the hearts within their breasts (22:46)

So follow the Deen of Ibrahim, the upright. He was not of the idolaters. (3:95)

God has preferred the strugglers over those who hold back. (4:95)

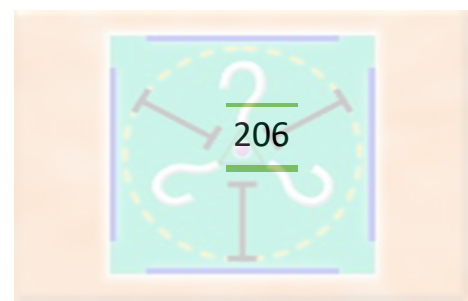
And those who believed, and those who fled their home and struggle in God's way – those are they who have hope in God's mercy. (2:218)

Are they equal – those who know and those who do not know (39:9)

What is there after the Real save error (10:32)

Therefore flee to God, surely I am a plain warner to you from Him. (51:50)

What is with you comes to an end, but what is with God is enduring (16:96)



| A Sufi Synopsis |

In their hearts is a disease and Allah has increased their disease, and grievous is the penalty they incur because they are false to themselves (2:10).

He is the One Who sent down tranquility into their hearts that they might be increased by faith added to their faith. (48:4)

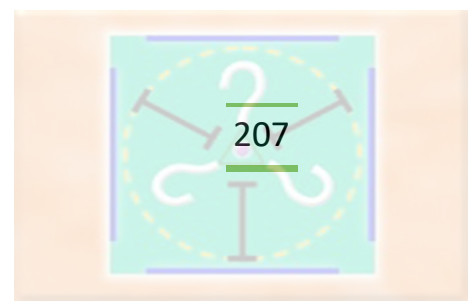
Say: Each works according to his manner. (17:84)

When My servants question you concerning Me – surely I am near. I respond to the call of the suppliant when he calls to me. (2:186)

If anyone forsakes the remembrance of the Most Gracious, We appoint a devil to be an intimate companion for him and he becomes his associate. And most surely they turn them away from the path. Yet, they think they are being guided in the right direction. (43:36-37)

And those who give that they give with hearts afraid because they are about to return unto their Lord – those strive for good things, and they are foremost in attaining them. (23:60-61)

We are closer to him than his own jugular vein. (50:16)



| A Sufi Synopsis |

They will ask you concerning the soul. Say: the soul is from my Lord's Command and of it you have been given little knowledge. (17:85)

His command when He desires aught is to say to it "Be" and it is. (36:82)

There is not a single thing which glorifies Him with His praise, but you understand not their manner of glorification. (17:44)

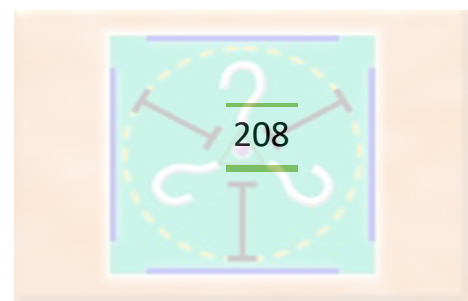
Am I not your Lord (Alastu bi rabbikum)? And the spirits answered: "Yes, we testify (Qarbala)!" (7:172)

He will love them, and they will love Him. (5:54)

His are the treasures of the heavens and earth. (39:63)

He prospers who purifies himself, invokes the name of his Lord, and prays. (87:14-15)

Those who spend their wealth for increase in self-purification, and in whom in their minds there is no favor from anyone for which a reward is expected in return but only the desire to seek for the pleasure of their Lord most high. (92:18-20)



| A Sufi Synopsis |

And We test you by evil and by good by way of trial. (21:35)

And surely We shall test you with some fear and hunger, and loss of property and lives and crops. But give glad tidings to the steadfast – who say when misfortune strikes them – to Allah we belong and to Him is our returning. (2:155-156)

O my slaves who have transgressed against their own souls! Despair not of the mercy of Allah who forgives all sins. (39:53)

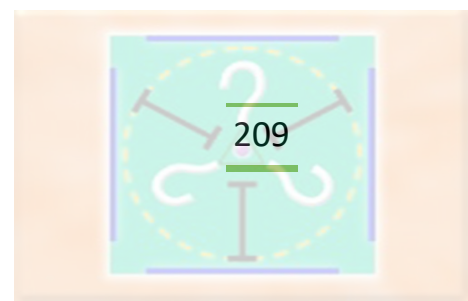
We shall show them our signs in the Universe and in their own souls until it is quite clear to them that it is the truth. (41:53)

O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge. (20:114)

Those who believe and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah; for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction. (13:28)

And be not like those who forgot Allah, therefore, He caused them to forget themselves. (59:19)

And you will be of three kinds: The as to the companions of the right-hand; how happy are the companions of the right hand! And (then) as to those of the left hand; how wretched are the companions of the left hand. And (then) the foremost in the



| A Sufi Synopsis |

race. The foremost in the race are those who will be brought nigh in gardens of delight ... a multitude of those of old, and a few of those of the latter time. (56:7-14)

They ask thee (O Muhammad) what they ought to spend (in the way of God). Say: that which is left after meeting your needs. (2:219)

Repel evil with that which is best (23:96)

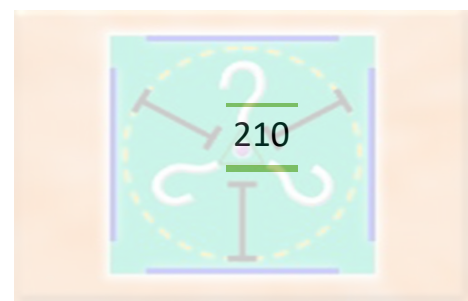
We have not sent you (O Muhammad) except as a mercy to all the worlds. (21:107)

If Allah were to take humankind to task for their wrong-doing, God would not leave here on a living creature, but God reprieves them to an appointed term (16:61)

O you who believe, fight against those infidels close to you. (9:123)

Those whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts them from remembrance of God. (24:37)

You see them looking at you, yet they do not see. (7:198)



| A Sufi Synopsis |

True believers are only those who have faith in Allah and His messenger and have left doubt behind and who strive hard in Allah's cause with their possessions and their lives. They are the ones who are sincere. (49:15)

Whoever obeys the messenger, thereby obeys Allah. (4:80)

Those of faith are overflowing in their love for God. (2:165)

Devote thyself to Him wholeheartedly. (73:8)

And to your Lord turn all your attention. (94:8)

Say: Surely my prayer and my service of sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds. (6:162)

Have you seen him who takes his caprice to be his god? (25:43)

Give to God a goodly gift. (73:20)

Who is he that will offer to God a goodly gift? (57:11)

If you help the cause of God, God will help you. (47:7)



| A Sufi Synopsis |

And to whomsoever Allah does not give light, that person has no light. (24:40)

Every moment He is in a state of Glory. (55:29)

Everything is annihilated except His face. To Him belongs the judgment and to Him shall you be brought back. (28:88)

God embraces all things in Mercy and Knowledge. (40:7)

And remember your Lord within yourself humbly and fearing and in a voice not loud in the morning and evening (7:205)

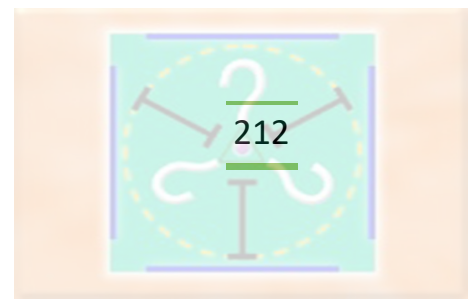
God makes you to be cautious about Himself (3:28)

The Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. (17:23)

Not a leaf falls but He knows it. (6:59)

You did not slay them, but it was God who slew them. (8:17)

And whoever is blind in this will be blind in the Hereafter, and even further from the path. (17:72)



| A Sufi Synopsis |

The Real has come and the unreal has vanished away. Lo!
Falsehood is ever bound to vanish. (17:81)

Each one does according to his rule of conduct, and thy Lord is
best aware of him whose way is right. (17:84)

We have neglected nothing in the Book. (6:38)

Enter houses by their doors. (2:189)

And they planned and Allah also planned, and Allah is the best of
planners. (3:54)

Their commerce profited them not, and they are not rightly
guided. (2:16)

Call upon Allah or call upon the Beneficent, unto which so ever
you call, His are the most beautiful names. (17:110)

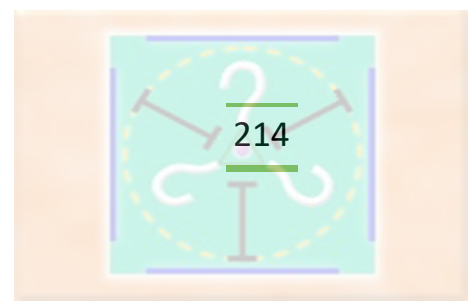
Shall we tell you who will be the greatest losers in their works?
It is those whose striving goes astray in the present life while
they believe they are working good deeds. (18:103-104)



| A Sufi Synopsis |

The believers are those whose hearts tremble when God is mentioned, and when His communications are recited to them, they increase them in faith and in their Lord do they trust. (8:2)

Oppression is worse than murder (2:217)



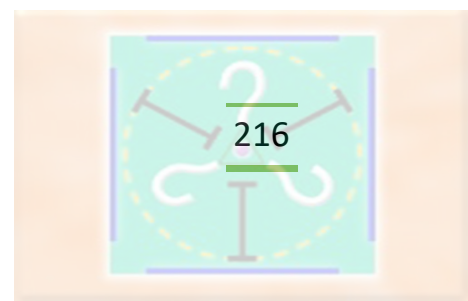
Synopsis 5: Food for Thought – While there are a number of hadith collections that put forth various isnads (or chains of authoritative transmissions concerning sayings or behaviors that are attributed to the Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him), the Prophet, himself, is reported to have had all collections of hadith destroyed because he did not want there to be any confusion among the people with respect to the difference between Divine Guidance and whatever the Prophet’s reasoning and intention might have been in conjunction with a given occasion, a particular individual, and a specific set of circumstances.

My shaykh had an extensive file of sayings attributed to the Prophet. My understanding of this is that citing sayings and behaviors which are attributed to the Prophet and using those attributed sayings to provide oneself with food for thought is a practice that is quite different from using those attributed sayings and behaviors to try to govern, or make judgments concerning, how other people ought to live their lives.

No effort has been made to cite the isnad for any of the purported hadiths that follow. The reason why the sayings which appear in this section are present is because either I have heard my shaykh cite such sayings or I have found such sayings attributed to the Prophet in sources that I consider to be authoritative in one way or another. Perhaps, just as important as the foregoing considerations is the following perspective: No suggestion is being made here that a reader is obligated to abide by any of the sayings being listed. Instead, personally, I have found the insights – whatever their true source might be – to be helpful to me as an individual.



| A Sufi Synopsis |



The Prophet is reported to have said: Islam began as something strange, and it will revert to being strange as it was in the beginning, so good tidings for the strangers. Someone asked: Who are the strangers? The Prophet is reported to have said: The ones who break away from their people (literally 'tribes') for the sake of Islam.

It has been reported that the Messenger of God said: Do not attend the circle of any learned man except the one who would call you to relinquish five things in favor of five other things – namely,

- (1) to relinquish doubt in favor of belief;
- (2) hypocrisy in favor of sincerity;
- (3) worldliness in favor of asceticism;
- (4) pride in favor of humility;
- (5) and enmity in favor of love.

Faith consists of: (a) profession of the tongue; (b) verification of the heart, and (c) implementation by the limbs

The shari'ah is my words, tariqah my actions, haqiqah my states, gnosis is my capital, intellect the basis of my Deen, love my foundation, passion my mount, fear my companion, knowledge my weapon, forbearance my friend, trust is my cloak, contentment is my treasure, truthfulness my residence, certainty my refuge, poverty is my glory and by it I attain to an honor above the rest of the Prophets and messengers.



Die before you die.

What actions are most excellent?

- (1) To gladden the heart of a human being;
- (2) to feed the hungry;
- (3) to help the afflicted;
- (4) to lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful;
- (5) to remove the wrong of the injured.

There is a piece of flesh in the body. If that is sound, then the whole body is sound, and if that is corrupt, then, the whole body is corrupt. This is the heart.

This world is prohibited to the people of the next world, and the next world is forbidden to the people of this world, and they are both forbidden to the people of Allah.

Knowledge is of two kinds: formal knowledge which does not go beyond verbal profession. It is the evidence of God against His people, and according to it, He will judge them ... and genuine knowledge which is deep-rooted in the heart ... that is the knowledge which is useful.

Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

Knowledge is the lost property of believers.

Seeking after knowledge is an ordinance obligatory upon every Muslim.

Seek knowledge, even unto China.

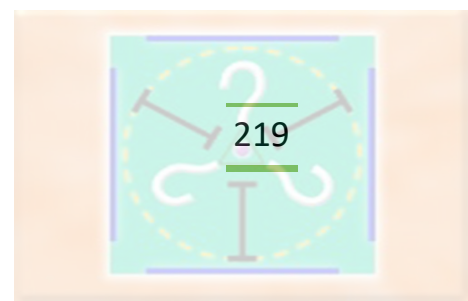
There are hidden gems of knowledge unknown to all but those who know God. If they are spoken of, none denies them except those arrogant toward God.

Whoever knows Allah curbs his tongue from speaking about God or expressing Him since this kind of knowledge cannot be contained in speech.

Whoever would increase in knowledge but would not increase in righteousness would increase God's wrath upon him.

He who knows himself knows his Lord.

Verily God does not take away knowledge from the hands of His servants but takes it by taking away the learned so that when no learned people remain the ignorant will be placed at the head of affairs. Causes will be submitted to their decision, they will pass sentence without knowledge, will err themselves, and lead others into error.



The Prophet is reported to have said: To be present in the circle of a learned person is better than prostrating oneself in prayer a thousand times. Or visiting a thousand sick people, or witnessing a thousand funerals. It was, then, said: "O Messenger of Allah, is it also better than reading the Qur'an?" To which he is reported to have said: What good is the Qur'an except through knowledge."

If the day should come wherein I increase not in knowledge through which to draw nearer to God, let the dawn of that day be accursed.

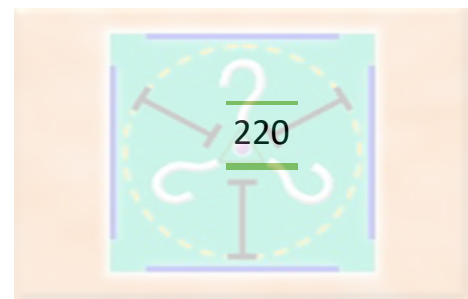
May the money-worshippers perish; may the belly-worshippers perish, may the sex-worshiper perish, may the clothes-worshiper perish.

Live in this world as if one were going to live for a thousand years and live for the next world as if one were going to die tomorrow.

Prayer is only acceptable to Allah when the heart is aware.

Reflect upon all things but reflect not upon God's Essence.

The Prophet is reported to have said that Satan may bait you with knowledge. When asked how that would be, the Prophet replied that Satan would say to you: 'seek knowledge and do



| A Sufi Synopsis |

nothing until you master it'. Then will man continue to seek knowledge and defer action until he finally dies having done nothing.

This life is but a tillage for the next, therefore, do good here that you may reap there, for striving is the ordinance of God and whatever God has ordained can only be attained by striving.

One's knowledge calls to be acted upon. If not satisfied, it will depart.

Reflection for a moment is better than action for seventy years.

Do not give wisdom to other than the people of wisdom for you will be doing the wisdom an injustice, and do not prevent the people of wisdom from obtaining it and so do them an injustice.

Every person who rises in the morning either does that which will be the means of one's redemption or one's ruin.

Shall I not inform you of a better act than fasting, alms and prayer? Making peace between one another – enmity and malice tear up heavenly rewards by the roots.

The Prophet was asked: "Which part of faith is most excellent?" He is reported to have replied: A beautiful character.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

I have been given all the names and have been sent to perfect good conduct.

The best thing in the Scale on the Day of Judgment will be a beautiful character.

Allah has 300 attributes, and he who acquires just of these for his own character trait will inherit Paradise.

The most perfect of the faithful in faith is the most beautiful of them in character.

The Prophet is reported to have said: There is a polish for everything that takes away rust, and the polish for the heart is the remembrance of God. The companions said: Is not repelling the infidel also like this? The Prophet is reported to have said: No! Although one fights until one's sword is broken.

Prayer is the sacrifice whereby every believer comes closer to Allah.

Prayer is service (shari'ah), drawing closer (tariqah), and joining (haqiqah)

The root of all prayers is the renunciation of the world, and the love of the world is the root of all mischief.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

O Allah! I have not worshiped Thee as Thou ought to be worshiped.

Only God's attributes are fit to praise His essence.

When people gather together to remember God, the angels surround them; mercy covers them; peace descends on them, and God remembers them among those who are with God.

The world is a curse and all that is within it is a curse except the remembrance of God and that which aides it.

There are 71 sects of Jews and only one of them is correct.

There are 72 sects of Christians and only one of them is correct.

There are 73 sects of Muslims, and only one of them is correct.

The faith of a believer does not become complete until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.

If the believers fear and hope were to be weighed, they would balance.

Do you love your Creator? Love your fellow-beings first.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

The best of alms is that which the right hand gives and the left hand knows not of.

O Allah, I seek refuge from Your punishment by Your mercy.

I seek refuge from Your wrath by Your contentment, and

I seek refuge from You by You.

Everything lives and develops in accordance with what it has been created for.

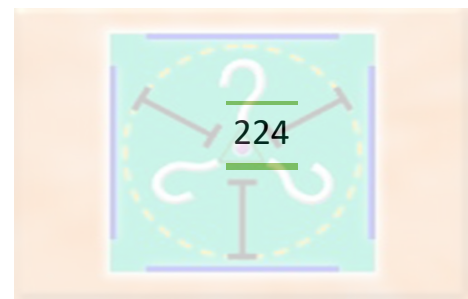
Human beings live in a state of sleep. When they die, they awake.

All men are doomed to perish except those people of action, and all people of action will perish except for the sincere, and the sincere are at great risk.

By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend benevolently out of what you love.

People die in the state in which they lived and are resurrected in the state in which they died.

True modesty is the source of all virtues.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

Meekness and modesty are two branches of Iman (Faith or Belief).

Verily, God instructs me to be humble and lowly and not proud.

O Allah! Give me only as much as I need today so that I may look to Thee again tomorrow for my sustenance.

Hell is veiled in delights and Heaven is veiled in hardships and miseries.

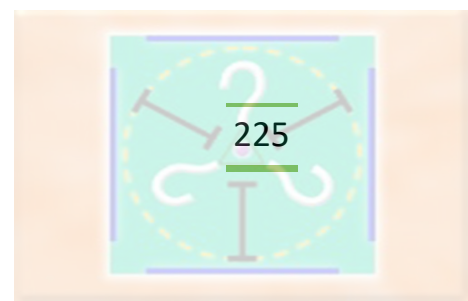
If someone treats you with nafs, threat them with ruh (spirit).

Every one of you is a guardian, and every one of you shall be questioned about what you are guarding.

This world is maintained in existence by illusion.

Assist any person who is oppressed – whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

You will not enter Paradise until you have faith, and you will not complete your faith until you love one another.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

All Muslims are like the component parts of a foundation, each strengthening the other; in such a way must they support each other.

Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to once have said to Anas: Son, if you are able, keep your heart free from malice towards anyone from morning till night and from night till morning. Then, he is reported to have said: Oh, my son! This is one of my laws, and he who loves my laws verily loves me.

This world is a prison for the faithful but a paradise for unbelievers.

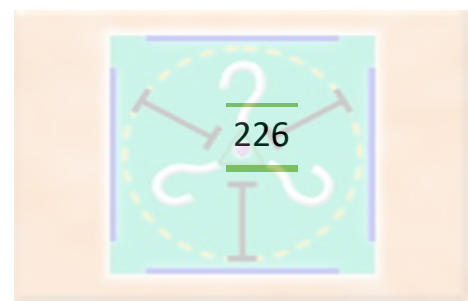
True belief is that when I and Allah become dearest to you.

Tomorrow should not be counted among your hours.

Your most hostile enemy is your soul enclosed between your two sides.

Kindness is a mark of faith and whoever has not kindness has not faith.

Deal gently with the people and be not harsh; cheer them and do not condemn them.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

God is not merciful to the one who is not merciful to humankind.

There is no person who is wounded and pardons the giver of the wound but God will exalt that person's dignity and diminish that person's faults.

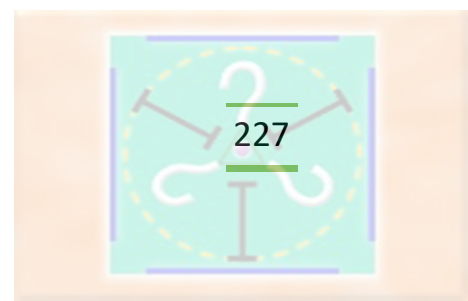
The creation is as God's family for its sustenance is from Him. Therefore, the most beloved of God is the person who does good to God's family.

I swear by God that this world in comparison with the world to come is as though one of you put his finger into the sea ... Let him consider what he brings out of it and what remains.

A person will be gathered on the faith/piety of one's close friends, so let each of you look to the one who you take as a friend.

Take advantage of a good opportunity when the door opens, for you never know when it will close again.

A man came to the Prophet and exclaimed: O Messenger of God, I truly love you. The Prophet is reported to have replied: Be, then, ready to wear the cloak of poverty.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

Poverty flows to one who loves me faster than the rapids of a waterfall.

God Almighty is the sustainer of all people. Among them He loves best those who are of most benefit to others.

The world is the farmland of the hereafter. Whoever plants good in it will harvest joy, and whoever plants evil in it will harvest regret.

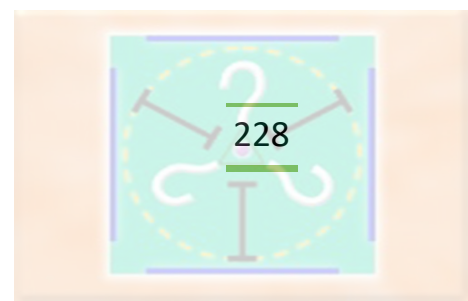
O 'Aisha, swallow patiently the bitter taste of this world and await the sweet bliss of the hereafter.

There is no peace for a believer other than in meeting one's Lord.

Reach out to establish the link between you and your Lord in order to attain true happiness.

Shall I tell you about your illness and its remedy? They replied: Indeed, Messenger of Allah. He said: Your illness is your sins, and your remedy is repentance.

The person who exalts oneself is humbled by Allah while the person who humbles oneself is exalted by God.



All of the Revealed Books are contained in the Qur'an. And the meaning of the Qur'an is contained within Surah al-Fatiha. And, the meaning of Surah al-Fatiha is contained in Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem, and the meaning of Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem is contained in Bismillah, and the meaning of Bismillah is contained in the dot beneath bey [b]

Many are there among you who fast and, yet, gain nothing from it except hunger and thirst, and many are there among you who pray throughout the night and, yet, gain nothing from it except wakefulness.

Hadith Qudsi:

I conform to the opinion that My servant has of Me.

Whoever seeks [tariqat] Me, finds Me [tajalli, hal, maqam, ilham, kashf];

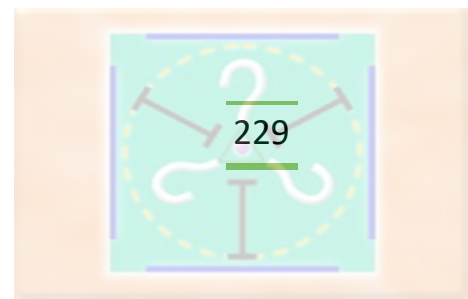
Whoever finds Me comes to know Me [gnosis, mari'afat];

Whoever comes to know Me, loves Me [isqh];

Whoever loves Me, that person I kill [fana];

Whomever I kill, I owe that person blood money;

And to whomever I owe blood money, I am the recompense for the blood money [wahdat al-wujud/wahdat al-shuhud, baqa].



| A Sufi Synopsis |

The ones who love each other for My sake deserve My Love.

The ones who give what comes to them in abundance deserve My Love.

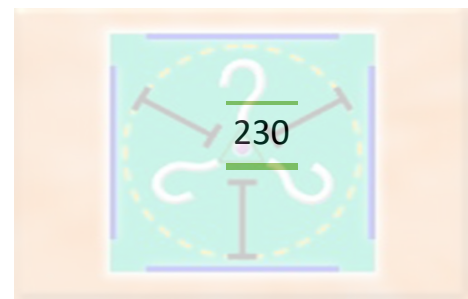
The ones who frequent and visit each other for My sake deserve My Love.

I am sitting with the one who remembers Me.

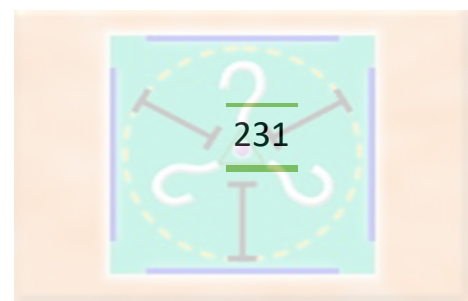
I am found in the hearts which are broken for My sake.

There is nothing more pleasing to Me than when my servant does that which I have made obligatory upon him/her.

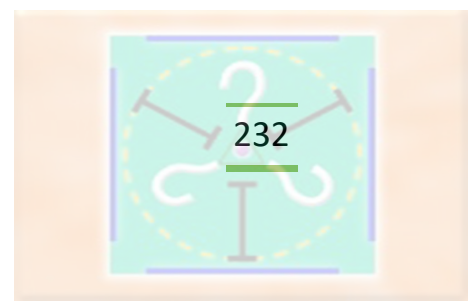
My devoted servant does not cease drawing nigh unto Me with acts of free-will offering until I love him, and when I love him, I am the eye with which he sees, the ear with which he hears, the feet wherein he walks, and the hands by which he acts.



Synopsis 6: A Synoptic Meditation – ‘David Icke’s Perspective: A Sufi’s Meditative Reflection’ -- Previously, the following meditative exercise was published as a separate monograph. It has been included in the present work because it serves to provide a good synoptic example of how Islam, in general, and the Sufi path, in particular, help to orient me when dealing with a variety of issues that, on the surface, might not seem to have much to do with either Islam or the Sufi path and, yet, the critical reflection that takes place throughout the extended essay which follows is fully informed by my understanding of Islam and the Sufi path.



| A Sufi Synopsis |



Forward (Please Read First)

What follows is something of a meditative exercise concerning a variety of topics and issues that emerge during the course of just a single chapter in one of a number of books that have been written by David Icke. Irrespective of whether the reader supports what is being said by David or said by me or said by neither of us, the reader should engage the following as a meta-meditation – that is, as a meditation on a mediation – and part of any meditative exercise is to observe not only where the exercise might take one but how and why one responds to whatever might occur along the way.

The phrase: “A Sufi’s Meditative Reflection” is used in the title of the present work in order to try to convey the idea that I do not speak for all Sufis, but rather, whatever transpires in the following discussion is a reflection of what is being manifested in the phenomenology of a single individual who might be right or wrong about any number of things. Therefore, whenever I might be wrong, then the shadow that appears over my work should not automatically be cast upon other folk who refer to themselves as travelers on the Sufi path.

For better or worse, I call things as I “see” them. However, as everyone who reflects on the foregoing words is likely to acknowledge, what we don’t see is what often tends to cause many of our problems. In this respect, I am attracted to the truth that is embedded in the words of Daniel Boorstein who is reported to have said: “The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance, but the illusion of knowledge.”

The present work is more of an extended essay or monograph than it is a book. There are no chapters, but, beginning, on page 7, there are a number of topical headings which are listed.

The topical headings are intended more as a way of providing readers with a way to keep track of different facets of the general discussion, so that, if some topic is of interest to a reader, then, hopefully, that individual will be able to re-locate a given topical section more easily. The material in the present



| A Sufi Synopsis |

extended essay or monograph should really be read in the sequence that follows, beginning on page11, because the meditative reflections reflect the linear flow of the Introduction as well as Chapter One of David Icke's book: *Everything You Need To Know But Have Never Been Told*.



Some Introductory Remarks

The name David Icke first showed up on my radar back in the mid-to-late 1990s. I was vaguely aware of his having been a professional goal keeper for the Coventry City football club. A few years later, he had to move into sports reporting because of the manner in which arthritis was ravaging his body – something which resonates with the decades of difficulties my mother went through as a result of her own encounters of an unfortunate kind with those sorts of painful, debilitating dynamics.

Somewhere along the line, I also saw a few clips of some of David's early scrums (a rugby term, not a football word) with British talk-show hosts concerning his post-sports ventures which involved delving into an array of controversial topics that were bending, if not warping, the sense of normalcy which most people have in relation to their conception of reality's nature. In the beginning, David didn't fare all that well when invited by different television personalities to speak about his research, and, as a result, he seemed to be invited on to those shows not because anyone in television was necessarily interested in what David thought about one, or another, issue but because he seemed to be an easy target for ridicule and jokes at his expense ... a cheap form of blood sport in which television often revels.

Over the last several decades, the foregoing tides have turned. In the interim thirty years, or so, David has sold thousands of books and DVDs, as well as has been very busy on a lecture circuit that has taken him all over the world where he addresses thousands of people for multiple hours at a time, and, now, he also oversees his own set of streaming services on the Internet which reach millions of people.

For a variety of reasons, approximately four years ago, I began to pay attention to some of his presentations a little more closely. Many of the critical points he was making about: The pharmaceutical industry, the banking industry, Palestine, medicine, war, 9/11, history (both ancient and modern), governmental duplicity, COVID-19, the media, education,



science, and a few other topics coincided, in many ways, with the conclusions at which, I – and, quite frankly, many others -- had arrived, independently, in conjunction with the foregoing topics.

However, there were other things being said during some of the foregoing sorts of programs over which David had control that began to raise a few questions in my own mind. For instance, and oftentimes with very good reason, David was quite critical of different religious orientations, and, yet, he seemed oblivious to the ways in which his perspective is, actually, quite religious in its own, inimical manner.

The Nature of Religion

Naturally, this brings us to the question: What is religion? Different dictionaries might define the notion of “religion” according to the manner in which some scholars tend to go about engaging such a topic as a function of the properties or qualities which various expressions of religiosity might share in common, despite whatever differences characterized the ideas and practices to which reference was being made by use of that word.

While many people appear to suppose that the idea of God or gods is the sine qua non of religion, not much research is needed to discover that although religions frequently do revolve about the presence of a Deity or deities – and such a presence is described in a multiplicity of ways – this kind of presence is not a necessary ingredient to the notion of “religion.” Indeed, quite apart from the dimension of God or gods, religion tends to constitute a dynamic in which individuals – separately or in groups -- seek to determine the nature of the essential truth concerning their relationship with Reality or Being or Existence.

The character of the aforementioned seeking process has several elements which appear to be held in common by all religious ideas, activities, institutions, and understandings. More specifically, whatever the nature of the foregoing relationship



between the individual and Reality is held to be, it is believed to give expression to: (1) The truth; (2) a source of morality or guidance concerning behavior; (3) a sense of duty and obligation in conjunction with what is believed; (4) a system of explanation concerning lived experiences that confers meaning and purpose concerning those experiences; (5) a sense of the sacred because one's way of seeking is considered to entail: Truth, provide a source for morality/guidance, serves as the origin of duty or obligation, and offers a way of explaining experience that is couched in terms of ultimate forms of meaning and purpose, and all of these qualities have an inviolable, pure, alluring, and inspiring dimension to them which gives expression to a sense of sacredness that needs to be honored, protected, and gives expression to a dimension of existence that is awe-inspiring.

Those individuals who don't care about – or claim that they don't care about -- truth, morality, guidance, duty, obligation, explanations, meaning, purpose, or the sacred are often voicing testament to their own sense of their relationship with Reality, Existence, or Being. As such, their existential stance indicates that they believe themselves to be right or independent of considerations involving truth, and, therefore, this status of rightness and/or independence constitutes justification for the way they conduct themselves, and, as well, injects hermeneutical orientation into their lives (i.e., meaning and purpose), while assuming such a sacrosanct status within their belief system concerning the nature of their relationship to existence that they are willing to do whatever is necessary to preserve that way of life, and therefore, this sense of centrality and fundamental grounding confers a sense of inviolability or sacredness on all that they think, feel, or do.

In light of the foregoing considerations, whatever one believes, feels, or thinks concerning the truth about the nature of one's relationship with Reality, Being, or Existence, and however one's actions relate to such beliefs, feelings and thoughts, one is following a religion. Most people – especially academics – like to give the impression that when they talk



about: Physics, politics, literature, sociology, psychology, economics, law, evolution, philosophy, atheism, chemistry, biology, medicine, government, mythology, art, history, democracy, and so on, that they are talking about ideas and issues that are apart from religion, but this is not the case because everything they do and say adheres to the themes, features, and properties noted earlier that make religion, religion.

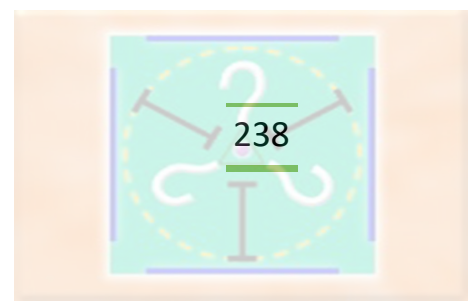
When David Icke, or anyone, seeks to put distance between what such individuals are advocating and the notion of religion, they begin at no beginning and are working toward no end which is other than religion. All they are doing is engaging in conceptual exercises which seek to indicate why they believe their approach to religion might be preferable to the religious approach of someone else concerning the nature of one's relationship with Reality, Existence, or Being.

Some people prefer the term spirituality to the notion of religion. However, as Shakespeare indicated, a rose by any other name would smell as sweet – or not – depending on one's aromatic sensitivities and biases.

The name which one assigns to a given phenomenon is irrelevant to the reality of that to which the name is being assigned. What makes something what it is, is its reality – whatever that might be – and not its name.

Individuals who refer to themselves as spiritual beings rather than religious ones are not actually pursuing any kind of search that is different from what those who consider themselves to be religious individuals are actively pursuing. Both are looking for the truth of things, and both are seeking to discover the source of guidance, obligation, duty, purpose, meaning, explanation, and sacredness that is believed to be entailed by such truth ... if, and when, that sort of truth is ever realized.

David Hume once sought to argue that one could not derive 'ought' from 'is.' However, the value of his argument rests entirely on what the nature of IS, is, and whether, or not, there is some kind of ought inherent in "Isness", as well as whether, or



not, it is humanly possible to constructively access, and, therefore, legitimately derive ought (via: reason, insight, unveiling, remote viewing, intuition, dreams, drugs, or anomalous experiences) from whatever realities are existentially present.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: “There are 71 sects among Jews, and only one of them is correct. There are 72 sects among Christians, and only one of them is correct. There are 73 sects among Muslims, and only one of them is correct.” In other words, there are at least 216 sects among successive groups of Jews, Christians, and Muslims which are swirling, or have been swirling, about in the world and across time, and, at best, only three of them are correct, or, alternatively, perhaps, there is only one of those 216 sects that is correct because the one that is correct in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam might just be different historical manifestations giving expression to one underlying standard of correctness.

Presumably, one could extend the foregoing sort of framework to Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Jainism, Gnosticism, mysticism and an array of indigenous systems of belief in a similar manner. In other words, although there might be any number of ideas and practices that are associated with various ways of engaging the Truth project, not all of those ways are necessarily correct when measured against the standard of what actually is the way of Reality.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also is reported to have said: “The right and the left are both ways of error, and the straight path is the middle way.” One’s heart is drawn to such words even as, simultaneously, one realizes that not only is finding the middle way a considerable challenge, but, as well, trying to live in accordance with what is found in relation to such a path might well be even more difficult.

With respect to what follows, I don’t make any claims that I am one of the correct ones that are being alluded to by the Prophet. Like Leonard Cohen, all I can say is that, every day, I’m just paying my rent in the Tower of Song ... churning out my



melodies and lyrics, hoping they resonate, to some extent, with one, or more, of the lost – or misplaced and forgotten -- chords through which the universe arose.

Anomalous Experiences

Notwithstanding the foregoing caveat, and despite the fact that there are many aspects of David's Icke's work with which I tend to agree -- and which have been mentioned, in passing, earlier -- nevertheless, I have come across facets of his perspective which, to me, seem quite questionable, problematic, or just plain wrong. More specifically, I recently purchased a book by him entitled: *Everything You Need To Know But Have Never Been Told*, and, although I have only read the introduction ("On the Road to Now") and Chapter One ("The Biggest Need To Know"), already I am sensing there appears to be a certain amount of trouble in conceptual Paradise.

The ensuing discussion is not intended as a "hit" piece. I consider David Icke to be a fellow seeker of the truth, and, therefore, just because I am trying to critically delineate some possible problems with certain aspects of his hermeneutical position, this does not mean I consider all of his work to be nonsense.

On the basis of what I have heard from, and seen of, him previously, he engages in a great deal of quite good research, and, consequently, as I read more of what he has to say (there are another 650 pages to go in the aforementioned book, as well as thousands of pages in his other books, that have not been read by me), then, conceivably, things which seemed problematic to me at first glance might become mitigated to varying degrees by what has not, yet, been read. Be that as it may, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle might say: "Watson, the game is afoot.

Early on in *Everything You Need To Know But Have Never Been Told*, David talks about some anomalous experiences that he had which induced him to follow the path that he has been on



for the last three decades. For instance, he mentioned having sensed, whenever he was alone, a presence of some kind on numerous occasions in and around 1989 – a presence that seemed to grow somewhat in felt intensity with the passage of time, and a presence that, in a sense, was crowding his existential space and, as a result, David, somehow, wanted whatever the presence was to break the silence and provide an indication of what was going on.

The foregoing series of encounters was followed by a strange set of circumstances that unfolded in a newspaper shop where he was led, rather inexplicably, to a book by a psychic, Betty Shine. He purchased the book, consumed its contents in a day, and, then, arranged to meet the author for a reading.

David indicates that he did not tell the psychic about his earlier experiences involving the sensation of a presence having been near him when he was alone, but, nonetheless, among other things, during one of his sessions with Betty Shine, he had been informed by her that there was a presence that knew David wanted to communicate with them, but the time was not right. In addition, the psychic passed on some information to David that had been given to her – apparently, by whatever presence had been encroaching on David's life.

The information was in the form of a number of declarations concerning certain aspects of David's future, many of which – if not all -- turned out, later, to be true. One of the things about which he was informed stipulated that David would say many things and wonder where the ideas to which the words gave expression came from and David was told that those words would come from someone or something other than David. He was also told that, on occasion, knowledge would be placed in his mind.

Over the next several years, a number of peculiar sets of events culminated in his going to Peru in 1991 and having an remarkable encounter. More specifically, while in Peru he had another form of anomalous experience, in a certain location when traveling through the Andes Mountains, during which he



felt energy entering his head, as if driven by a drill, and, then, flowing down to his feet.

This phenomenon continued on and ended in a way that was announced by a voice he heard within him earlier during the foregoing experience. The way in which the foregoing experience was slated to come to an end was very improbable at the time David heard the voice, but precisely that ending came to pass.

After he returned to Britain, following his journey to Peru, David indicates that there were all kinds of ideas, thoughts, and information which were being downloaded into his mind. This went on for a number of months and was quite overwhelming and confusing to him.

While in the foregoing condition, he somehow ended up appearing on a television show and began to talk about a variety of issues and possibilities. The issues and possibilities to which he gave voice challenged and threatened the sense of reality of both the show's host as well as that of the audience – both within and outside of the studio – and, as a result, David encountered considerable criticism and ridicule for his efforts.

However, the downloading of information continued on. Over time, David became more confident and competent in communicating what was bubbling to the surface of the sea of consciousness within him.

If one were interested in doing so, one could raise all manner of questions about whether, or not, David's foregoing anomalous experiences were veridical or authentic. I'm going to take David at his word ... in other words, I will accept that what he said had happened, actually did happen, and happened in the manner in which he indicated.

That something happened is one thing. What the significance of such events might be tends to be a separate issue.



Taqwa – Piety – Openness

The foregoing account, which is set forth in the opening section of *Everything You Need To Know But Have Never Been Told*, sets the stage for the first chapter of his book – “The Biggest Need-To-Know” – which will be the primary focus of this presentation. The latter chapter begins with a quote from E.B. White – namely: “The world is full of people who have never, since childhood, met an open doorway with an open mind.”

There is a potential difference between, on the one hand, having a mind that is receptive or open to ideas to which it might be exposed that could be of any sort of quality or character (dubious and otherwise), and, on the other hand, having a mind that is open to being taught truth. One of the Quranic terms for the latter sort of openness is transliterated as “taqwa” which, in English, is often translated as “piety.”

However, the foregoing condition of piety entails a degree of religious, spiritual, or epistemological sensitivity that is inclined toward trying to differentiate between what is acceptable to God and what is not acceptable to God. Therefore, in order to seek and learn the truth of things, one should have a certain kind of existential and epistemological orientation toward what is, and what is not, to be learned, and, consequently, not all manner of openness to ideas is necessarily a good thing.

If not already obvious, I try to approach issues through a certain religious or spiritual orientation. That approach bears the label: “tasawwuf”, or “the mystical dimension of Islam,” but as indicated earlier my approach (which might, or might not, accurately reflect that spiritual-religious tradition in whole or in part) could be just one of the 72 sects being alluded to in the foregoing saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that were wrong in one way or another.

Having provided the foregoing qualifier, what was said previously about there being a potential difference between, or among, conditions of hoped-for epistemological openness and the truth of things, also applies to me, as well as to: David Icke,



the readers of his book, and, finally, the reader of the present work. One would like to feel that in any set of circumstances one is being sincerely open to, or receptive to, learning the truth, but this often works out better in theory than in reality.

One is constantly making purported epistemological choices. However, those choices are not always correct and what one thought might be bringing one closer to the truth might actually turn out to be an obfuscation of, or distancing from, the truth.

This is a very challenging, but essential, conundrum that needs to be properly resolved. Unfortunately, and quite frequently, this does not take place, but, either way, one's existential understanding and orientation will be impacted moving forward.

Given the foregoing considerations, what is one to make of the title of David Icke's book: *Everything You Need To Know But Have Never Been Told*. To begin with, the title seems a little presumptuous because, for one thing, he doesn't know what I -- or any of his readers -- have, and haven't been, told.

Moreover, given that there are likely to be many things that I (and others who might have read the book in question) have been told by many people, David doesn't really know if -- among the things that I (and others) have been told -- there actually might have been things among those items that I (we) were told that I (we) need to know. In addition, one might also wonder if among the things that I (or others) might not have been told, whether, or not, there are things that I (we) need to know, and, if so, what sorts of epistemological needs have gone unattended.

The foregoing way of describing the situation sounds a little like a Monty Python script, but based on the aforementioned title of his book, David Icke seems to believe that he knows what other people need to know concerning the meaning of life. He also appears to believe that what he knows, others have not been told, and while it might be the case that there are those individuals who have not been told what David purports to know, it is another matter altogether whether, or not, David actually knows what he claims to know when he makes certain kinds of statements ... statements that will soon be examined.



I once read an account in which the Buddha (peace and blessings be upon him) was reported to have been addressing a small group of individuals in a forested area. He alluded to all of the leaves in the forest and indicated that there were more truths in the universe than there were leaves in the forest, and, then, scooping up a handful of leaves from the forest floor in front of him, he indicated that he taught the truths that people needed to know in order to be in the right kind of existential orientation in order to be able to live life properly.

Whether the foregoing account is apocryphal, or not, I can't say. Either way, it seems to exude a certain amount of wisdom.

There are, at least, three questions that need to be asked in conjunction with the second chapter of David Icke's aforementioned book. Firstly, how much of that second chapter actually consists of knowledge. Secondly, with respect to whatever knowledge might be present in that chapter, how much of it is needed, and, thirdly, to whatever extent such knowledge is needed, what is the nature of that need?

Illusion

David begins the chapter entitled: "The Biggest Need- To-Know" by claiming that:

"Once upon a no-time, in a 'land' called Forever, there was only Awareness in awareness of itself – all possibility and all-potential waiting to manifest. There was no form: only the potential imagination of form of every possible kind. This was the infinite state of pure awareness from which all that we think we 'see' has ultimately come." (Page 1)

As will be discussed in a little more detail later on in this meditative essay, David doesn't believe that time has any reality. For him, time is an illusion.



The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "This world is maintained in existence by illusion," and, therefore, I am quite willing to engage in a discussion in which illusion not only has a role to play, but illusion has a significant role to play within the context of maintaining this world in existence, but the questions which arise from such an acknowledgement are: (1) What is the nature of an illusion, and (2) what is the nature of the role that illusion plays in maintaining this world in existence?

A great deal of art is an illusion. When done correctly, two-dimensional surfaces are capable of creating the illusion that one is seeing more than two-dimensions.

Every so often in Toronto, on the northwest corner of Bloor and Yonge, street artists would show up and use colored chalk to create, on the sidewalk area, the most impressive three-dimensional looking images one is ever likely to encounter this side of holographs. The art was illusory, and, yet, it had a reality that was generated in a knowing, epistemological manner that was capable of – intentionally so – inducing people to see something that was not actually present ... until the rains came and proceeded, among other things, to wash the artistry into the nearby street gutters.

Our optical systems generate a similar, illusory magic. Two-dimensional surfaces are generated that can be turned into contours of incredible complexity that shape one's phenomenological landscape through a multiplicity of dimensionalities beyond the three dimensions of space and the one dimension of time that serve as a locus of manifestation for the non-spatial and non-temporal dimensions of: Emotion, thought, ideas, insight, understanding, interpretation, beliefs, hopes, problems, questions, and possible solutions.

Saying that no-time is the reality and time is the illusion requires an explanation. How does the illusion arise out of the reality, and, perhaps, an even more interesting question is why are the conditions generated that make such an illusion possible?

Is it all happenstance? Or, is something else intended.



Illusion doesn't create illusion. Somewhere along the line, real capacities are needed to be able to create the conditions that are conducive to inducing illusion to appear.

The aforementioned artists in Toronto showed up and created the visual conditions necessary for an illusion to emerge. They never seemed to be asking for money from the crowds that I saw gather around such artwork, and one could venture a guess that one of the reasons why someone might do something for other than money is because of love ... the love of creation, as well as to be part of the creative process, and to be able to enjoy the opportunity to entice others to become observing participants in such a phenomenon and, as well, experience an array of emotions and thoughts.

Perhaps, the same sort of possibility runs through whatever illusions are entailed by human experience. Perhaps, love for the creative process and love for what is generated through that process is the reason why human beings are able to experience illusion, and, maybe the illusion is the necessary starting point through which to access experiences that are more real in some sense.

Illusions have a reality. Their reality involves a capacity to generate whatever conditions are necessary to give rise to the experience of the desired illusion.

Artists don't create those who observe their art or the abilities of the latter individuals. However, artists do have a sense of how to go about leveraging the abilities of observers which turns out to be one of the conditions that is necessary for an illusion to be possible.

Illusions require conditions that entail certain kinds of realities. Without these realities, the conditions which are necessary for illusions to arise are not present, and, as a result, the illusion is not possible.

Illusions are not a nothing. They are a 'something' with ephemeral properties and conditions that are made possible by underlying realities.



Form and Formlessness

What does David mean when he claims that in the reality of “Forever” -- which is devoid of time – there is only Awareness of whatever “Forever” is and that such awareness has no form but only consists of imagination’s potential for every kind of possibility which gives expression to the “infinite state of pure awareness?” What is the empirical basis in which such a claim is rooted?

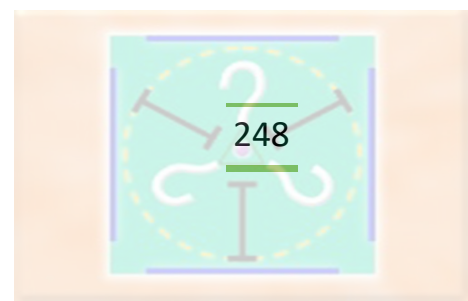
Why should one suppose that the nature of “Forever” is formless while, simultaneously, claiming that it is infinite? After all, infinity is something that has – however elusively – a form. Indeed, mathematicians (thanks to Cantor) are quite adept at giving different kinds of forms to the infinite in the guise of, for example, natural and real numbers.

Moreover, why claim that “Forever” is formless and, yet, also claim that “Forever” allegedly has awareness as well as consists of a capacity for imagination that is capable of giving rise to all possibilities and potentials? Awareness, imagination, potential, and possibility all seem to have a quality of form about them even if one is not in a position to exhaustively account for the details of those form-like qualities.

“That” which is without form is without form. As such, this “That” is unknowable to human beings because we only deal with the notions of form that can be manifested through the phenomenology of experience.

One can ask how form arises from formlessness. Nonetheless, asking such a question does not render the formless any less formless since we do not necessarily have insight into how form emerges from the formless other than to say, perhaps, that if not for the “presence” of the formless, then, that which has form would not be possible.

The conditions of illusion have been created through the dynamics of form. What makes such dynamics possible is not known, and, as such, the formless remains formless.



David believes that proponents of different religions and indigenous traditions are nothing more than storytellers who have become entangled in ancient ways of language usage. He believes that such ancient forms of language usage can be replaced by the language of science and computation, but notwithstanding the foregoing perspective, conceivably, the language of science and computation could just be another, more technical form of storytelling or narrative with respect to the quest of trying to make sense of how form arises from the formless.

If Awareness is the only reality, then, what is meant by the notion that Awareness is aware of itself? Does the “itself” or the “awareness” have a form, and, if so, what might be meant by the notion of a formless form?

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: “Reflect upon all things, but reflect not on God’s Essence.” One possible meaning of the foregoing is that if human beings – even when fully realized – do not have the capacity to grasp Divine Essence, then, all attempts to try to make sense of how Essence and manifested reality are related will come to nothing other than the realization that all dimensions of manifested reality are an unknown function of Essence ... as such, Essence is un-penetrable, and, therefore, from the side of manifestation, the relationship between manifestation and Essence is asymptotic ... capable of being approached, in some sense, but never capable of being reached even though from the side of Essence, everything that is manifest is possible because Divinity is, as Pascal suggested, like a circle whose center is everywhere but whose circumference is nowhere.

Inversion?

David wants to help bring about a transition in the human narrative that transcends the descriptions and accounts that are given through traditional religious venues. While, on the one hand, he contends that the foregoing sorts of religious



narratives are, as far as they go, often correct, nonetheless, on the other hand, he believes that such narratives have tended to devolve into inverted renditions of the original nature of the traditions to which such narratives give expression, and, in addition, he asserts that human beings should not be worshipping anybody or anything when we are, already, the all but, unfortunately, have just failed to realize – or have been prevented from realizing -- this truth.

I'm having a little difficulty juxtaposing some of the foregoing themes. David starts out by saying that "themes of religious and narrative cultures are basically correct, emphasis often on the basically," (Page 2) but, then, he indicates that "we should not be worshipping anybody or anything when we are the anybody/everybody and anything/everything." (Page 2)

What are the "themes of religious and narrative cultures" basically correct about? What is meant by "basically?"

What are the criteria for determining what constitutes the conditions for being "basically" correct? On what grounds can the use of such criteria be justified?

David indicates that "themes of religious and narrative cultures are basically correct." Yet, he, simultaneously, suggests such themes have become so inverted and corrupted that billions of people are worshipping something other than what had been indicated originally.

How does David know what was originally called for by the overtures of reality? Is this part of the understanding that was downloaded into him through some of his anomalous experiences, and, if so, then, why should such an understanding be trusted?

I've had some anomalous experiences in my life, and even when such experiences seem relatively simple on the surface, the ultimate significance of those experiences is not always easy to fathom. For example, Najm al-Din Razi (may Allah be pleased with him) lived during the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, and one of the books he wrote was entitled: *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return*.



In the aforementioned book, the author alludes to the witnessings and visions that might appear to a wayfarer as the latter individual travels along the mystical path. The author also indicates that, on occasion, the same sort of vision or form of witnessing will take place within various spiritual stations and, yet, such visions and witnessings will have different significances depending on the nature of the station in which they occur.

To demonstrate the foregoing point, the author uses the image of “fire”. However, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of other images that could have been used to make the same sort of point.

Before delving into his account, the author makes clear that only a realized shaykh or guide is capable of determining the significance of an image if it appears in a particular vision or form of witnessing. Having given a cautioning concerning the process of trying to assess the meaning of a given image, he proceeds to talk about a number of possibilities to which the image of fire might be giving expression.

Sometimes the image of fire refers to the passion of a seeker’s quest. On other occasions, the presence of fire in a vision might indicate that a quality of anger is coloring a given vision.

There are instances when the image of fire gives expression to the quality of devilry, while in other visionary states, the image of fire exemplifies the light of zikr or remembrance of God. In still other circumstances, the image of fire might be a sign of the kind of impassioned longing that reduces human qualities to mere ash.

Fire can signify guidance as was the case when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) saw fire up on the side of a mountain and went to investigate its source and nature. In other cases, the image of fire could be a sign of gnosis, sainthood, or a witnessing in relation to the truth of things.

To understand the significance of David’s various anomalous experiences, one would have to know what the

source of such experiences was and what the meanings of those experiences were when measured against the standards of reality in relation to which all experiences must be measured. One also would have to critically reflect on what meanings David might be assigning to such experiences and whether, or not, his process of assigning meanings actually reflected their realities.

Does, or did, David have contact with, and was he provided with insight into, the nature of the original teachings for any given expression of religion? Within certain parameters, one might be willing to agree with his assessment that many manifested forms of religious activities seem suspect because of, among other things, the egregious hypocrisy that often marks the difference between what is said and what is actually done by practitioners of some of those spiritual or religious traditions, but such discernment is possible even if one does not know, or has not been exposed, to what the original form a given tradition might have been.

This issue of original intent is of fundamental importance. David presents himself as someone who knows what the nature of our relationship with Being is and how the character of that relationship has become distorted over the years, and, therefore, trying to understand how David thinks about origins, original dynamics, and existential potential is not only a worthwhile exercise, but it provides one with an opportunity to critically explore issues which might provide some indication of how tenable such thinking might be.

Beginning nearly thirty years ago, I spent about eight years interacting with an individual who was, and is, a spiritual charlatan and, eventually, that reality was made manifest to me. I've also spent 16, or so, years interacting with someone who I believe to be the real deal and, over the years, a little of the latter individual's reality has been made manifest to me.

I spent considerable time with the one I consider to be a genuine spiritual guide first (and the time spent was at often close quarters, frequent, and quite intense in one way or another), and, then, only later on (about four years after the



foregoing individual passed away in 1988) did I have a relationship (that often was conducted through a sizable physical distant) with the individual whom I consider to be a spiritual fraud. If I had met the latter individual first, I've often felt that I might never have been conceptually, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually prepared to go in search of someone who was a genuine guide.

In other words, the order of many existential events does not exhibit the commutative property. The order in which life events are experienced can make a considerable difference to one's life.

When one is brought into contact with those who are spiritually corrupt, that corruption can leave its mark. I've seen many people who came into contact with the aforementioned fraudulent teacher begin to distance themselves entirely from the spiritual or religious quest.

To induce the foregoing sort of distancing activity is, presumably, one of the purposes motivating the activities of those fraudulent individuals who enjoy trying to lead people astray from the truth. Consequently, I consider myself quite blessed and fortunate to have survived such an encounter – at least to some extent – in order to be able to carry on with the spiritual-religious quest as best I am able to do in the absence of a genuine, authentic teacher who is physically present.

Before moving on, I should note that the one whom I considered to be a genuine shaykh never tried to beguile me with allusions to some alleged spiritual status that I might have and, instead, he just provided me with many opportunities that would assist me to work on myself and concentrate on trying to become a better human being. However, within a relatively short period of time after meeting, in person, the other individual – the one whom I, now, consider to be a charlatan – I was being designated by him as someone that his own shaykh or guide had indicated should become a spiritual shaykh and who would have an important role to play in the Western world within the spiritual lineage of the branch of the Sufi path into which I was being initiated.



While the activities of the false shaykh (many of which I was not told about and didn't find out about until much later) sought to entangle me in an array of potentially problematic machinations of one kind or another, the authentic shaykh only ever sought to induce me to become committed to pursuing the realization of good character and actionable truths. My ego was being addressed by the false teacher, but my soul and spirit had been addressed by the authentic guide, and if it had not been for the Grace of God in the form of the teachings of the authentic spiritual individual that came into my life, I might never have survived the games and stratagems of the charlatan that, with God's permission and my choices, subsequently came into my life.

On the surface, both of the foregoing individuals appeared to be very similar. They each quoted from the Qur'an and were familiar with many aspects of the body of sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) known as Hadith, and, in these respects, were almost like mirrors of one another.

They each were able to display a voluminous knowledge concerning different facets of the Sufi mystical tradition, and, as a result, would recount incident after incident after incident concerning the lives of those who had traveled the Sufi path in the past. They each were able to meaningfully relate the teachings of the Qur'an, Hadith, and various practitioners of the Sufi mystical tradition to the problems of everyday life in the modern world, and they each could do this in an intriguing, interesting, humorous, informative, and charismatic manner while responding to questions that went on for hours at a time, deep into the night and early morning hours.

As a result of the foregoing resonances and similarities -- and despite what many people might think (especially individuals who have not had such experiences) -- differentiating between an authentic and a false spiritual guide is not necessarily a slam-dunk. To be sure, if the charlatan doesn't have much skill, then, perhaps the counterfeit is easily detected, but when one is engaging a master crafts person of

spiritual counterfeiting, the task of detection becomes much more challenging.

The situation is further complicated by the existence of what Alan Watts (1915-1973) used to call “genuine fakes.” These are individuals who are not charlatans, but, are, rather, human beings who were quite genuine and sincere in their spiritual commitments even though what they believed might not be true or might not have much to do with the actual nature of one’s relationship to Reality or Being.

The foregoing notion of “genuine fake” has a somewhat ironical aura in my memory banks. More specifically, having read a number of the works of Alan Watts, and, then, attended a talk by him not too long before he passed away, I’ve often had the sense that Alan, himself, might have been a genuine fake ... in other words, he was someone who sincerely believed in what he said but didn’t necessarily know what he was talking about.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a potential for genuine fakery in many of us, including myself. This potential is just one of the many things against which one must try to guard oneself while engaged in the quest to discover the truth about the nature of one’s relationship with Reality or Being.

Notwithstanding the foregoing considerations, there is much about David Icke which I admire and which resonates with various aspects of my own life. As previously indicated, I feel that quite a bit of his research and ideas – which engage a considerable litany of issues, themes and topics -- seem quite sound and tenable ... at least to me.

On the other hand, there are various dimensions of David’s work and spiritual orientation about which I have my doubts. The present essay is an attempt to zero in on, and critically reflect about the sort of subject matter within David’s overall perspective which appears to exhibit a fundamental, if (to me) problematic, kind of significance with respect to trying to discover and map out the truth concerning the nature of one’s relationship with Being or Reality or Existence.



The Nature of Reality

Under a section entitled “Reality Check” which appears near the beginning of the first chapter (“The Biggest Need-To-Know”) of his book: *Everything You Need To Know But Have Never Been Told*, David begins to introduce some ideas about what he considers to be the nature of reality. For example, he indicates how the notion that the world is “solid” and “physical,” while widely accepted, is not necessarily tenable.

He goes on to note that material substances are made up of atoms, and that atoms, themselves, are made up of electrons and a nucleus consisting of protons and neutrons which, in turn, are made up of, usually, three kinds of quarks. He, then, makes mention of how quantum physics claims that 99.9999999 % of material substances consist of nothing more than empty space.

One begins to enter rather nebulous territory when one starts to talk about space being empty, especially given how – as will be explored a little later -- David considers space to be as illusory as he considers time to be. Furthermore, there is a difference of opinion about whether space is, or isn’t empty, and if not empty, there are a variety of perspectives concerning what might occupy it.

Some quantum theorists believe that space, itself, constitutes an unexplored country, that resides somewhere beyond the Planck length (approximately 1.616255×10^{-35} meters, which is about 10^{-20} times smaller than a proton) as one approaches the foamy dynamics that allegedly give expression to space on its most fundamental level. Is space particulate in nature or is it a wave phenomenon of some kind? Or, is it both? Or, is it neither?

Is space filled with virtual photons that blink into and out of existence in unknown ways? Or, is space part of the Einsteinian notion of time-space which has the capacity to be affected by gravitational fields that, among other things, can alter the way clocks run, depending on where the clock is in relation to a given gravitational field and the magnitude of that field.



Einstein said that time is what a clock measures. Maybe, however, time is what enables a clock's metric to have the degrees of freedom needed to be able to operate according to the properties of that metric, and, as such, while gravitational fields might affect the way in which a clock's metric operates, nonetheless, those fields have no capacity to affect time. If so, then relativistic effects might have to do with clocks and modes of measurement and not time.

Is space replete with dark matter and dark energy or are these two ideas merely artifacts of some unknown set of field dynamics to which the reality of space gives expression? Is space filled with all manner of plasma phenomena that are generated through the woom and warp of electric and magnetic fields that some argue modulates most of what transpires in an Electric Universe?

Is space a geometric dimension or is space some other kind of qualitative dimension that is capable of accommodating structures that possess breadth, width, and depth? Is space an informational construct, or is it an unknown kind of phenomenon that makes informational constructs possible?

Whether one considers space to be: Dimensional (geometric or otherwise), an informational construct, wave-like, particulate in nature, capable of interacting with gravitational fields, a generator of dark matter and/or dark energy, a medium capable of giving rise to virtual photons, a thermodynamic boundary that might help maintain cosmological background radiation as an ambient temperature just a few degrees distant from absolute zero, the playground of plasma dynamics, or some other kind of phenomenon, all of the foregoing possibilities have a physicality about them. Does this quality of physicality make things solid?

Maybe, things are solid in the sense that is alluded to in the Leonard Cohen's song: "Democracy Is Coming To The USA", in which he says: "It's coming from the feel that it ain't exactly real, or its real, but it ain't exactly there." Governments fall; businesses fail; marriages crumble; life vanishes; cars breakdown; winning leads evaporate; people are betrayed;

buildings collapse; reputations are ruined; hopes dissipate; causes are lost; clothes wear out; the new replaces the old; memories are extinguished; jobs are downsized; promises are thwarted; politicians lie; innocence is seduced; magicians disappear; money runs out; love is unrequited; things fall apart.

Whatever sense of solidness people might have about some aspects of existence that sense is also surrounded by, if not permeated with, all manner of experience indicating that nothing is really solid. Everything has a degree of fragility inherent in its nature ... a vulnerability to tenuousness.

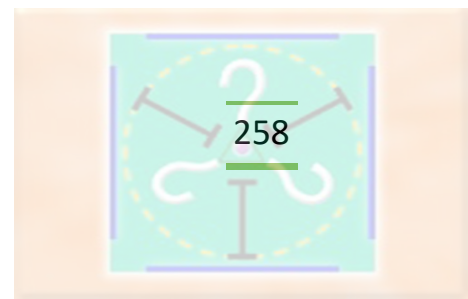
We might plan our lives with the idea that things will remain stable, constant, whole, and predictable. However, experience tends to teach us from a very early age that there is often a 'disconnect' between our plans and the nature of existence.

Being solid, physical, or material are conceptual-emotional-sensory constructs based on our experiences and our interpretation of those experiences. As the nature of our experiences and hermeneutical frameworks change, so too, does the character of those constructs.

For example, our sense of what is solid, physical, or material was different before the atomic bomb and after it. To entertain the idea that matter can be converted into energy, one has to begin to rethink what it means to be solid, physical, or material – even if one does not understand those sorts of events in terms of quantum physics.

Physicality has to do with the capacity to produce palpable effects of one kind or another. Those effects might be a function of: Waves, particles, energy of some kind, fields, dimensional dynamics, informational constructs, and so on, but all of those phenomena can either be considered to be physical in some sense of the word or capable of producing physical effects – the sorts of effects that can be seen, heard, touched, tasted, felt, sensed, or experienced in some fashion.

Dreams have a physical dimension irrespective of how they arise. Anomalous experiences entail elements of physicality as well.



Are physical phenomena the same as material phenomena? How one answers that question depends on one's understanding of what makes physical phenomena, physical, and what makes material phenomena, material.

Our sense of what is solid requires material and physical dynamics to remain stable. When the latter dynamics change, then, so too, does our sense of what is solid undergo transition.

Forms, manifestation, structures, dynamics, energy, fields, waves, particles, forces, experiences, and dimensions can all be described as being material or physical in nature depending on how one goes about defining terms. Of course, there are all manner of ways of describing things - mathematically, scientifically, spiritually, phenomenologically - that are considered to be descriptions of material or physical phenomena, but this doesn't mean that one can necessarily reduce Reality - whatever it might be - down to such descriptions.

Reality appears to be some sort of a will-o'-the-wisp set of phenomena, while descriptions or accounts directed toward that Reality often encompass quite another set of possibilities. Descriptions are relational maps, and explanations are annotated maps concerning those relations, but maps (whether annotated or not) don't always accurately or completely account for the actual territory that is being mapped.

David seems to be of the opinion that most people don't understand the fundamental nature of reality. While it might be the case that the vast majority of people do not have any familiarity with the concepts of quantum mechanics, I believe many individuals do have an appreciation that whatever Reality is, it is capable of sliding in all directions, and some of these directions appear to be more concrete, solid, physical, and material than do others.

Initially, David seems to chide the general public for not knowing that things are not solid and are relatively empty space. Yet, just a few paragraphs later, he is talking about how space is not empty and filled with energies of one kind or another.

So, which is it? Do solid things consists of empty space, or is emptiness filled with various forms of energetic solidity? Are we dealing with Memorex or Reality?

Having said the foregoing, one might add that: To whatever extent most people do not understand the nature of reality, then, nevertheless, one also should consider the possibility that David, himself, might not understand the nature of reality. This is said not because I believe that I know what Reality is all about and, therefore, have the ultimate standard of evaluation to assess what David is saying, but, rather, this sense of doubt concerning certain facets of his perspective exists because David's alternative approach to the fundamentals of Reality doesn't seem to be all that convincing due to a variety of lacunae, inconsistencies, unanswered – if not unanswerable – questions, and a certain dimension of arbitrariness that appear to be present in his conceptual position concerning the nature of Reality ... beginning with the notion that he appears to want to say that space is both empty and, in a sense, solid at the same time.

On Holding a Book

For example, David argues that when a person is holding a book, the person is not actually holding a book, but, rather, is holding an electromagnetic field. Or, even more precisely, one set of electromagnetic fields – a person's hands – interacts with another source of electromagnetic waves – the book – in order to enable a claim to be made that a book is being held.

To say that a person is holding a book or that a certain number of electromagnetic fields are interacting are both descriptions of what is taking place. David appears to believe that one of the foregoing ways of describing the situation is more accurate or true than the other way of doing so, but this seems to be a distinction without a difference.

The kind of description one uses depends on the purpose or purposes that give rise to a particular description. An individual



might not know how computers and the Internet work or what makes it possible for the two to be able to interact in ways that generate feature-rich web sites, and, yet, this lack of knowledge about what the individual is actually doing on the level of electronics and coding whenever that individual seeks to engage the World Wide Web does not prevent that person from being able to travel from one web site to another and being able to obtain whatever information might be of interest. On the other hand, if a person is having trouble getting the computer to operate properly and/or is having difficulty logging on to the Internet, then, either that person is going to have to possess the technical knowledge which would be capable of resolving the existing problems or that person is going to have to have access to someone with the sort of technical knowledge who will be able to sort out whatever the problem or problems might be.

Similarly, a person doesn't have to understand the physics of electromagnetic waves to be able to pick up a book and to start perusing through it or reading it. If someone asks that individual what is going on, and the person being asked says something about having an interest in the book in his, her, or their hands, then what is being said is not descriptively inaccurate, whereas, if the person had responded by saying, well, I had an interest in the way various sets of electromagnetic waves are manifesting themselves during their dynamics of interaction relative to a particular set of on-going biological processes, then, while the description might be accurate, it doesn't necessarily add very much useful insight into the situation.

Furthermore, to say that the person is encountering a phenomenon in which the information contained in the electromagnetic fields of the structure referred to as a "book" (by those who are woefully ignorant) is being interdicted by the electromagnetic fields that help form the structures known as "hands" (by people who should know better), is, technically speaking – and contrary to what David is claiming – not really entirely accurate either. After all, besides referring to the presence of electromagnetic fields to account for the existence of a book and the hands that hold it, one also should mention:



The presence of gravitational waves or, possibly, the as-yet, undiscovered gravitons, together with the manifestation of strong gluon forces that govern the dynamics of the quarks within the protons and neutrons that help make the phenomenon of a book possible, as well as the occasional manifestation of the weak force, when a few scattered neutrons amidst the ka-zillions of other neutrons that help create the ‘illusion’ of the book decay into protons, while releasing a certain number of electrons and anti-neutrinos, and, thereby, help give rise, over time, to some amount of wear and tear in the fabric of the book, as well as a certain amount of ever-so-tiny increases in the level of back-ground radiation.

In addition, can one suppose that the conceptual, linguistic, emotional, motivational, creative, phenomenological, spiritual, willful, hermeneutical, and epigenetic capabilities that might have played a role in a given structure – sometimes known as a “book” – being picked up by things called “hands” can necessarily be reduced to being nothing more than a set of interacting electromagnetic waves? If the answer to the foregoing question is: “No, we cannot suppose that such phenomena can be reduced to being functions of just electromagnetic fields and nothing else”, then, obviously, much more is going on in the process of holding a book than can be accounted for by the presence of a set of interacting electromagnetic waves, while, on the other hand, if the answer to the foregoing supposition is: “yes, the presence of electromagnetic field accounts for everything”, then, one will need to spell out, precisely, how such a unified theory of everything works – something that scientists have unsuccessfully been trying to accomplish for nearly a century.

David contends that “The experience of apparent solidity is really electromagnetic resistance between energetic fields of different frequencies or densities.” (Page 5) Nonetheless, if something resists being penetrated as a result of the way energetic fields of certain frequencies or densities interact with one another, then, trying to claim that such dynamics are not, simultaneously, what makes something not just appear to be



solid but to actually be solid to a certain degree seems rather an arbitrary way of going about one's explanation of reality.

The terms: "Resistance" and "densities," which appear in the foregoing quote are the vocabulary of solidity, not emptiness. A lay person's understanding of what makes something solid might not be the same as that of a physicist, but both modalities of description lead to the same place: Being able to hold a book in one's hands.

David continues on in the foregoing manner by contending that: "You who are not solid can't walk through a wall which is not solid because of electromagnetic resistance and not physical resistance because there is no physical." (Page 5) Quite frankly, this sounds nonsensical.

In what way, is electromagnetic resistance not a form of physical resistance? What, exactly, does David mean by the notion of "physical"?

As previously indicated in this essay, the terms "material," "physical" and "solid" are somewhat interchangeable with one another, as well as being relatively linguistically and theoretically fluid in the sense that each of those terms could be engaged in ways that are capable of accommodating a wide variety of conceptual possibilities concerning the nature of reality. Among the latter sorts of theoretical frameworks that might be used to describe the phenomenon of holding a book, one could mention the idea that the presence of electromagnetic fields is believed, by some, to play an important role in determining whether, or not, something could be considered to be physical or material, or solid.

A little later in his book, David contends that ears don't hear, brains do. Moreover, he adds that sight, taste, smell, and pain are all brain functions in as much as the brain is required to decode the information that is being carried by different kinds of signals.

While the brain might play an important role with respect to the processing of sensory signals, there is a great deal of uncertainty about what, exactly, is involved in the nature of that



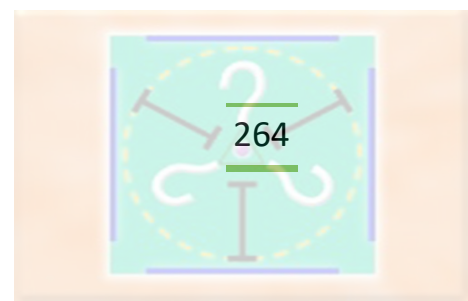
processing? Is the brain what is making sense of those sensory signals, or is the meaning and understanding which arise in conjunction with the foregoing sorts of sensory signals a function of “that” which has oversight concerning, say, the epigenetic dynamics underlying the metabolic processes throughout the body which interpret incoming signals and make “choices” or “decisions”, or “judgments” or “assessments” about what structural, enzymatic, and other kinds of proteins should be given expression within the genome, considered as a whole (and this includes the so-called junk DNA and RNA which turns out not, at all, to be junk or nonfunctional) in order to properly deal with such incoming sensory signals.

Hijacking Phenomenology

How do sensory signals get transduced into phenomenological experiences? Yes, the brain plays a role in all of this, but general psychology, neurobiology, and transpersonal psychology are still trying to figure out what the role of the brain is with respect to the phenomenology of consciousness.

Is consciousness a physical or material phenomenon, or is it neither of those possibilities? And, even if one does not wish to consider consciousness to be either physical or material in nature, can one demonstrate that consciousness is necessarily a function of brain processes, and nothing more, or could those brain processes be a complex, intricate scaffolding dynamic that is built (through a multiplicity of transduction events of one kind or another) to serve as a parallel system for monitoring and keeping track of phenomenological experiences within a biological environment rather than being the source of those experiences?

As Nick Begich, Robert Duncan, Len Ber, Sabrina Davis Wallace, and others have documented in conjunction with the phenomenon of frequency following behavior, technologies exist that are capable of hijacking different aspects of the brain’s biological processes and, then, through manipulating various



electromagnetic frequencies, are able to induce people to have specific thoughts, emotions, and experiences, or to perform certain kinds of behaviors. However, what frequency following behavior does is, among other things, to entrain biological processes and, thereby, interfere with the latter's capacity to be receptive to non-EMF kinds of signals – such as might be involved in processes of willful consciousness or extra-biological forms of receiving and processing non-EMF forms of signal transmission, and, consequently, there is a potential difference between what brains do and what dimensions of a human being do that exist apart from processes of biological functioning, even though, there seem to be ways in which the biological and the non-biological are able to communicate with one another and impact one another (The old mind versus brain controversy started by, among others, Rene Descartes).

The dynamics of hijacking a brain have been experienced by tens of thousands of targeted individuals around the world, and have been reported on, in some detail, by individuals such as Bill Binney, an NSA whistleblower, and his physicist wife, Katherine Horton, as well as Russian émigré Dr. Len Ber, or former networking engineer Sabrina Davis Wallace, along with many other people. As horrific as the targeted individual phenomenon is, that hijacking dynamic has some holes – at least currently this seems to be the case – in which individuals who have been targeted and, as a result, are being electronically played with or manipulated, to varying degrees, by psychopaths who have been supplied with DARPA-researched technological toys by still other psychopaths, nonetheless, such targeted individuals do sometimes still have a few degrees of freedom through which to resist or fight against what is transpiring, and, therefore, despite having to experience very painful, exhausting, and debilitating forms of torture on a daily basis, nevertheless, such individuals – or a subset of them -- possess what appear to be both some biological and non-biological forms of resiliency that enable them to speak out, do significant research into the problem, and try to find ways of countering what is taking place.



Being able to use various kinds of pharmaceuticals, frequency technologies, and acupuncture techniques to block pain signals does not mean that pain is a function of brain dynamics. Rather, such results merely shows that one can approach the dynamics of pain signals from two directions – one source that is physical or material, and another direction which -- as the placebo/nocebo effect, hypnosis, and certain aspects of epigenetics have shown -- appears to be non-physical or non-material in nature.

Identity

At one point in the first chapter of David's aforementioned book, he quotes the film maker and artist, Sergio Toporek. Essentially, the quote makes reference to the fact that human beings are only able to see less than 1% of the electromagnetic spectrum, hear less than 1% of the acoustic spectrum, are made up of cells, 90% of which contain microbial DNA that is not human, occupy a body that is made from atoms which are 99.999999+ empty space, none of which are the same atoms which existed in us when we were born, and, finally, have two fewer set chromosomes in their genomes than do potatoes.

I'm not quite certain what the point of the Toporek quote is or why David decided to include it in his book. Human beings, like all life forms, have degrees of freedom which give expression to various kinds of capabilities as well as are characterized by degrees of constraint which impose limits on what human beings, in general or specifically, are capable of accomplishing.

While human beings might come equipped with capacities that are capable of picking up on less than 1% of the electromagnetic spectrum and less than 1% of the acoustic spectrum, nevertheless, human beings also come equipped with capacities that enable instruments to be constructed which are capable of detecting extensive aspects of the electromagnetic and acoustic spectra. Consequently, what David's point is, in



pointing out the aforementioned considerations, seems to be a sort of cherry picking of data that doesn't appear to lend much, if any, support to the sort of perspective that David is trying to advance at this point in his book.

In addition, the fact that potatoes have 48 chromosomes and human beings have 46 chromosomes is neither here nor there because one of the truly remarkable dimensions of human genetics is that while, on the one hand, the 46 chromosomes in human beings might only code for about 23,000, or so, proteins, on the other hand, the epigenetic system which exists in humans is capable of coding for roughly 90,000 proteins by arranging sequences of DNA and RNA that are found within so-called junk DNA and, then, directing how those sequences can be expressed in ways that are capable of generating nearly four times the diversity of proteins that are generated through the manner in which the genes on the 46 chromosomes are normally expressed, and, as a result, the human genetic system certainly exhibits a great deal more diversity than what the 48 chromosomes in potatoes are able to do.

Moreover, one could accept the idea that 90% of human cells contain DNA which is microbial and not human, but this does not necessarily require one to argue that those cells are not part of what makes a human being, human. Or, alternatively, one might wish to point out -- as, I believe, Richard Alpert/Baba Ram Das used to do -- that a distinction can be made between the car being driven and the one who is operating the car.

Furthermore, reminding readers that most, if not all, of the atoms with which we started are no longer with us when we are older, doesn't necessarily disclose any sort of significant insight. Instead, the issue being raised alludes to a fundamental question that neither David nor Sergio Toporek seems to be asking. More specifically, how is that despite the fact that the atoms with which we began are no longer with us when we are older (and indeed different kinds of tissues and organ cells within our bodies also go through an array of cycles involving complete replacement over the course of weeks, months, years, and a lifetime), nonetheless, most of us have the sense of going



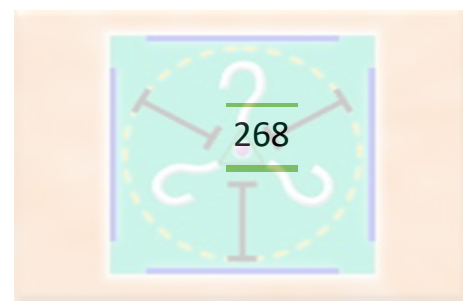
through such changes with a relatively stable notion of “self” notwithstanding those sorts of replacement dynamics?

I believe it was David Hume who once posed a similar sort of problem concerning the nature of identity when he talked about a ship that left harbor, and, then, during the course of its journey proposed that every plank and part of the boat was replaced. The question he asked had to do with whether the boat that arrived back in harbor at the end of its journey was the same boat that left harbor at the beginning of the voyage.

What makes something what it is? The ship might have had everything material/physical element replaced during the course of its journey, but the person or people who paid for the wood, rope, tar, sails, metals, and so on that were used to rebuild the ship and, as well, had papers establishing ownership of the craft, plus the testimony of all of the crew concerning what had transpired during the journey, then, legally, according to maritime law, the ship was the same despite whatever changes were made to it over the course of time.

What makes a human being a human being? Is it the atoms, cells or tissues of a human being that render the individual human, or is there something other than material/physical considerations that make a human, human?

Perhaps, like Hume’s transformed ship, the biological transformations that a human being undergoes over the course of life or the extent to which non-human DNA exists within human beings is incidental to the issue of identity, because just as legal considerations in the case of, say, a ship which is being re-fashioned during a voyage might determine continuity of identity rather than physical/material considerations per se, then, so too, there might be dimensions of a human being that are extra-material or extra-physical and which play a central role in determining what constitutes a human being. For instance, if that which makes a human being, human is non-material or non-physical in nature -- such as consciousness or a dimension that is spiritual in character and transcends the physical even as that qualitative dimension interacts with the quantitative realms of the physical and material -- then all of the



interesting data points that are being focused on by David Icke and Sergio Toporek in the quote to which I alluded earlier really seem to have little do to with an array of more fundamental considerations concerning human identity.

Who's Minding the Store?

David Icke continues on with trying to develop his perspective by referencing another quote, this time from a publication entitled "Wonderpedia." That quote indicates how during every second of a person's life, the brain encounters 11 million sensations which are, then, filtered down to a manageable set of 40, or so, sensations that are used to construct a perceptual lens of sorts.

I have just one question with respect to the foregoing considerations. Could David be a little more specific about how all of the foregoing supposedly takes place?

What is the nature of the metric which calculates that there are 11 million sensations occurring every second? How reliable is that metric?

What are the natures of the filters through which 11 million sensations are whittled down to just 40 sensations? How are decisions made? What makes those decisions? How do we know that it is the brain which is making those decisions?

Given that many biochemical reactions take place somewhat slowly relative to, say, the speed of light, and given that the foregoing 11 million sensations are, at least in part, mediated by biochemical dynamics, and given that "something" or "some things" have to make judgments concerning which genes are to be given expression so that 11 million sensations can be reduced down to 40 sensations and, thereby, be able to form an intelligible and functional relationship with on-going events in the surrounding environment, and given that energy must be generated and delivered to all of the foregoing dynamics, how can one be sure that it is the brain which has complete and total oversight of the foregoing set of processes?



The Wonderpedia quote that appears in David's book at this point only talks about brain dynamics, and does not at all talk about what other dimensions of awareness might be shaping what transpires within phenomenology. Meaning, purpose, intention, motivation, understanding, memory, likes, dislikes, and intuition might have nothing to do with the electromagnetic and chemical dynamics that take place in the brain.

Just as a television set does not produce the programs that appear on its screen, so too, perhaps, the human brain does not produce the programs that appear on the screen of consciousness. Moreover, just as a television set can breakdown and no longer be able to properly process the signals being received from elsewhere, and just as there are ways in which the signals coming from elsewhere can be jammed and prevented from reaching the television set, so too, perhaps there are ways for the brain to break down in a manner that undermines its ability to properly process signals coming from outside of the brain, or, maybe, there are ways in which the brain's manner of operating can be hijacked so that it is no longer capable of picking up on certain kinds of signals involving meaning, purpose, intention, choice, creativity, insight, and understanding.

Are eidetic memories stored in the brain, and, if so, how is this done? Where in the brain - and how -- do individuals known as "human calculators" (who, among other things, can quickly calculate - however this is done -- complex powers, roots of numbers, and prime numbers) do their computations and reach answers faster than computers which operate at the speed of light? How does Broca's area of the brain produce speech and how does Wernicke's area of the brain comprehend speech, and how does the individual who generates speech understand that what is being said is what was meant to be said before intention was turned into language?

David maintains that the other 10, 999,960 sensations (the 10,900,060 figure that appears in David's book is incorrect) which do not make the final cut of 40 sensations are taken up by the subconscious mind. Is the subconscious mind part of the



brain? If so, where in the brain is the subconscious mind? How does it operate?

Why should the subconscious mind be able to absorb [remember (?)] 10,999,960 new sensations every second, while the active capacity of the brain's memory dynamics seems to be governed by the limit of 7 plus or minus 2 chunks of data that was written about by George Miller more than 60 years ago? What is the nature of the interaction between the brain that is processing 11 million sensations per second, and the subconscious mind that is accumulating 10,999,960 new sensations every second, and what are the principles which govern or have oversight concerning those interactions?

Quantum Physics

According to David, "... quantum physics explores the hidden realms beyond the 'seen' and has demolished the material, solid, clockwork model of reality pedaled for so long by mainstream science." (Page 6) As quantum physicists themselves have been attesting -- at least since Nobel Prize winning scientist Richard Feynman might, or might not, have indicated to an allegedly bewildered and confused graduate student back in the 1960s but did indicate in a talk given while at Cornell -- no one understands what quantum physics means and, therefore, one should just do the calculations, which are extremely accurate as far as they go.

Quantum physics is capable of describing a great deal – at least on a certain level of phenomena. However, what can actually be explained by quantum physics is surprisingly limited

Quantum physics doesn't actually explore the hidden realms beyond the 'seen.' Instead, quantum physics is sort of like a powerful microscope that allows one to "see" some of what appears to be happening beneath a surface level of events that is normally considered to be "real". Nonetheless, this does not make quantum physics a way to explore realms beyond the 'seen', but, rather, this merely makes quantum physics a



different way of engaging or 'seeing' or understanding what usually is, or can be, "seen" through more superficial modalities of 'seeing' and understanding.

Quantum physics filters reality according to its own set of presuppositions, biases, methods, and limitations. Quantum physics can provide extremely precise descriptions concerning what is highly likely in any given situation in which certain kinds of events involving forces, particles, waves, frequencies and an array of other quantum properties of various kinds are unfolding on a nano or sub-nano level, but quantum physics has nothing at all to say about what makes such an unfolding process possible or why those properties have the characteristics that they do or why the constants which show up in such phenomena (e.g., such as Planck's constant, or the fine structure constant, and so on) have the values that they do.

The reason why Werner Heisenberg, Niels Bohr, John Wheeler, Albert Einstein, David Bohm, Hugh Everett III, Roger Penrose, and others all had different ideas about what the nature of quantum phenomena are is because none of those individuals were able to prove to the satisfaction of everyone else that the former's understanding of quantum phenomena was, and is, correct. Quantum physics is the ultimate Rube Goldberg-kind of conceptual device in which all manner of incredible pieces of evidence have been cobbled together to provide a method for generating accurate descriptions involving certain kinds of events despite the fact that no one actually seems to know how all those pieces hang together in the way they do or why that system of descriptive methodology is capable of such precision.

David seems to want to bring quantum physics into his narrative because of the ways in which that kind of scientific inquiry raises so many important questions concerning various aspects of classical physics which tend to be rooted in material and physical notions of solidity – classical notions that David wants to jettison so that he will be in a conceptual position (or so he believes) to be able to put forth his own notions concerning the nature of reality (which will make their



appearance shortly). However, quantum physics hasn't necessarily been able to entirely free itself from notions of physicality, materiality, or solidity, but, instead, just approaches those issues from a very different direction such that one tends to scratch one's head and wonder what it actually means to say that something might be physical, or material, or solid in some sense.

David refers to Nikola Tesla as a real scientist (whatever that means) who once was reported to have said: "The day science begins to study non-physical phenomena it will make more progress in one decade than in all of the previous centuries of our existence." What Tesla might have meant by the notion of non-physical phenomena has not been made clear, and, furthermore, one also might raise the question of whether science would ever be able to study such non-physical phenomena and still remain science, or, alternatively, whether one would have to begin to re-envision the process of scientific methodology and the manner in which one might go about demonstrating truths with respect to non-physical phenomena.

Being able to demonstrate that there are phenomena, events, and effects that cannot be explained by physical science as currently understood might only mean that one will have to re-calibrate what is entailed by the notion of physical science. Anomalous phenomena that cannot be explained or understood by existing notions of physicality and materiality does not automatically require one to cast off the realm of the physical and material but might just be challenging one to discover what makes what are normally referred to as physical and material events or phenomena possible, and therefore, one would need to probe what the nature of the relationship is between, on the one hand, that which is described in physical and material terms, and, on the other hand, that which appears to transcend the realm of the physical and material and, yet, somehow, makes the latter kinds of phenomena possible. To date, quantum physics -- despite all of its advancements relative to classical physics -- has not been able to provide a persuasive way of addressing any of the foregoing issues.



What Are We In Essence?

According to David, human beings should not identify with their bodies, but they should reflect on the capacity for awareness that is associated with that body. Although awareness does occur in the context of the biological body and can be shaped by that context, nonetheless, he contends that “awareness in the purest sense has no form.” (Page 7)

Aside from trying to resolve the questions which surround the idea that awareness can have some sense of purity (for example, what are the criteria for determining what constitutes pure consciousness?), one also has to grapple with how awareness in such a pure sense supposedly doesn't have any form. The foregoing sort of claim would seem to present something of a conundrum since one might suppose that awareness, whether pure or not, is giving expression to its own modality of form by being manifested as awareness and not something else and, as such, can, to some degree, be recognized as the kind of experiential form to which the word “awareness” can be applied.

Subsequently, David indicates that, in essence we are, in some sense, awareness. He further indicates that awareness, at least in its most expanded sense, is not energy, but, in some way, just is.

Just is: ‘what’? He doesn't answer that question, but he does say that human awareness is but a sub-expression of a total, over-all awareness.

Moreover, he stipulates that since God is “Infinite Awareness” (David's term), and because human beings possess awareness, then, human beings give expression to the Divine. He further notes that while some religions and spiritual traditions are quite ready to embrace such a possibility, there are other religions and spiritual traditions which would consider the idea that human beings are, in some way, God would be sacrilegious and blasphemous.



There are other ways of engaging the foregoing issues besides the manner in which David is giving expression to those themes. For instance, what if one were to say that awareness is a form of manifested phenomena which God makes possible and that the existence of such awareness says nothing about God other than that God is the source of such a phenomenon.

Furthermore, what if one were to say that God is without form, and, therefore, anything that has form is other than God even as such forms could not exist were it not for the Presence of Divinity? Awareness – even in its purest sense – has a form which distinguishes it from other modalities of manifestation, and, therefore, awareness – even if pure and infinite – is something other than God given that the latter is being alluded to as “That” which has no form.

Being other than God does not necessarily make the awareness in human beings something that is, according to David, “insignificant, detached, isolated, and powerless” relative to God but it does make that awareness dependent on God for whatever significance, sense of relatedness, and power that is entailed by the awareness which has been made available to human beings through the putative Source of such a manifested phenomenon.

We don’t know what awareness is or how it is possible. We don’t know what God is but are hypothesizing that the existence of awareness can be attributed to the capabilities of Divinity, and, consequently, the nature of the relationship between awareness and God is immersed in a great cloud of unknowing. David favorably endorses Alan Watts (1915-1973) when the latter is quoted as saying: “God is what no one admits to being and everyone is,” (Page 7) but what is the nature of the evidential proof that would be capable of validating such a claim?

There is considerable evidence to indicate that awareness is vulnerable to: Delusions, illusions, hypnotic states, undue influence, biases, propaganda, logical fallacies, acts of counterfeiting, misinformation, charlatans, disinformation, indoctrination, psychotic breaks, drug-induced distortions,



manipulation, mistakes, and so on. Evidence which has been cleansed of all of the foregoing qualities is much harder to come by and even harder to assess as to the state of purity of that sort of evidence.

My spiritual guide – the one whom I consider to be authentic – was an authority on the teachings of the Indian Sufi mystic, Hazrat Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him). There is a story associated with the latter individual in which, late at night, someone rushed into the courtyard near the shaykh’s residence clamoring that he “had seen God.” He kept repeating the phrase over and over until the shaykh came out from the house and calmed the person down and asked that individual to describe what he had seen.

The person proceeded to do as he had been asked. When he had finished, the shaykh indicated that the person was getting carried away with things because all that the individual had seen was the light of his own ablution (ritual form of readying a person for worship).

In other words, the individual had seen something that was, in its own way, real. Nonetheless, the reality which was encountered and witnessed was not God.

There is a difference between creation and the Creator. Creation exists by virtue of the Creator’s Presence and capabilities as a Creator, but creation cannot be equated with the Creator any more than a novelist can be considered to be nothing other than the narrative and characters that such a novelist makes possible.

There is a second teaching that comes from the life of Hazrat Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him) that was related by my spiritual guide. More specifically, there was an occasion in which the shaykh’s son came to his father in a perplexed condition due to a spiritual experience that had taken place.

The young man described his experience, indicating that during the experience he seemed to have been in a stage that was higher than one, or another, prophet, and this was

incongruous with his understanding that non-prophets could not occupy a spiritual state higher than a prophet. His father reportedly responded that there were two points associated with every human being, one of which had to do with one's point of origin and another locus of manifestation which had to do with an individual's point of spiritual ascension.

While, sometimes, it might be the case that a non-prophet could have a point of origin that was, in some sense, higher than that of a prophet, nevertheless, according to the shaykh, no non-prophet could experience a state that was higher than the point of spiritual ascension of any given prophet. And, therefore, one set of observations which might be drawn from what the shaykh was saying is that "awareness", whatever it might be, has gradations, and some of those gradations have to do with one's point of origin and other modalities of such gradations have to do with spiritual ascension, and, therefore, at the very least, the nature of one's relationship with the One Who made such gradations possible can be quite complex and nuanced depending on whether one is talking about origins or ascensions.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "There are hidden gems of knowledge unknown to all but those who know God; If they are spoken of, none denies them except those who are arrogant toward God." The Prophet is also reported to have said: "Whoever knows Allah, curbs one's tongue from speaking about Allah, since this kind of knowledge cannot be contained in speech,"

To have some sort of knowledge concerning what God makes possible does not make one God, any more than having knowledge of the Sun makes one the Sun. The Presence of God might make all manner of manifested phenomenon possible, and in coming to know of such manifested phenomena one comes to be acquainted with some of what that Presence is capable of doing, but such knowledge does not make one God even while it does provide a medium of communication between that Presence and the one who is opened up to some of what that Presence is able to bring about.



There are some experiences which can be described through language. There also are some experiences which cannot be properly or fully described through the use of language but must be engaged phenomenologically, and there are many levels and dimensions of phenomenology which exist between one's point of origin and one's point of ascension.

The fact that one can be aware of such dimensions does not necessarily mean that one's awareness is equivalent to "That" which made such awareness possible. In fact, we don't even know what such awareness is or how it was made possible, and, therefore, we have absolutely no knowledge of whether, or not, human awareness has been made possible in conjunction with, or as a function of, some sort of Divine awareness.

The properties of manifestation are one thing. What makes such manifestation possible might be another issue altogether, and to whatever extent this latter point is relevant, then, one would not be able to employ some form of spiritual reverse engineering through which one would be able to go from: Acquiring some degree of understanding in relation to the properties of manifestation, to: Arriving at an accurate understanding concerning the nature of the Divine Being that made such manifestation possible.

Interpreting Experience

David indicates that he imbibed a psychoactive substance on two occasions. The substance was ayahuasca, and he went where the chemical took him on consecutive nights while spending time in the rainforests of Brazil during 2003.

The following comments are not intended as a form of shaking an accusatory finger at David and saying "Tut Tut" concerning his use of psychoactive substances. Nearly sixty years ago, I had my own close encounters with a variety of psychoactive substances, and it was more than two nights.

David claims that he remembers his aforementioned chemically induced experiences in photographic detail.



Although there is no independent way of demonstrating that his claim is true, one could accept what he has to say in this regard, while simultaneously pointing out that the clarity of his experience might be neither here nor there.

Jean Piaget, the developmental psychologist, had a photographic-like detailed memory of an event that he believed occurred when he was two years old. In the memory, his nanny protected him and saved him from being kidnapped by a stranger.

What he remembers so clearly never took place. It was a false memory.

George Bush supposedly had a number of flashbulb memories concerning how he had come to know of the alleged attacks on 9/11. However, not only were those clear memories inconsistent with one another, some of them couldn't possibly have been true, and, yet, he had those "memories" nonetheless.

Elizabeth Loftus, who pioneered a great deal of work concerning the issue of false memories, recounts how some fifteen years after beginning her research on this topic she encountered a relative who spoke about a day when Elizabeth was 14 years old and had found her mother's dead body floating in a backyard swimming pool. Initially, Elizabeth indicated to her relative that she had not been the one who found her mother's body and, moreover, she didn't remember events in the way they were being explained to her by her relative, and, yet, within a relatively short period of time she began to have specific images concerning that day which seemed to indicate that she had been the one to discover her mother's body, only to be told a few weeks later by the same relative that the notion that Elizabeth had discovered her mother's body was not correct, and the relative apologized for having induced Elizabeth to have believed otherwise.

Maybe David Icke's memory of what transpired during his psychoactive-inspired journey in 2003 was correct, and, maybe, it wasn't. The issue is whether, or not, what he remembers from that trip provided him with true insights concerning the nature of existence.

According to David's written account of his 2003 experience, at some point during his psychoactive encounter, he heard a voice telling him that: "All you need to know is Infinite Love is the only truth – everything else is illusion." (Page 9)

In what sense is pain an illusion when considering the lives of those who, through no apparent fault of their own, are abused, bullied, raped, molested, tortured, bombed, maimed, terrorized, sold into slavery, killed, or who undergo prolonged, painful deaths as a result of this or that disease or some series of iatrogenic errors? If Love is Infinite and the only truth, then, what is to make of what is happening to the foregoing set of individuals? One can either avert one's awareness as one tries to explain away and rationalize what is happening to the foregoing individuals as being illusory, or one can begin to entertain the possibility that, perhaps, we don't actually understand what Love is or how it operates or why things happen in the way they do.

Until one has all the data, one doesn't know what the significance of pain is and whether it is illusory, or all too real. Until one knows what the nature of the relationship is between the existence of pain -- terrible pain -- and the Presence of Infinite Love, then, to claim that pain is illusory seems to be little more than an exercise in gaslighting. Until one knows whether, or not, there is some sort of compensatory measure for whatever pain is experienced, or one comes to have deep insight into the possible roles that pain plays in working toward the realization of one's essential potential, then everything we do would appear to be reduced to being nothing more than different ways of whistling past the cemetery on a dark and stormy night in which something that we can't quite identify is in hot pursuit.

One doesn't have to deny David's foregoing drug-induced experience to question its meaning or significance. One doesn't have to deny the phenomenology of David's experience to be able to question what it means for illusion to appear to exist in the middle of Infinite Love and whether such illusion is actually

entailed by the nature of Love and, as such, serves one, or more, purposes.

To know that something is illusory, one has to know something about the nature of Reality as well as how such Reality makes such illusions possible and why. To be able to distinguish between illusion and Reality requires discernment, and being told that Infinite Love is the only truth, while everything else is illusory, doesn't really provide such discernment but, instead, merely indicates that there is a discernment that needs to be made.

David continues the account of his encounter with a psychoactive substance by further indicating that the Voice which had been addressing him with respect to the idea that Infinite Love is the only truth also went on to inform David that he was going to be taken to a modality of awareness which was not only gave expression to his origins but would, as well, give expression to his condition of return. He was further told that the experience he was about to undergo would help David to acquire greater insight into the nature of things.

He, then, speaks about experiencing or seeing a "shimmering radiant blackness of stillness and silence" that, despite its blackness, also gave expression to brilliant light. David was further informed by the Voice that what he was experiencing was the Infinite Awareness being aware of All-potential and All-possibility prior to the point through which potential and possibility would be imagined into existence.

Since, previously, David indicated that the Voice had informed him that Infinite Love was the only truth, then, presumably, one might safely conclude that Infinite Awareness is merely another way of talking about, or referring to, Infinite Love. Having realized the nature of the identity of Love and Awareness, one wonders about the status of that which is entailed by All-potential and All-possibility which are to be imagined into existence.

Apparently, the Infinite is not only a loving awareness, but it has the capacity to imagine all-potential and all-possibility into existence. Whether such potentials and possibilities are also



infinite is uncertain, or, if they are infinite, perhaps, they are different kinds of infinities much as natural numbers and the real numbers can be shown, through Cantor's mapping technique, to constitute different kinds of infinities.

In what ways all-possibility and all-potential might give expression to the Presence of Infinite, Loving, Imaginative, Awareness is uncertain. What might constitute loving expressions of illusion and loving expressions of truth is unknown, and, perhaps, that is the challenge with which human beings are faced – how to develop discernment in relation to the difference between infinitely loving, aware, imaginative expressions of illusion and infinitely loving, aware, imaginative expressions of truth.

David indicates that he is not the only individual who has encountered the Darkness that is both black as well as shimmering with brilliant light. For instance, he refers to Dr. Eben Alexander, a Harvard professor and neurosurgeon, who had a near-death experience in 2008 when the latter individual entered into a coma for a week and during his "coma" he engaged, or was engaged by, a "dazzling darkness" that appeared to manifest pure love and all manner of knowledge.

Dr. Alexander refers to the foregoing phenomenon as being the expression of some sort of "Core." David mentions that Nikola Tesla also spoke of the "Core" from which everything arises.

According to Tesla, "My brain is only a receiver in the universe. There is a core from which we obtain knowledge, strength, and inspiration. I haven't penetrated the secrets of this core, but I know that it exists"? (Page 11) While the 'core' that Tesla sensed existed -- but which he had not penetrated -- might, or might not, be the same sort of Infinite, Aware, Loving, Imaginative Reality to which David and Dr. Alexander were alluding in the foregoing discussion, one wonders about the extent to which such a dazzling, dark infinitely loving and knowing core was penetrated by either David or Dr. Alexander.

Conceivably, the foregoing Core is not capable of being penetrated. Perhaps, just as there is said to be an event horizon



associated with a gravitationally dense black hole which marks the boundary between a gravitational force which cannot be escaped and the space beyond that boundary which is in proximity to a black hole that has not, yet, been pulled into the inexorable draw of force that is at play in such a cosmological, gravitationally-based maelstrom.

The dazzling dark, core phenomenon which exudes the presence of an infinite love and knowledge could be but an epistemic and existential event horizon that serves as a veil of the Reality which is hidden by manifested phenomena which convey Hawking-like radiation of some kind which involves, in a difficult-to-grasp manner, a complex of: Semi-Infinity, love, awareness, imagination, potential, and possibility. Consequently, like Tesla, perhaps neither David nor Dr. Alexander actually penetrated such an event horizon but, instead, experienced what was being radiated through, or from, that veiled aspect of Reality.

During his discussion concerning the ayahuasca-induced experience outlined previously, David contends that any entity which: Takes form, moves, or gives rise to patterns of interference that constitute manifestations of acoustic or electromagnetic phenomena constitutes “figments of Infinite Imagination.” In fact, David indicates how the aforementioned Voice had informed him that all such vibrational manifestations are expressions of illusion.

Given that so much of our normal sense of “reality” is a function of vibrational resonances that result in manifestations that take on forms, modalities of movement, and force field frequencies of one kind or another, one might ask: Why should this be the case? Why is there so much illusion with which to have to hack one’s way through like some explorer with a machete in a dense rain forest?

The foregoing sentiments resonate, somewhat, with J.B.S. Haldane’s comment which stated that: “God has an inordinate fondness for beetles,” for beetles, like illusions, seem to be everywhere. Perhaps, just as beetles have their ecological

functions, so too, do illusions have their ecological functions within the ontology of things.

Maybe, illusions are not meant to be ignored but are, instead, a phenomenon that needs to be understood. Learning about illusions becomes part of one's journey toward the truth.

Previously, mention was made that my spiritual guide – the one I consider authentic, and not the one who was steeped in illusions – was an authority on the life and teachings of Hazrat Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him). My shaykh's doctoral dissertation explored the teachings of the aforementioned Sufi mystic.

One of my spiritual guide's external examiners was A.J Arberry who, at the time, was considered to be one of the preeminent scholars in the world with respect to: Islam, the Sufi mystical tradition, and the Qur'an. In fact, at one point in his life, Arberry translated the Qur'an and, then, half way through the translation process became Muslim – a conversion which had to be kept secret because of the many academic prejudices that existed back then, and still do, concerning Muslims and Islam. Arberry considered my spiritual guide's dissertation to be the best thing that he had ever read about the Sufi path that, up to that time, was available in the English language.

When my shaykh became a faculty member at the University of Toronto he often entertained the idea of getting his dissertation published. As a result, from time to time, he would re-engage the document with the thought of getting it ready for publication, and in this regard, he would go about making a few corrections here and there as well as introducing new material which he felt might help to enhance the quality of his work-in-progress.

About five or six years into his tenure as a professor, he was informed by his own shaykh in Ajmer, India that he was to assume the duties and responsibilities of a shaykh who would help people to, God willing, step onto and traverse different facets of the Sufi path. As a result, my future shaykh began to undertake the rigors of seclusion.

Seclusion, or “khulwa”, takes place for a period of between 1 and 40 days. During this spiritual exercise, one starts by going into a room by oneself -- beginning after sunset – and, then, one proceeds to keep the night vigil before -- a number of hours later -- beginning the fast that takes place between several hours before sunrise and sunset (breaking the fast with only bread and water), while: Observing the five daily prayers; engaging in zikr or remembrance; reading the Qur’an, and, if so instructed by one’s shaykh, pursuing the practices of meditation and/or contemplation.

The idea is: To eat less, drink less, spend less time with people, and remember God more. My spiritual guide started out with a period of seclusion that lasted 40 days.

Every year, thereafter, for the next twenty years, he performed a seclusion that lasted 40 days. Occasionally, when his teaching and familial obligations permitted him to do so, he also added a 19-day or 21-day period of seclusion to the aforementioned yearly observances.

Having had a relatively small taste of what seclusion is like, I know that observing the rigors of seclusion has, God willing, the capacity to change one, and in the process, opens one up to various kinds of experiential possibilities. My spiritual guide’s many seclusions also induced changes in him, including his understanding of the Sufi path, which, over time, became more nuanced, deeper, and richer as a result of, among other things, his periods of seclusion.

Consequently, at some time following the completion of a period of seclusion, he would consider the idea of re-writing various aspects of his doctoral dissertation in order to better reflect the enhanced understanding of the Sufi path that seclusion, by the Grace of God, had conferred upon him. Eventually, he reached a point in which he gave up all thought of up-dating his thesis because his understanding was changing at a rate that was more rapid than any free time he might have – which was not much – to be able to re-work his dissertation in order to incorporate his deepening insight into the nature of the Sufi path .

In a sense, as the truth became clearer to him, many modalities of previous understanding were re-worked and modulated to varying degrees. These sorts of understandings were like scaffoldings that played a temporary, supportive role, only to be replaced by better forms of epistemological, ontological, and metaphysical scaffolding later on.

Perhaps certain kinds of illusions are necessary. One might need to acquire the sorts of understanding that enable one to journey a little more closely to the truth concerning the nature of one's relationship with Reality, and, in the process, leave various other kinds of illusions behind ... illusions that were, rooted in realities of one kind or another, but illusions that were more likely to obfuscate than to illuminate.

Illusions, like truths, come in all manner of gradations. Illusions – or some of them – might be the forms of epistemological, moral, spiritual, aspirational, ontological, and metaphysical challenges which must be overcome and mastered so that one will develop the personal qualities that are necessary to be able to fully realize one's essential potential or fitra – at least as much as one's capacity will permit and God's Grace will allow.

David uses the term "Phantom Self" (Page 12) as a way of referring to the dimension of human experience that identifies, to varying degrees, with different facets of the world through ethnicity, financial class, race, social status, career, political affiliation, institutional affiliations, gender, educational background, and the like. He considers the Phantom Self to be at the heart of the human inclination toward trying to control others and, therefore, responsible for a great deal of the trauma and misery which exists in the world.

Every spiritual tradition has a term that is similar to David's notion of the Phantom Self. The Islamic/Sufi counterpart to the Phantom Self is known as "nafs", and this notion not only entails an inclination to seek to control others, and, thereby, bring trauma and misery into people's lives, but, as well, the nafs gives expression to that tendency within human beings to rebel

against the truth, especially the truth concerning the nature of one's relationship with Reality or Being.

There is also a term known in the Islamic/Sufi tradition as "dunya." This refers to the chaos, tumult, antagonisms, and conflicts that are generated through the way in which each individual's nafs clashes with the same problematic dimension in other people as everyone seeks to satisfy his, her, or their own interests at the expense of everyone else.

According to David, the human goal is to "become One with Infinite Awareness." In support of such a perspective, he cites a woman by the name of Anita Morjani who indicates, based on a near-death experience that if we can transcend the idea of just being expressions of the physical body, then, "... we are all expressions of the same consciousness." (Page 12)

David adds that the foregoing perspective has played a central role in the lives of enlightened individuals down through the ages. He, then, claims that quantum physics is just beginning to catch up with such a position.

There are a number of observations which might be made in conjunction with the previous two paragraphs. To begin with, if each individual gives expression to one of the possibilities and potentials that is imagined into existence by a loving, infinite Core, then, conceivably, contrary to what David claims, the goal is not necessarily to become One with Infinite Awareness but, instead, the goal might be to seek to realize, God willing, whatever one's essential potential has the capacity to do within the ecology of the Core of Created Being. As such, the Ocean with which one might become One is not necessarily Infinite Awareness but the essential potential of created Being that Infinite Awareness makes possible which, might well be infinite in nature, but, again, a form of infinity that is different from the Infinity which is the Source of such a lesser, more limited, form of infinity ... in a sense, perhaps human beings are like an infinite - but limited -- form of natural numbers relative to the real numbers of Infinite Awareness (one might keep in mind that, sooner or later, all analogies break down).

There is a saying in the Sufi tradition which stipulates that God never repeats manifestation. If so, then, while we might all be expressions of the One Source, those expressions are not necessarily the same ... a consideration which would seem to resonate with David's earlier reference to the notions of All-possibility and All-potential. As such, we would not all be the same expressions of an Infinitely Loving, Aware Capacity for Imagining possibilities into existence, but, instead, we would be individually unique manifestations of such a set of infinitely essential possibilities and essential potentials.

David mentions how Anita Morjani indicated that during her out of body experience she entered into a state or condition of clarity in which she maintained that not only did she understand everything but she also felt connected to everything. David goes on to say that she was referring to the force that moves everything and connects everything.

Without wishing to disparage Anita's description of her out-of-body experience, nonetheless, a person reflecting on the foregoing account would not necessarily be unreasonable or unfair if such an individual were to raise the possibility that while acknowledging the possibility that Anita might have experienced a sense of understanding and connectivity which was quite profound, whether or not she was, in fact, actually connected to everything or understood everything might require something more than her claim that this was the case in order to be persuasive to individuals other than herself. David assumes that she is talking about the same sort of thing about which he is talking in his book, but that assumption might not be warranted.

David endorses an analogy which Anita uses to help describe the nature of her experience. She asks one to imagine someone being in a pitch black warehouse with nothing but a flashlight.

The beam of light gives expression to the narrow range of frequencies that one can see or engage under such circumstances. However, when the lights of the warehouse are turned on, then, one begins to comprehend that one is



immersed in, and connected to, something much greater than could be disclosed by using the limited capacities of a flashlight.

One might wish to ask, however, why stop with the warehouse? What lies outside of the warehouse, and what lies outside of the region in which the warehouse is located, and what lies outside the state or province in which the warehouse resides, and what lies outside the country in which such a warehouse exists, and what lies beyond the world in which such a warehouse is situated, and what lies beyond the solar system where the world exists which contains the warehouse in question, and what exists beyond the galaxy where such a solar system can be found, and what exists beyond the universe where the galaxy is located, and what lies beyond the physical/material entities that populate such a universe, and doesn't one need different kinds of light to engage or "see" realities that are normally escape the luminosity of whatever kind of light one is using, and how does one know that the light one is using within any given context actually is capable of disclosing everything that is present or is intimately connected to everything that is present?

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "The movements of nafs are more difficult to detect than the movements of a black ant on a smooth rock in the dead of night." How does one know that what one is seeing is reality rather than the extremely difficult to detect movements of the nafs as it seeks to claim knowledge, understanding, or connectedness that might not be not be real?

Finally, one has difficulty understanding how David can believe that quantum physics can be said to be catching up to any of the foregoing issues. Quantum physics is a methodology for describing the dynamics of phenomena within a context which, according to the so-called standard model, consists of different kinds of carriers of force or forms of energy known as gauge bosons such as: photons (electrodynamics); W and Z entities (weak nuclear force, particle decay); gluons (which operate within neutrons and protons); the much sought for, but,



so far, elusive graviton (gravity), as well as the Higgs field which has to do with the acquisition of, or conferring of, mass.

The foregoing gauge bosons provide the means through which a group of phenomena known as fermions tend to interact with one another. Fermions refer to structural -- or structural-creating -- entities such as electrons, neutrinos, quarks, protons, neutrons, muons, and so on, although, obviously, the properties associated with any given form of boson will also introduce structural-like properties into whatever context of which they are a part.

Unless one wishes to make: Infinity, Awareness, Truth, Love, the Core, potential, possibility, and imagination a function of quantum mechanics – and, no one has really come up with a plausible and provable way of accomplishing such a task – then, one might be better off – both scientifically and metaphysically - - to suppose that quantum physics gives expression to just one set of possibilities or potentials which are imagined into existence by the Source of all such possibilities and potentials. More specifically, no one – and I do mean no one – has shown, in detail, how fermions and bosons combine together in self-organizing ways to generate: Understanding, insight, logic, reason, phenomenology, talent, creativity, knowledge, critical awareness, character, intelligence, choice, meaning, purpose, or spirituality.

The foregoing claim is not intended to say that fermions and bosons aren't, on some limited level, part of the biological dynamics that receive, transduce, and utilize, for example, the intelligence that is being transmitted to, and through, human beings from such higher-order realities – illusory though biological dynamics might be relative to ultimate forms of awareness, knowledge, insight, unveiling, truth, and so on. Nor is the claim in the last sentence of the previous paragraph meant to suggest that fermions and bosons don't have a role to play in the way in which one set of technological psychopaths and sociopaths have enabled another set of psychopaths and sociopaths to hack into the biology of a set of unfortunate human beings who are known as “targeted individuals” and,

thereby, not only interfere with the cognitive and metabolic functioning of the latter group of people, but, as well, are able to generate conditions of frequency following behavior in the latter individuals using pulsed frequencies of coherent energy to remotely control what goes on in the bodies and brains of targeted individuals, but such technological abuse is parasitic on an underlying order which makes biology possible and which fermions and bosons did not create, and, indeed, fermions and bosons did not create themselves or their quantitative and qualitative properties, and if the reader doesn't want to acknowledge what is being said here then start listening to the testimonies of people such as Len Ber, Katherine Horton, Bill Binney, and thousands of other targeted individuals, as well immerse oneself in studying the research of people like Nick Begich, Robert Duncan, Len Ber, Clifford Carnicom, Ana Mihalcea, and Sabrina Davis Wallace ... because both groups of people will warn you that the plan of the technologically savvy transhumanist psychopaths and sociopaths alluded to earlier is to leverage phenomena that are based in fermions and bosons to control everyone and everything ... a plan that is already well-advanced and currently is infiltrating more and more levels of society.

Maybe David knows the truth concerning the nature of his relationship with Reality or Being. Maybe Anita knows the truth concerning the nature of her relationship with Reality or Being. Maybe the experiences of David and Anita are equivalent in this respect.

Nonetheless, notwithstanding the alluring possibilities to which David and Anita are bearing witness, there continue to be an array of questions arising from their perspective(s) which do not seem to be adequately addressed by what has been said so far in the second chapter of David's aforementioned book.



To Sleep, Perchance to Dream

At this point, David quotes a Sufi mystic, Hazrat Jalal-al-Din Muhammad Rumi (may Allah be pleased with him): “This place is a dream. Only a sleeper considers it real. Then death comes like dawn and you wake up laughing at what you thought was your grief.” (Page 13)

What kind of a dream is this place? There are many sorts of dreams that can be experienced. What makes dreams possible?

Is a sleeper real, and, if so, in what sense is the sleeper real? What makes sleep possible?

If a sleeper is real in some sense, how does a sleeper dream that which is not real? If the dreamer is not real, then, how does the dreamer wake up?

What kind of death is being alluded to in the foregoing quote? Is it the death of nafs? Is it the death of the body?

Is it the death of that which is not real? What makes such a death possible?

What does it mean to wake up? What is the nature of the grief to which an allusion is being made? What happens if one wakes up to discover that what one thought was one’s grief in the dream has carried over into one’s waking state, and, as such, is a very real nightmare come to life and not, at all, the stuff that dreams are made of.

I’m not questioning Rumi (may Allah be pleased with him). I’m questioning whether we understand what he is saying and whether what has been translated into English accurately reflects that to which such a mystic originally might have been trying to draw one’s attention.

The Instantaneous

David returns to the testimony of the neurosurgeon, Dr. Eben Alexander, who talks about the nature of thinking that takes place outside the brain. Such a phenomenon is said to involve “instantaneous communication.”

What is meant by such a phrase? To a microsecond (10^{-6}), a nanosecond (which takes place 1,000 times more quickly – 10^{-9}) might seem to be instantaneous, and to a nanosecond, a picosecond (which takes place 1000 times more quickly again – 10^{-12}) might seem to be instantaneous, and to a picosecond, a femtosecond (which takes place 1000 times more quickly still – 10^{-15}) might seem instantaneous.

One could continue the foregoing downward journey with attoseconds (10^{-18}), zeptoseconds (10^{-21}), and yoctoseconds (10^{-24}). Every level of metric is more instantaneous than the level prior to it, and, yet, duration exists in all of the foregoing metrics, and, therefore, none of them are instantaneous ... just instantaneous-seeming.

All of the foregoing instances of temporality are like the movement of molasses when compared to the Planck length of time. According to the National Institute for Standards for the United States, the Planck length of time is assigned a value of 5.391247×10^{-44} – some twenty magnitudes of quickness faster than a yoctosecond (10^{-24}) -- and, yet, the Planck length of time, once again, gives expression to a very tiny period of duration which means that, technically speaking, however quick that duration might be, it is not instantaneous even though an individual whose phenomenology is taking place as a function of processes that occur at a rate measured in Planck temporal lengths might feel that things are taking place instantaneously.

Are thoughts which occur outside of the dynamics of the brain necessarily instantaneous? We don't really know because irrespective of however quickly they occur, it is possible that some form of duration is present which takes place more quickly than anything we thought might be possible or faster



than any metric we might care to come up with in order to try to measure the temporality of such an occurrence.

Degrees of Freedom

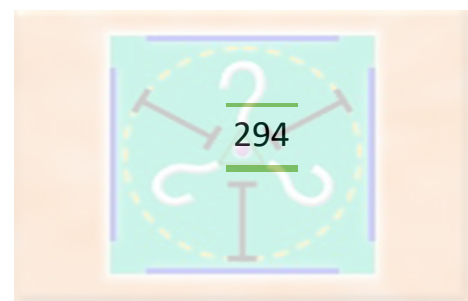
David goes on to quote Dr. Alexander as indicating that our most essential self is “completely free.” As is the case with the notion of “instantaneous,” so too, the notion of “freedom” might depend on the nature of the metric one is using to assess what freedom actually involves.

While it might be the case that relative to all of the addictions of the ego or nafs, the essential self is completely free, this does not mean that there aren't forms of measurement or assessment which might indicate that there are certain kinds of limitations associated with the essential self. For instance, can one be free from who and what one is essentially?

Until one's essential nature has been fully realized, one can't possibly know whether, or not, there are any limitations associated with that nature. The Qur'an informs us that: “They will ask thee concerning the spirit (ruh). Say: “The spirit is by command of my Lord, and of its knowledge you have been vouchsafed but little.”

The spirit is but one dimension of an individual's essential potential. So, before one begins talking about being completely free, perhaps one should determine what the nature of different dimensions of one's being are and try ascertain what the Manufacturer might have to say about those sorts of processes.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: “Every child is born according to primordial nature (fitra); then, the person's parents make the child a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian.” If we are diligent, we spend our lives trying to overcome what we have become fashioned into by our parents, the world, and our problematic choices and, if God wishes, then, somehow, we seek to try to find our way back to our primordial nature.



There is not necessarily just one kind of possibility associated with such a primordial nature. There is not necessarily just one kind of potential associated with such a primordial nature.

There might be degrees of freedom with respect to certain aspects of our operational possibilities. Similarly, there might be limitations and constraints in conjunction with other facets of our inherent set of possibilities.

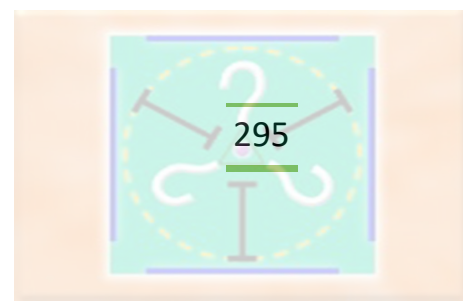
A term which appears in some Sufi discourses is: “ayn al-thabita.” This can be translated as referring to a “fixed form” or an “immutable entity.”

The Qur’an indicates that: “Our only speech to a thing, when We desire it, is to say to it: “Be, (Qun)” and it is (16:40). God calls upon a fixed form to be, and it is imagined into existence as it is enabled to make the transition from possibility to actuality

Nafs, mind, qalb [that quality of the heart which is capable of turning back and forth between the call of the world and the call of fitra (essential potential)], fo’ad (a potential of the heart which has the capacity to see or grasp the truth of something), the sirr (which, when emptied of illusions generated by the nafs, dunya, and so on, protects the heart from being influenced by other than God), the kafi [secret, (Qur’an, 20:7)], and the previously mentioned ruh or spirit are all entailed by that fixed form, whose core (fitra) gives expression to the essential potential of such a fixed form. Life becomes the venue through which -- according to choice, circumstance and Grace -- various possibilities associated with such a fixed form are played out or manifested.

A person is free (as a potential) to choose to be what that individual is essentially. A person is free to choose one set of possibilities associated with one’s essential nature rather than to choose some other set of possibilities associated with one’s fixed form.

Nevertheless, we might all be limited by, and free in accordance with, the nature of one’s essential potential. Barring Divine intervention, we all operate according to the degrees of



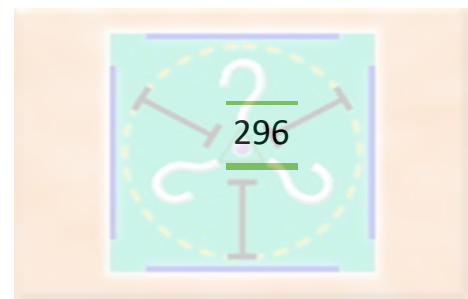
freedom and limitations or constraints that are present in the fixed form that contains one's existential possibilities.

We are all expressions of Divine creativity and imagination. However, while in essence we might be Divine, we are not Divinity in Essence, and, moreover, every manifestation that emerges through Divine expression is different in its potential and possibilities – different from other existential potentials and different from That which served as the Source for those sorts of potentials.

Now, of course, maybe David and Dr. Alexander are correct when they claim that we are completely free when operating out of our essential selves. However, given that most of us are not necessarily operating in accordance with the nature of our essential selves, and, therefore, given that acquiring an evidential basis through which to judge such claims is difficult to come by, an alternative set of possibilities to the one provided by David and other individuals that he has mentioned have been outlined to provide a certain amount of food for thought for those who might wish to reflect on, if not research, such issues further.

The Nature of Attention

At this point, David refers again to the ideas of Alan Watts (1915-1973) whom David considers to have been an “awake philosopher” -- which would seem to be an oxymoronic phrase since philosophers often speculate about possibilities rather than actually know the nature of the realities about which they are speculating. Be that as it may, David indicates that Alan Watts once said that the Ego (what David calls the Body-Mind) is “nothing other than the focus of attention,” and David wishes to leverage the dynamic inherent in the “focus of attention” notion in order to be able to support David's belief that we – as individuals – are nothing more than points of attention of Infinite Awareness.



There is an interesting analogy in this regard which Hazrat Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him) uses to try to provide individuals with some sort of understanding concerning the condition of “fana” or “annihilation” – the experience of passing away from awareness of one’s sense of self -- that some individuals encounter as they traverse the Sufi path. More specifically, the shaykh asks one to imagine looking up into a cloudless sky at night where there are countless stars on display. When the sun comes up in the morning, those stars don’t cease to exist, but, rather, their degree of visible luminosity is overpowered by the presence of the Sun’s proximate, and, therefore, greater level of luminosity.

Similarly, when an individual experiences fana, the “self” of that individual does not cease to exist. Instead, that person’s awareness of the self is overpowered by the Presence of the Divine luminosity as it dominates the individual’s awareness of the self’s existence.

The point of focus here belongs to the individual undergoing fana. That point of focus does not necessarily give expression to God’s awareness of the situation but might only give expression to the experience which an individual has when God’s manifested Presence serves as Ground to the form of whatever occupies the individual’s attention and renders that person’s sense of self relatively invisible.

If an extremely beautiful woman enters into the visual field of a man or a very handsome man enters into the visual field of a woman, and an individual’s gaze is captivated by the presence of such beauty or handsomeness to the extent that, even if only for a few seconds, all awareness of the surroundings disappears, and all sense of time as well as space evaporate, and all thoughts concerning plans, schedules, purpose, meetings, duties, propriety, and responsibilities are reduced to zero, and the one who is immersed within such a gaze no longer is aware of oneself but is, instead, entirely mesmerized by, and preoccupied with, the presence of such beauty or handsomeness, one cannot actually say that the individual has become one with what is being visually engaged, nor can one justifiably try to claim that

such enchantment is nothing more than an expression of the presence of beauty or handsomeness even though such a presence helps make the phenomenology of complete enchantment and self-effacement possible.

Similarly, the notion that an individual undergoing the condition of fana has become one with God is problematic. One's experience of Divine Presence is the experience which God has made possible in manifested form, and, therefore, even while the individual's point of focus is entirely consumed by what God has made manifest to that individual, none of what is observed necessarily constitutes an expression of Divinity in any essential sense but, instead, only constitutes what God has made possible in the way of manifestation.

Is the One Who made possible such an experience aware of the nature of the experience that an individual is undergoing? Presumably, yes, but this doesn't necessarily make the individual's point of experience an expression of the Creator's Awareness, any more than a painter can be reduced down to one, or another, painting that is made possible by such a painter, although, clearly, there is a relationship between the painter and the painting.

A painting is a possibility that has come to be. A painting gives expression to a potential that exists.

How the possibility makes the journey from potential to reality is something of a creative mystery. Imagination brings forth the possibility and potential even as the painter remains hidden and invisible in relation to that which emerges into the visible world.

Furthermore, if Ultimate Reality or Infinite Awareness is without form – as David claimed earlier in the first chapter of his aforementioned book -- then, such experience cannot be equated with Divinity, because all manifestation has a form, whereas Infinite Awareness, by David's own admission, does not. Consequently, one cannot necessarily say that the individual who is entranced by an all-consuming manifested form (i.e., that which emerges in the phenomenology of a person undergoing fana) has become One with a formless God or that

the experience of fana gives expression to a point of focus of Infinite Awareness at that juncture in time because we don't really know how such a spiritual condition is being made possible or what is actually being experienced during that condition.

Presumably, Infinite Awareness is capable of discerning the difference between limited manifestation and That which has made such manifestation possible. Manifestation is always limited in one way or another irrespective of how expansive, rich, nuanced, and vibrant it might be, whereas Infinite Awareness is not limited in any way and, as such, there is no point of focus. The point of focus belongs to the limits of manifestation alone.

To suppose that the focus of awareness of the individual is but an expression of Infinite Awareness is a hypothesis concerning the nature of how a given phenomenological condition is made possible by That which is the Source of such a phenomenological condition. Proving that such a hypothesis is correct goes way beyond mere words and claims.

A point of focus is a point of focus. One has no way of knowing whether there is something beyond that point, nor can one use such a point of focus to try to prove that whatever is being manifested through that point of focus couldn't be other than what it is, and one has no way of showing that such a point of focus is necessarily the same as the sort of Awareness that is believed to have made such a manifestation possible.

In the earlier analogy which David attributes to Anita Morjani, the individual who is in a darkened warehouse with just a flashlight to illuminate the surroundings has no idea of the things that might exist in the warehouse that have not, yet, shown up in the limited light of the flashlight. However, when the warehouse lights are turned on, then, the individual is opened up to all the things that were not previously visible.

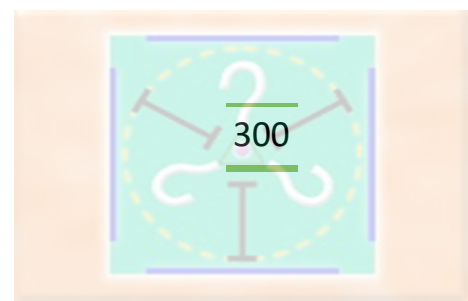
The point of focus of the flashlight has been replaced by, and expanded into, the point of focus of an entire warehouse. Similarly, the point of focus of a person who is experiencing a normal kind of phenomenological event (that is, an event which

is similar to what other people in the vicinity were having and about which they could all talk in intelligible ways) but is, subsequently, brought into a condition of fana, then, one might say that the point of focus of such a person has been switched to something else entirely that is not visible to other individuals who might be in the vicinity.

In a sense, the warehouse lights have been turned on for such an individual while everyone else in the warehouse is still straining to figure out what objects occupy the warehouse while using the limited range of their flashlights. Yet, none of those individuals (either the individual who sees by the lights of the warehouse, as well as the individuals who are still using flashlights) is necessarily aware of whatever exists beyond the walls of the warehouse because in every case, the point of focus only illumines according to the nature of the kind of light that is being manifested through the point of focus being considered.

David claims that: "Infinite Awareness is not energy but produces energy as an imagination of All-Possibility." (Page 15) Moreover, energy, frequency, and vibration are all imagined into existence.

Are All-possibilities imagined into existence because they are what make Awareness Infinite, or is the capacity of Imagination to generate All-possibilities something that is separate from, and independent of, All-Possibility – possibilities and potentials that could be generated but don't have to be? Are such phenomena imagined into existence because Infinite Awareness cannot do otherwise since Infinite Awareness is nothing other than All-Possibility, or, is the emergence of possibilities and potential a Mercy through which individual points of potential and possible focus are selected to serve some purpose or set of purposes that are possible, but not necessary? David doesn't seem to indicate which, if any of the foregoing possibilities, might be the case.



Frequency, Vibration, Force, and Energy

However, he does maintain that if such imagined possibilities become detached from a state of Infinite Awareness, they will fall into lower forms of energy, frequency, and vibration, and, as a result, enter into states of illusion. How does something such as energy, frequency, or vibration become detached from a condition of Infinite Awareness?

Can energy, frequency, or vibration ever actually become detached from Infinite Awareness? Or, is this a matter of energy, frequency, or vibration somehow losing their way within the realm of possibility despite not having been lost track of by Infinite Awareness?

Why suppose that if energy, frequency, and vibration are manifested on some kind of lower level that this renders them illusory? In what sense are they illusory?

What is energy? Is energy a function of frequency/vibration?

Are frequency and vibration possible because of the nature of the energy that is present? In other words, are frequency and vibration merely energy manifested according to frequency and vibration? Can energy exist without the presence of either frequency or vibration?

Do the notions of force and energy give expression to the same kind of phenomenon? If so, do different forces give expression to different kinds of energy, or is there some sort of underlying unity that is, depending on circumstances, manifested differentially as one kind of force or energy rather than another kind of force or energy?

The photon is described as being the boson that transmits or carries the force of electromagnetic dynamics. The energy associated with a photon is described as being directly proportional to its electromagnetic frequency and inversely proportional to its wavelength.

The higher the frequency of a photon, the higher is the energy associated with it. The shorter the wave length is, then,



the higher the energy is which is associated with a given photon, and the longer the wave length, then, the lower the amount of energy which is associated with a given photon.

Is a photon more than the energy associated with it? Is the notion of a force something other than the energy which is present?

Is force a function of the kind or quality of energy which is present rather than just the quantity of energy that is present? For instance, the properties of forces vary with: Electromagnetic forces, strong forces, weak forces, gravitational forces, and Higgs forces.

Electromagnetic forces arise through the interaction of charged particles that are mediated by, or through, photons. This force is said to be infinite in range, and the strength of the force between charged particles is a function of the fine structure constant that has a value of -- approximately -- $1/137$ independent of any particular modality of measurement. All of this is described by the mathematics of quantum electrodynamics (QED).

The weak force involves, among other things, the dynamics of particle decay. Its strength is a function of the Fermi constant which is said to have a value of 1.435×10^{-36} joules per cubic meter. A joule is a unit of energy that is defined as the amount of work done by a force of one newton (see the next paragraph for a definition of this force) acting across a distance of one meter.

The properties of a gravitational field are due to the presence of an unknown entity which pulls, at a constant rate of $6.67408 \times 10^{-11} \text{ Nm}^2 \text{ kg}^2$, on whatever it is that makes up the stuff or contents of the universe. The term "N" in the foregoing quantity stands for newton, a measure of force, and is defined as the amount of force that is required to accelerate a kilogram of mass at the rate of one meter per second squared in a given direction.

The strong force which is transmitted through, or carried by, gluons (as described by Quantum chromodynamics - QCD) have to do with the force that binds and set limits on the dynamics



through which the quarks within protons and neutrons can engage one another, which, in turn, affects how protons and neutrons interact with one another. At high temperatures and energies, the strength of the force associated with gluons diminishes.

The strong force gives expression to a force that is: 137 times stronger than the electromagnetic force (but only over a relatively short distance). The strong force is a million times stronger than the weak force, and is 1.67×10^{38} times stronger than the gravitational force.

Then, of course, there is the force associated with the Higgs boson. The Higgs boson is described as being like a wave sweeping through the Higgs field which transmits a force that enables elementary particles to acquire mass.

Force seems to have something to do with the way in which energy is organized, manifested, dispersed, and transmitted, all of which structures the sorts of functionality that characterizes, and differentiates, different kinds of forces. An unanswered question in the standard theory of quantum dynamics is how do different forces come to have the properties (including energy) that they do ... and this is a problem that some scientists hoped one, or another, edition of string theory might be able to resolve but, to this point, has not been even remotely successful.

Contrary to what David says in the first chapter of *Everything You Need To Know, But Have Never Been Told*, matter is not just energy that has been condensed to various vibrational forms. Matter, as given expression through the interaction of bosons and fermions, encompasses an array of different ways in which energy is “condensed,” and what is missing from the physics is a defensible account of how energy came to be organized or condensed in the different modalities that are associated with what appear to be separate kinds of forces, but, might, ultimately be expressions of some unified field theory that splinters in different directions when some sort of primordial symmetry becomes broken through an unknown event, process, or dynamic.



David contends that if frequencies fall far enough, then, they become “energetic densities that we call matter.” How does a frequency, or vibration, or energy go about “falling?” What are the dynamics of such a ‘falling’ process?

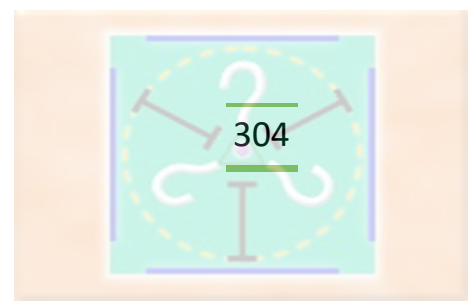
Is the fall a random phenomenon? Or, is there an order to the dynamics of the fall?

Randomness doesn’t necessarily mean that there is no order to what is transpiring. Randomness only means that whatever is being referred to as giving expression to random phenomena is not characterized by any known algorithm, or by a set of determinate processes, which is capable of producing the observed phenomenon. As such, randomness might be more of a statement about ignorance rather than a statement about the nature of ontology.

If All-possibility is really all inclusive, then, why can’t one suppose that some of those possibilities are manifested according to one set of energies, frequencies, and vibrations while other possibilities are manifested according to other sets of energies, frequencies, and vibrations? What makes one set of frequencies, somehow, lower than another set of frequencies, and isn’t it possible that even if one set of frequencies is lower, in some sense, than the other, nevertheless, such differences might just be the way they are because they serve different purposes or are involved in different kinds of manifestation, and, as such, are not necessarily detached from the Source from which they originate?

Illusions and Non-Illusions

While illusion might be one of the possibilities that is encompassed by the notion of All-Possibility, there is nothing which necessitates that illusion necessarily constitutes the essential nature of the visible universe. In fact, even if one were to acknowledge that illusion is part of the potential of All-Possibility, one also would also have to acknowledge that non-illusion is also one of the potentials of All-Possibility, and, as a



result, one would have to ask whether there is more evidence and reasons to suppose that visible reality is nothing more than an illusion which serves to obfuscate Reality or whether there might be more evidence and reasons to support the idea that whatever its limitations, degrees of freedom, and character, the phenomena that are accessible to most people under “normal” circumstances have a role to play – if properly analyzed and understood – that is capable of assisting an individual to work toward discovering the truth concerning the nature of one’s relationship with Reality, Being, or Existence

According to David, physical matter is illusory because the energy which is present in matter vibrates so slowly that it appears to be solid. Perhaps, this is only the case if the one who is encountering such vibrational rates is not equipped with the capacity to perceptually grasp the character of the relationship between vibration and appearances.

Maybe, human beings are so constructed that, at least on a certain level, they are incapable of seeing how the frequency present in a given form of energy induces certain systems of perception to interpret such a manifested form of energy as being solid. If this is the case, then one might raise the question of whether, or not, the foregoing sort of perceptual phenomenon served a purpose, and therefore, was not necessarily illusory in any disinformational or obfuscatory sense, or, alternatively, whether, or not, such a perceptual arrangement could be considered to be illusory but, nonetheless -- for whatever reason, purpose, or ordered set of arrangements – was intended to serve such an illusory role.

Another possibility is that the “normal” visible world is intended to give expression to only partial, limited truths, and, as such, is intended to serve as a form of protection – both for the Truth as well as those who are not properly prepared -- that prevents people from realizing certain truths until those individuals are ready to engage those truths with the appropriate modalities of sacredness, respect and duties of care.

Mystical paths – irrespective of the nature of the spiritual tradition in which they are immersed – all tend to have such a



protective dimension inherent in their structure. One of the most crucial elements of any such path is the necessity of acquiring the character traits – such as humility, courage, resilience, honesty, nobility, integrity, honor, compassion, perseverance, love, sincerity, generosity, charitableness, strength, forgiveness, forbearance, and patience – because without such character traits, whatever mysteries might be disclosed or stumbled upon are likely to be abused, misused and/or misunderstood.

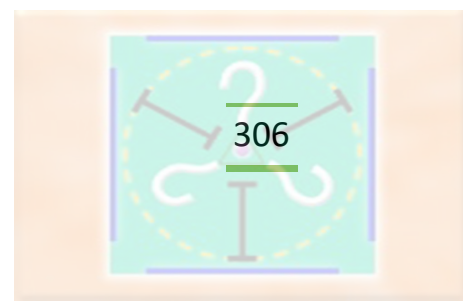
The manner in which David introduces the notions of “lower,” “illusory,” and “fall” into the discussion seems rather arbitrary. One can constructively engage the issues which his discussion seeks to address – as this essay has attempted to do - - without necessarily having to claim that the physical-material world of apparent solidity is, in some sense, ‘lower,’ ‘illusory,’ or ‘fallen.’

The visible world is as it is. Our mission, should we accept it, is to figure out why that world is the way it is and what, if anything, it has to do with the truth concerning the nature of one’s relationship with Reality, Being, or Existence.

Particles and Waves

David indicates that: “There is no matter. There is only light and sound.”

When, in 1900, Max Planck introduced the notion of the quantum– which has a constant value of: $6.62607015 \times 10^{-34}$ joules per second – it was introduced as merely a mathematical construct. The value was used as part of Planck’s formula for describing the radiation dynamics of a blackbody (which is an idealized structure that is capable of perfectly absorbing all electromagnetic radiation), but in order to remain in thermodynamic equilibrium, the rate of emission of such a blackbody must be equivalent to the rate of absorption of that same structure.



Planck wanted to represent the radiation being absorbed and emitted from a blackbody as a digitized quantity rather than continuous quantity in order to help resolve the problematic energies that were being calculated by many researchers in conjunction with blackbody radiation ... calculations that were at considerable odds with what was actually being empirically observed. This problem was sometimes referred to as the ultraviolet catastrophe due to the problems that were generated for classical theories of physics as a result of the differences between predicted and actual results in conjunction with the ultraviolet end of the electromagnetic scale.

In 1905 Einstein came along and wrote a paper describing the nature of the photoelectric effect. In that paper, light – often considered by many to be a wave-like phenomenon – was described by Einstein in a manner that indicated how, under some circumstances, light exhibited particle-like properties and effects.

More specifically, the energy of a photon is given by the formula $E = h \times v$, where h is Planck's constant, and v is the frequency of the photon being considered. When the energy of the photon is greater than the energy of whatever surface-electron's might be binding the photon (e.g., the surface of a metal), the photon will be able to escape the surface to which it had been bound and will emerge as a packet-like (i.e., particle-like), kinetic form of energy.

In 1922-1923, Arthur Compton came up with an explanation for why the wavelengths of X-rays and other forms of energetic electromagnetic radiation exhibited an increase when subjected to electron scattering experiments. This came to be known as the Compton Effect and formed part of the foundations that were supporting the quantum revolution in physics.

According to Compton, one should think of X-rays (usually understood as a wave-like phenomenon) as being able to give expression to discrete pulses, packets, or quanta of energy. When such X-rays were engaged by scattered electrons, then, the wavelength of the X-ray would increase as a result of



absorbing discrete quanta of energy via the electrons being scattered.

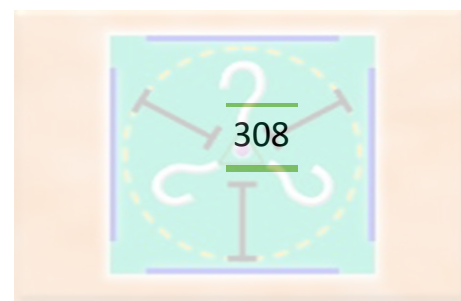
In 1924, Louis de Broglie put forth a dissertation which proposed that just as photons could be shown to be capable of being manifested in both wave-like and particle-like forms, so too, electrons and other elementary entities – which traditionally were thought of as particles – could be shown to have wave-like properties. This became known as the de Broglie hypothesis of matter-waves or particle-waves ... a hypothesis which, subsequently, has been demonstrated to be consistent with many kinds of empirical observations.

One has difficulty understanding how David can justify asserting that there is no matter. Manifestation – at least on the plane of physical-seeming events -- comes in at least two modalities: Wave-like and particle-like.

While one might not be able to take everything we encounter in this world and reduce it down to solid, material substances or stuff, nevertheless, neither can we entirely eliminate the traces of particle-like properties which show up in the presentations of individuals like Compton and Einstein.

We might not fully understand in what way something is particulate in character, while simultaneously being wave-like in character. However, apparently, the Universe is trying to tell us something, and one of the lessons we are being taught might be that when one is confronted by something which seems like a paradox, then, perhaps, one has not properly understood what is transpiring and this should induce one to look more closely – as well as differently – at the possible nature of one's relationship to Reality, Being, or Existence.

In its own way it is a kōan to which one is being invited to meditate upon. A kōan is a spiritual exercise within certain teachings of Zen Buddhism that is given expression through a paradoxical story, statement, interchange, or question that is used to induce seekers to critically reflect on the nature of the paradox that is being addressed as a way of being drawn toward deeper insights into the nature of the spiritual path and how that path connects one to life's essential quest.



A famous kōan is: What is the sound of one hand clapping? A variation of that kōan is: Are we talking about the left hand or the right hand when considering the idea of one hand clapping, and, would there be any difference in the character of the sound in the two cases

When is a particle not a particle, and when is a wave not a wave? What is the nature of the role that particles and waves play in conjunction with the ultimate nature of one's relationship with Reality, Being, or Existence?

Light and Sound

Contrary to what David claims, there appears to be more to manifestation than just light and sound – at least as normally understood. Indeed, even in the case of light and sound, one might want to consider the possibility that there are many kinds of light and sound which end up weaving a complex tapestry involving both visible reality and hidden realities.

In the Qur'an, one finds: "Say (O Muhammad): This is my way. I call to God upon insight – I and whoever follows after me." (12:108) Or: "It is not their eyes which are blind, but the hearts in their breast." (22:46)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "God has seventy thousand veils of light and darkness, were they to be removed, the Glories of God's Face would burn away everything perceived by the sight of God's creatures." He is also reported to have said: "Be careful concerning the vision of a Mu'min (someone who has an advanced condition of insight and understanding), because such a person sees by the Light of Allah."

Everything in Created existence is made up of a combination of light and darkness. What is the nature of light and what is the nature of darkness?

Insight gives expression to the Light of God that makes vision of any kind possible. The light by which eyes see is not the light by which hearts see.



Using one's ignorance to serve as the filter or lens through which one places limits on what can and cannot be, is a problematic methodology. As Shakespeare had one of the characters in *Hamlet* acknowledge: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio than are dreamt of in our philosophies".

As noted previously, the Qur'an informs one that all that is necessary for a thing to be is for the sound of Qun (Be) to be said to it (Qur'an, 16:40). Qun gives expression to the intention of activating possibility, and, therefore, for every different kind of fitra or essential potential to which Qun is addressed, there is a slightly different articulated sound that emerges.

Matter, frequency, vibration, solidity, and the physical give expression to an array of qualitative and quantitative manifestations involving sound and light. To whatever extent matter, frequency, vibration, solidity, and the physical can be said to exist, they exist as a function of the presence of the Light and Sound which God makes manifest.

The Creator makes use of infinite riches as Divinity wishes. The created are naked or poor and have only the existential, manifested clothing with which they are provided. (Qur'an, 35:15).

David states: "When people talk of seeing something appear out of nowhere or 'disappear before my eyes' they are describing phenomena that enter the frequency band of visible light and then change frequency to go beyond it. ... Those more aware of how energy interacts with consciousness (is consciousness) can perform apparent 'miracles' which are not miracles at all. They are the result of knowing how reality works." (Page 16)

In a sense, the process of seeing takes at least three to tango. There is that which is manifested, and there is that which is either receptive to, or not receptive to, what is being manifested, and there is the One Who brings together, through light of one qualitative kind or another, the manifested and the one who might potentially witness what is being manifested.



Divinity dances in the moonlight while humming a tune and dreaming a lucid-dream. A character emerges in the dream and is given a determinate capacity for awareness which enables that individual to become aware of the moon, begin to remember a forgotten song, and start to move in unison with someone else who has emerged from the ontological shadows.

There are many faculties within a human being through which seeing might take place. According to the practitioners of the Sufi mystical path, the eyes, the mind, the heart, the spirit, along with other inner potentials such as the sirr and the kafi, all have different capacities to see, and while all forms of seeing might be dependent on the presence of Divine Light, not all such light necessarily involves a form of electromagnetic frequency.

Is Light a form of energy? What is meant by the notion of energy? Does energy make Light possible or does Light make energy possible?

Are energy and consciousness the same as David's previous quote seems to claim? If so, what kind of energy is consciousness? Can one necessarily say that frequencies of some kind are involved?

When something appears and, then, disappears in the phenomenology of seeing, doesn't one's understanding of what is transpiring depend on the nature of the faculty through which one is seeing or through which something is being seen? The seeing of the mind is different from the seeing of the eyes, while the seeing of the heart is different from the seeing of the mind or eyes, and the seeing of the spirit is different from the seeing of the eyes, mind, or heart.

Do we really know how reality works on any of the foregoing levels involving the mind, the heart, the sirr, the kafi, or the spirit? Is it all a matter of frequencies, and, if so, frequencies of what?

According to David, none of this seeing business is a miracle but is, instead, just a matter of knowing how reality works. Isn't the capacity to know how reality works something of a miracle,



and does anyone know how such a capacity to know actually works?

According to David, the visible universe is nothing more than a quantum computing system which makes use of quantum states consisting of an array of particles – such as electrons – to be able to store as well as process information. Whose “visible universe” is David talking about?

Is he referring to the Universe that is visible to a person whose essential nature is fully realized or is he alluding to the universe that, to varying degrees, is visible to an individual whose understanding of visibility is a function of a certain range of electromagnetic phenomena (extending, in most cases, from 380 nanometers on the violet end of the spectrum to 750 nanometers on the red end of the visible spectrum), or is he alluding to someone who operates somewhere in between the foregoing two possibilities?

Quantum States

Some individuals who have written about the Sufi path speak about five domains of ontology – namely, Nasut, Malakut, Jabarut, Lahut, and Hahut. The term “Nasut” entails what many people would call the “physical world” and part – but only part - - of that physical world has been described through what is known as the standard model of quantum mechanics which involves quantum electrodynamics (QED – the realm of electromagnetic and weak force phenomena), quantum chromodynamics (QCD – the realm of quarks, gluons, and the strong force), the Higgs field (the Higgs boson), as well as general relativity or gravitational phenomena.

Quantum physics has, as of yet, no demonstrable insight into how to go about describing – let alone explaining -- what makes: Life, forces, energy, consciousness, logic, reason, insight, understanding, knowledge, memory, creativity, talent, character, spirituality, or existence possible. So, when David maintains that the Universe is a quantum computing system



that makes use of quantum states consisting of an array of particles, including the electron, how does he know that quantum states are capable of characterizing not only all facets of the realm of Nasut, but, as well, are characteristic of what is taking place in the realms of Malakut, Jabarut, Lahut, and/or Hahut, and if the latter realms are not a function of quantum dynamics, then, why suppose that a quantum computer is actually capable of storing or processing the dynamics of those realms in an error-free, intelligible, constructive, and useful fashion?

No matter how powerful a computational system might be, one cannot compute what one does not understand and, then, expect to arrive at reliable results. Just as natural numbers are not capable of capturing the nuances and intricacies of real numbers, why should one suppose that quantum dynamics are capable of capturing the nuances and intricacies of phenomena which are not necessarily quantum in nature?

Quantum computers and normal computers share certain similarities. However, there are also important differences.

Both of the aforementioned kinds of computing devices possess, and operate in accordance with, various modalities of processing units that consist of logic gates and circuits which, respectively, will organize and transmit different sorts of algorithmically directed functions. Standard computers use sequences or bits of 0's and 1's to represent the computational structures that are being processed.

Quantum computers, on the other hand, utilize the properties of what are known as qubits to store, process, and transmit possibilities. Qubits are not restricted to just representations that can be expressed in terms of either 1 or 0 but, instead, are able to express representation as being both 1 and 0 at the same time until some sort of measurement is made or designation is specified.

This principle of superpositional representation permits more possibilities to be considered at any given point in a sequence of algorithmic directives. In addition, the property of entanglement enables qubits to be operated on as part of a



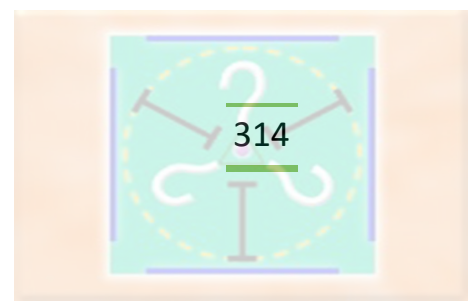
network of possibilities rather than just as isolated, separate entities as is the case in most standard non-quantum computers.

As a result, artificial atomic structures, involving qubits circuitry and logic gates, can be created that are able to process possibilities far, far more quickly than can standard computer chips. However, in order to ensure that such circuitry and logic gates are not interfered with, or compromised, by ambient forms of electromagnetic activity, the materials of quantum computers often exist in a context of nested chambers kept at near-absolute zero temperatures.

No matter how powerful a quantum computer system might be that is based on a capacity to compute and analyze an array of possible quantum arrangements concerning a given outcome, as well as to be able to collapse the foregoing computational functions in a way that can identify a sought-for solution with respect to a given set of dynamics under a given set of circumstances that are characterized by a given set of possible values, if the situation that one is attempting to represent, describe, compute, analyze, as well as resolve is not a function of phenomena that can be described through quantum superpositional and entanglement modalities of metrics, then, such a project begins at no intelligible beginning and works toward no intelligible end.

David claims that we have quantum physics because the universe is a quantum computer. Not only has David not actually demonstrated that the Universe is a quantum computer since we don't necessarily know or understand all that is entailed by, or given expression through, the different dimensions of the Universe, but he hasn't really demonstrated that the reason why we have quantum physics is because the Universe is a quantum computer, as if just because something might be a possibility then this explains why what is, is manifested in the way that it is.

Quantum physics emerged in bits and pieces across more than a hundred years of intense creative, mathematical, experimental, and conceptual activity. Many different kinds of observations, insights, instrumentation, mathematical



considerations, critical reflections, questions, models, successes, and failures of hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals went into the development of quantum physics, and, therefore, even if one wished to try to simplify matters and claim that quantum physics was inevitable because it is one of the possibilities that exists within All-possibility, this doesn't really provide one with an understanding of why it came together in the way that it did rather than not be manifested at all.

Of course, some might want to argue that if the universe is a quantum computer, then, quantum physics came together in the way that it did because this was all part of the ontological configuration in which the wave function collapsed when the superpositional set of possibilities for how quantum physics might come together, did come together. Although the logic of the foregoing perspective is understandable, it is still based on the assumption that that Universe is, indeed, a quantum computer, and that All-possibility is nothing but the set of quantum states which are possible in such a Universe.

Nonetheless, operating out of such a conceptual framework would require one to be able to demonstrate that the Universe is, indeed, a quantum computer and that the ontological states being described through quantum physics are, in fact, quantum states rather than some other kind of state. One cannot assume one's way to one's conclusions.

We don't know why different kinds of particles and certain elemental isotopes have the decay rate that they do, but we know that such a decay process is governed by the weak force. Similarly, we might suppose that we understand that quantum physics is one of the possibilities of the universe that happened to emerge when, somehow, some sort of universe wave function collapsed, but, just as in the aforementioned case of particle decay, we don't know what the nature of the dynamics were that led to one particle decaying rather than another, so too, we don't know what the dynamics are that make potential undergo the transition from possibility to actuality in either general or particular terms.



A little later on in the first chapter of the aforementioned book, David says that “the human body/brain is a biological quantum computer.” (Page 18) However, while considering the human body/brain to be a quantum computer is a possibility, whether the body/brain actually is such an entity is another issue.

We don't know what influences could be impinging on the human body/brain or how such influences might be shaping what takes place biologically. Antoine Béchamp talked about “microzymas”, and Günther Enderlein referred to “endobionts”, while Wilhelm Reich spoke of “bions,” and Gaston Naessens employed the term “somatids”, and all four individuals were alluding to an entity which they considered to exist prior to, as well as to be a progenitor of the emergence of cellular life and, therefore, were, in some way, responsible for directing cellular life (via the processes of epigenetics), rather than cellular life being just a function of the dynamics of the genome.

The genome is a potential. Epigenetics activates that potential in a way that the genome, in and of itself, cannot do on its own.

Epigenetics introduce a source of organizational activity that is capable of translating the potential of the genome as well as the potential of the so-called junk DNA and junk RNA into metabolic pathways that have functional properties. That organizational capacity comes from beyond the genome as well as comes from beyond the so-called “junk DNA” and “junk RNA” -- just as sentences imply the existence of something beyond the alphabet that make sentences possible.

Alphabets might be necessary for the generation of sentences. Nonetheless, in and of themselves, alphabets do not generate syntactical structures or semantics, nor do alphabets dictate how such syntax and semantics will be used in any particular case of meaning- making.

Similarly, DNA and RNA might be necessary for metabolic pathways to be possible. Nevertheless, strands of DNA and RNA, in and of themselves, do not generate metabolic pathways but, rather, organizational functionality is needed, and this comes



through epigenetic dynamics that direct the expression of genes. Just as the existence of sentences indicate that there is more to language than the existence of letters, so too, the existence of organizational capabilities in the matter of gene expression points to the need for a source of direction and control that is beyond the genetic alphabet of DNA and RNA in and of themselves.

Microzymas, endobions, bions, or somatids were considered, respectively, by Béchamp, Enderlein, Reich, and Naessens to be sources of order or organization that were not necessarily inherently physical in nature, but which constituted a medium of transduction that enabled those entities to access certain kinds of order or organization – wherever such order and organization might be coming from – that was capable of impacting biological processes in a physical way by, among other things, ordering the manner (i.e., sequences of metabolic steps, chronobiological timings, amounts, combinations, targets, and so on) in which different branches or pathways of metabolism unfolded in any given kind of cell form, tissue, or organ. If – and I emphasize the word “if” – biology operates as a function of transduction processes which have an organizational character that influences the way in which biological life forms operate, and if such organizational properties are not a function of the interactive dynamics of fermions and bosons, then, one might not be able to reduce the functionality of being human to the computational dynamics of a quantum computer (For a more in-depth exploration of some of the foregoing issues please engage my book: *Follow The What? – An Introduction*).

“Garbage in, garbage out” is as true for quantum computers as it is for standard computers. Being able to compute possibilities very rapidly is useless if one doesn’t understand the nature of the possibilities with respect to which one is busily computing.

Quantum computers can be used to engage in processes of modeling phenomena such as brain activity, the universe, and so on. Nevertheless, if one doesn’t understand the nature of what one is trying to model, then, such modeling efforts will fail.



Consequently, if: Intelligence, understanding, reason, logic, insight, creativity, consciousness, language, memory, critical reflection, interpretation, perception, morality, and spirituality cannot be shown to be functions of, among other things, superpositional and entanglement logic, then, once again, one cannot necessarily refer to the body/brain as being a quantum computer. In other words, if one cannot show that all events and dynamics that occur in, or in association with, a human being are a function of quantum forms of computational logic, then, there will be dimensions of what transpires in conjunction with human biology which cannot necessarily be descriptively reduced down to the sorts of computations that are made by quantum computers, and, if this is the case, then, such computers can neither accurately describe nor definitively explain the nature of being human.

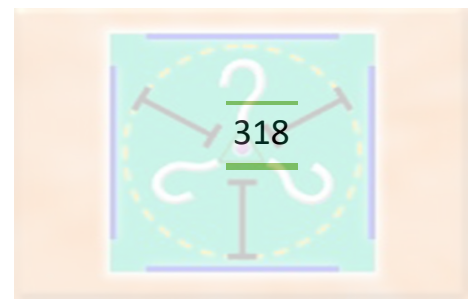
Information

David claims that the universe can be summed up as a function of information. More expansively, he maintains that we perceive the universe according to the interaction between: (1) the manner in which the information to which the Universe gives expression is encoded and (2) the manner in which humans decode it.

Information is a way of parsing, describing, or encoding something else. Information does not exist on its own but always exists in relation to, and, therefore, to varying degrees, is functionally dependent on that to which it seeks to allude.

Information is a system of representational description. Information is a way of mathematically, linguistically, or conceptually encoding that to which such mathematics, language, or concepts refer.

The encoding which takes place is not necessarily a function of the ontological character of that which is being encoded in the form of information. Rather, the encoding is a representational



interpretation of the ontological character to which the information is alluding or referencing.

If the ontology of that which is being encoded is quantum in character, then, the system of informational encoding which is used to represent that ontological character need not be quantum in character itself. However, under such circumstances, the issue, then, becomes a matter of trying to assess the extent to which such a descriptive or encoding process accurately captures the ontology of that which is being represented.

When encoded information is decoded, then, one must have a means of determining the extent to which the decoding process is capable of reproducing or mirroring the encoding process. To whatever extent such a decoding process can be demonstrated to be an accurate reproduction of the encoding process – in other words, two modalities of description (encoding and decoding) are shown to be equivalent to, or homologous, to one another – the existence of such equivalency does not absolve one of the task of proving that the original way of encoding information accurately describes that to which such information is alluding through the latter's representational structure.

Ontology – whatever it might be – does not emanate or exude information. Information is a conceptual or hermeneutical tool/method or form of metric that is used to parse whatever the phenomenology of emanation or exuding is believed to involve. The dynamics of informational processing seek to render such a parsing process into a representational description – through encoding – which alludes to that aspect of Reality, Being, or Existence which has been, or is being, descriptively parsed.

Mathematics can be used to describe the functional relationships of either one phenomenon to another or can be used to describe the network of relationships that are perceived to exist among a group of phenomena. Mathematics rarely, if ever, seems to be capable of actually explaining what it is being



used to describe or how what is being described came to be in the first place.

Not surprisingly, the information processing dynamic of quantum computing is steeped in the mathematics of quantum mechanics. The algorithms, logic gates, circuitry, and storage activities that govern quantum computing processing tend to reflect the mathematics of quantum mechanics.

Just as to a hammer, everything seems like a nail, so too, to a quantum computer everything seems like an exercise in quantum dynamics. When used in an appropriate context, quantum computers often work very well and show a lot of promise for being able to resolve, within a relatively short period of time, certain kinds of problems – such as those entailed by cryptography – that might take standard computers years, and, perhaps, even lifetimes to handle (assuming, of course, that the former sorts of problems could be resolved at all via standard methods).

To whatever extent the Universe is a function of quantum events, then, quantum dynamics would seem to be an appropriate way to describe and make computations concerning such events. To whatever extent the Universe is not a function of quantum events, then, to that extent, quantum mechanics and quantum computers would appear to be irrelevant to how the Universe operates.

David contends that “the foundation state of the Universe is waveform information or what some call the Metaphysical Universe.” (Page 18) In traditional terms, metaphysics has to do with what lies apart from, or beyond, the physical and which physical filters, lenses, methods, or forms of representation are not capable of describing or explaining in a satisfactory manner.

To equate waveforms with the foundational state of the Universe might be a bridge too far. While waveforms of whatever kind might be a function of certain dimensions of the Universe, nevertheless, one cannot necessarily reduce the entirety of the Universe down to waveforms.



To whatever extent the term “metaphysics” is appropriate to use in conjunction with the phenomena of the Universe, this would be because one would have encountered one, or more, existential boundary regions in which waveforms and particles, of one kind or another, no longer appear to be involved in the manifestation of certain kinds of phenomena. David appears to be assuming that there is nothing in the Universe but waveforms/particles giving expression to the interaction of fermions and bosons, but he hasn’t shown that his foregoing assumption is warranted and, instead, he tends to use quantum dynamics as a lion tamer might use a whip and a chair to fend off -- “Tyger! Tyger! burning bright in the forests of the night, What immortal hand or eye Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?” (cf William Blake) -- the unknown, the inexplicable, the mysterious Order of things.

Furthermore, as indicated earlier, information is a way of parsing or representing the phenomena of waveforms and particles. Therefore, one must try to keep in mind that the ontology of waveforms and particles is one thing, while the way in which those waveforms and particles might be, for example, mathematically parsed or described is a different kind of issue.

Information, mathematics, and quantum dynamics are not metaphysical mediums relative to the Universe. Rather, they are methods for describing certain kinds of experiential phenomena which are often considered, in some way, to constitute physical or material dynamics – that is, dynamics which, in some broad sense of the term, are concrete, palpable, and visible (either directly or through instrumentation) and, consequently, not metaphysical at all.

Mysticism and spirituality tend to be metaphysical in nature. Such perspectives tend to account – whether correctly or incorrectly -- for what is normally visible by making reference to what normally cannot be seen and, therefore, such a perspective maintains that what, in some sense, is considered to be physical or palpable only exists because of That which is beyond, or transcends, the physical.



Sensation and Perception

David continues on by saying: “Our five senses convert this waveform information source into electrical signals and send them to the brain which constructs the reality that we think we see, touch, taste, hear, and smell.” (Page 18-19) While a tenable case can be built to demonstrate how our five senses might convert waveform-based experiential data into electrical signals of one kind or another, one might be on less stable and assured grounds when one tries to claim that it is the brain which constructs the reality that “we think we see, touch, taste, hear, and smell.”

Unless one is proposing some sort of solipsistic phenomenology, the properties that waveforms have – or whatever “stuff” makes things possible -- is not entirely a function of our eyes, tongues, ears, noses, or our capacities to register the sensation of touch. The stuff, waveforms, or entities that help manifest the universe have their own realities or sets of properties which are engaged by our senses.

There is an interaction which takes place between what waveforms or ontological “lego sets” bring to the dance floor and what our sensory wiring and processing bring to that same stage. There are individuals who experience synesthesia in which certain kinds of smells might be experienced whenever one is exposed to particular kinds of shape, or an individual might experience colors while listening to music, and so on

Leaving aside the issues of illusions, hallucinations, various kinds of pathology, dreams, hypnosis and different kinds of anomalous experiences which, from time to time have been reported and which might complicate the following explanation but do not necessarily undermine what is about to be said, nonetheless, generally speaking, in order to hear something one must come in contact with a waveform or “stuff” that has certain kinds of properties to which one’s hearing faculties are responsive, or in order to see something, one must come in contact with a waveform or “stuff” that has properties to which



one's faculties of vision can be responsive, and, the foregoing also holds true in the case of smelling, tasting, and touching.

This means – and, again, leaving aside various anomalous experiential conditions which appear to constitute exceptions to the general set of principles governing sensation – that sensory equipment does not activate itself but is activated through contact with the kinds of waveforms or ontological “stuff” to which a given sensory faculty is responsive. Furthermore -- and, once again, putting aside phenomena such as synesthesia which might appear to be exceptions to the general set of principles that govern sensation – the properties that are present in a given waveform or ontological “stuff” have a capacity to modulate what is experienced by one's senses, just as the properties that are present in a given capacity to sense can filter and modulate what a certain kind of waveform brings to the sensory dance.

Sensation is not a one-way street. There is a complex, interactive dynamic which is taking place between sensory faculties and that which is being sensed.

To organize, interpret, understand, and evaluate a given moment in the sensory dance as being of one modality rather than another involves a process of perception. However, perception is not necessarily something that sensory faculties impose on the waveforms which one encounters, but is something that is sort of a mutual work of art or construction to which both the senses and what is sensed contribute.

Again, putting aside an array of anomalies which are known to exist in conjunction with sensory experience, nonetheless, one can say that, in general, waveforms present our sensory capacities with a set of constraints and degrees of freedom that will tend to frame or modulate what is experienced. To a certain extent, perception is as much a function of what waveforms or ontological “stuff” brings to the dance floor as what sensory capabilities bring to that same venue, and, to that extent, perception is as much a function of what is sensed as it is a function of what does the sensing.



Therefore, one cannot say that perception is just a construct of the brain. To a certain degree, sensory capabilities will accommodate, or take into consideration, various properties of what is sensed during the construction of perception.

In addition, to be able to perceive something requires that an array of: Judgments, interpretations, characterizations, organizational arrangements, and conceptual/linguistic renderings must be made that give expression to cognitive processes that frame our sensory experience of what is being sensed. Nevertheless, these value-added intellectual processes cannot alter the character of one's sensory rendering of what is being sensed beyond certain limits since, otherwise, one will not be able to locate, for example, the book that is on a certain part of a table which can be found in the kitchen and that has a check stuffed in its pages which needs to be cashed even as one notes that the book appears to have the same sort of redness – but not necessarily exactly – that everyone else in the room is commenting upon even as the individuals who are gathered around the kitchen table might acknowledge, both individually and collectively, that the redness which is perceived is not actually the color of the book but, rather, the structure of the book has a waveform composition which rather than actually being red, induces the red part of the spectrum to be reflected to a person's eyes and, thereby, induce an experience of redness ... but, nonetheless, if the waveform or ontological "stuff" being sensed did not have the structure it had, the waveform would not have been able to interact with light to reflect the color that all of us might tend to agree that we saw or are "seeing."

Given the foregoing considerations, then, when David returns to the words of Alan Watts (1915-1973) which state: "Without the brain the world is devoid of light, heat, weight, solidity, motion, space, time, or any other imaginable feature. All these phenomena are interactions, or transactions, or vibrations with a certain arrangement of neurons," (Page 19) one feels a certain degree of uneasiness with the way in which things are being said or framed.



More specifically, the world is not devoid of the events that help make light, heat, weight, solidity, motion, space, time, or any other imaginable feature possible. Furthermore, the world is not just a function of a certain arrangement of neurons, even though such an arrangement might have a role to play in a given kind of sensory experience.

Even if neurons and the activities of the brain have a modulating and orientating impact on what is being sensed or perceived, neither Allan Watts nor David has shown that neurons and the brain are responsible for the sort of cognitive processes (consisting of intelligence, judgment, decisions, interpretations and so on) that help transition sensations into perceptions. In addition, if the ontological “stuff” and waveforms of the world were not what they were or are, then, to a considerable degree – and leaving aside anomalous experiences of different kinds – what we sense would not have the properties that it does.

Our sensory and perceptual faculties might filter, frame, shape, and alter, to some degree, our experience of the properties that the waveforms of the world bring to the phenomenology of sensory experience. Nevertheless, generally speaking -- and leaving aside anomalous forms of experience -- the ontological “stuff” and waveforms of the world shape and orient our sensory and perceptual capabilities in ways that tend to place constraints on what can, and can't, be done to such waveforms via sensory and perceptual processing and still have a world of ontological “stuff” and waveforms about which people can reach consensual agreements as far as what the nature of the properties are about which those worldly waveforms seem to be communicating to our senses.

Frequency Following Behavior

A little further on in his discussion, David says that: “The reason they can now connect the human brain with a computer



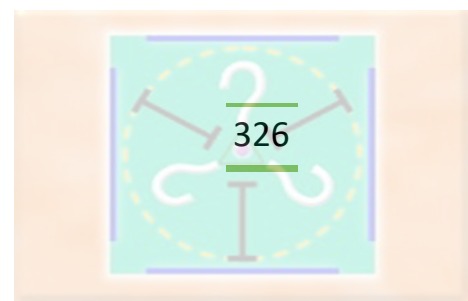
and make the computer respond to thought is because they are connecting two computer systems.” (Page 21)

The foregoing description appears to have a misleading dimension inherent in it. For example, the reason why human brains and computers can interface with one another to varying degrees is because of a phenomenon known as “frequency following behavior,” and this has little, if anything, to do with whether the phenomenon works because two computers are being hooked up to one another.

The fact that some frequencies can be used to entrain other frequencies does not depend on the presence of computers. Moreover, frequencies don’t depend on the presence of computers to be able to interact with one another.

However, if, through whatever means, one sends a pulsed set of frequencies to a computer and if that pulsed set of frequencies is associated with frequencies that are present during certain kinds of human thought processes, then, as long as the computer is set-up to engage such frequencies according to certain processing dynamics (i.e., algorithms), then the computer can be sensitized to the presence of the foregoing kinds of frequency signals and, as a result, begin to follow those pulsed signals and, if equipped to do so, exhibit certain kinds of behaviors that are a function of the properties of the signals that are being received. Similarly, if a human being is exposed, through whatever means, to pulsed beams of a certain frequency, and if those pulsed signals are characteristic of frequencies that are associated with a certain kind of thought or emotion in human beings, then, human beings can be induced to respond to the presence of such pulsed signals and, as a result, some of the frequencies in the brain of the person toward which the frequencies are being directed will begin to follow, or accommodate, the presence of the signals that are being communicated to the individual, and, consequently, the person will experience a certain kind of thought or emotion peculiar to, or associated with, the pulsed frequency which is being sent.

The individual interprets the presence of the pulsed frequency as if it were being manifested in a context that is



normally associated with a perception in which such a frequency is present. However, this phenomenon is possible not because the human brain is a computer but because of the role which frequencies and pulsed frequencies play in human experience.

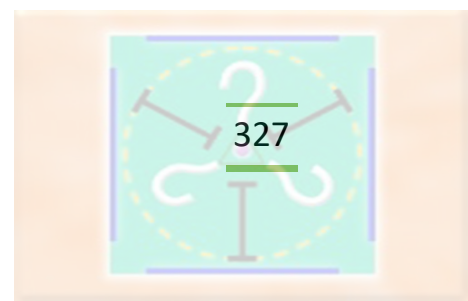
If one doubts that the foregoing considerations are true, then, for a start, one might take a look at the work of, among others: Nick Begich, Michael Persinger, Robert Duncan, Len Ber, and Sabrina Davis Wallace. All of the foregoing individuals, each in his or her own manner, have put forth evidence indicating that the brain possesses electromagnetic properties that are eminently hackable by means of techniques involving frequency following behavior, but notwithstanding such a reality, this does not make the brain a computer nor does the existence of such realities mean that one can reduce the mind to the brain.

Computers, Information, Energy, and Health

David goes on to state: "... The human body has the equivalent of a computer motherboard with its genetic network and the meridian lines of energy on which the healing art of acupuncture is based." (Page 21) There is a certain amount of vagueness present in the idea that the combination of a genetic network and meridian lines can be considered to be the equivalent of a motherboard in a computer.

The systems of logic that are present in a genetic network or the meridian lines is far more complicated, nuanced, and richer than anything that can be found in the motherboard of a computer. In addition, the circuitry that can be found in the epigenetic dynamics which connects, among other things, genetics and meridian lines exhibits far more degrees of freedom and enhanced capacities for generating a diversity of metabolic pathways in response to changes in environmental signals than any modern computer is capable of accomplishing.

Standard computers are shaped by the possibilities and limits inherent in putting together systems involving



combinations of: “or,” “and,” “not,” “yes,” “no,” “on,” “off,” and, sometimes a certain amount of fuzzy logic in which the nature of something entails a few degrees of freedom or degrees of imprecision beyond the narrow determinations that are permitted by Boolean logic processes. On the other hand, human memory, insight, inventiveness, creativity, understanding, critical reflection, talent, dreams, emotional intelligence, inspiration, abductive reasoning, moral assessment, and spiritual experiences often involve the experience of grasping (insight or intuition), or being grasped by (e.g., experiences of mystical unveiling in which the whole of a phenomenon is disclosed to a person) rather than being the result of some kind of step-wise computation or set of algorithms.

There is none of the computational character of computers – whether standard or quantum in nature – which is necessarily present in a great deal of human cognition and emotion. Consequently, the notion that the brain or the mind is just a kind of computer seems, at the very least, to be questionable.

As previously noted, David describes his own anomalous experiences in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s in a manner that indicated how he felt that understandings, of one kind or another, were being downloaded into him. The way in which he describes his own experience does not seem to be a matter of computing his way to such understandings by means of logic gates or the logical properties of qubits, but, rather, those understandings – whether right or wrong – felt to him like they were being given to him.

Artificial intelligence is called artificial intelligence because notwithstanding its capacity for making parasitic use of what has been given to it in the form of an array of computing algorithms by its human overseers, and as a result, has been enabled to take the collective contributions of a myriad of human beings and leverage those contributions, with human assistance, into performances capable of beating world champions at chess or Go. Nonetheless, to date, artificial intelligence has not been able to come anywhere remotely close to the natural intelligence of human beings with respect to self-



generated capabilities involving language, creativity, critical thinking, scientific discovery, mathematical inventiveness, moral sensibilities, emotional intelligence, or spiritual considerations.

I can't remember the last time that an AI system won a Nobel Prize, or a Pulitzer Prize, or a Fields Medal, or a MacArthur Fellowship. Part – or, perhaps, much – of the problem here, of course, is that the One Who oversaw the installment of natural intelligence in human beings is far more gifted than the humans who have deluded themselves into believing that, somehow, they have the same set of capabilities as the One Who created them.

David ends his attempt to try to draw parallels between computers and human beings by stating that: “Acupuncture needles and other techniques are designed to balance the flow of energy (information) through those pathways to maintain informational balance and communication in the constant interaction between body and Cosmic Internet.” (Page 21) What does it mean to balance the flow of energy, and why refer to energy as being equivalent to information when the latter is, at best, merely an attempt to descriptively represent the former since, among other things, energy can actually do what information cannot – namely, energize? Information – with human assistance -- might be able to talk a good game, but it can't actually accomplish what that which it is attempting to describe can accomplish unless information is organized by human beings into a system that is provided with the sort of energy that information needs to bring about any sort of effect.

In addition, health is not a state of informational flow – balanced or otherwise. Health is a state in which epigenetic dynamics either: (a) encounter no sources of pathological interference which prevent those dynamics from being able to function in accordance with their essential nature, or (b) to whatever extent such pathological currents are present, an individual's capacity for detoxifying those kinds of phenomena kicks in – which is controlled by epigenetic dynamics ... a



capacity that information did not, and cannot, give to human beings.

People might know how to use acupuncture needles to treat this or that malady, and, thereby, restore some sort of healthy, functional, balanced interaction between the forces or qualities or properties of ying and yang. Moreover, there might be some individuals who know how to use such acupuncture instruments better than do others, but neither the ones who are masters of acupuncture, nor the ones who are mere practitioners of acupuncture necessarily know the details concerning the actual character of the energy dynamics that are being induced to take place or what makes such inducements possible.

What is chi? Is it a form of electromagnetic energy or is it some other kind of energy that can, under certain circumstances, be transduced – as might be the case with respect to the activities of microzymas, endobionts, bions, or somatid dynamics -- into certain forms of electromagnetic energy, or piezoelectric energy, or biophotonic energy?

David brings together words such as: “Motherboard”, “quantum computing”, “information”, “informational flow”, “genetic networks”, “meridians,” “biological systems,” “energy,” and “Cosmic Internet” as if the mere juxtaposition of those terms – together with a few terms of connection -- forms a coherent, intelligible system. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case, and, as a result, while he might be creating a framework of meaning through which to interpret experience, the system of meaning being created doesn’t seem to provide much in the way of a demonstrable understanding of, or insight into, what either human cognitive potential or health seems to entail.

More On Computer Issue

On a number of occasions, David refers to human beings – sometimes in conjunction with the activities of the brain and



sometimes in conjunction with genetic activity and the meridian network – as being a computer ‘in the broadest sense of the term’ or “in the widest possible sense.” One tends to encounter a certain amount of difficulty trying to understand what is entailed by the notion of a computer that is to be construed in the broadest or widest sense of the term.

Computers compute. No one has shown that what goes on in cells, tissues, organs, the meridian system, or the brain is a matter of computation of some kind.

To be sure, there are individuals (e.g., Steven Pinker) who have sought to put forth models that are built around the idea of treating the brain as a network of computational devices. However, even if one were to agree – for purposes of argument – that all cognitive activities are a function of nothing more than brain activity, there are considerable lacunae in the accounts that are offered concerning the alleged computational nature of, say, dreams, consciousness, creativity, language, eidetic memory, meaning, insight, inventiveness, phenomenology, hermeneutics, belief, and mysticism. Moreover, if cognitive activities are not a function of brain activity, then, trying to fathom in what way such activities are computational in nature presents a variety of problems.

David talks about standard computers and quantum computers, but he never really talks, in clear and definitive terms, about what makes a computer a computer. As a result, the idea that one should think of computers in the widest, broadest terms tends to drift off into an unintelligible kind of vagueness that seems to accomplish little except to enable an individual to leverage that vagueness in ways that offer some extra degrees of leniency or freedom in relation to the process of theorizing about an array of possibilities that might, or might not, necessarily involve devices that are connected by a set or network of logic gates and circuits that are intended to compute answers as a function of mathematically weighted algorithms or ways of organizing such gates and circuits.

Being asked, as David appears to be doing in the first chapter of *Everything You Need To Know But Have Never Been*



Told, to engage the idea of computers in the widest, broadest sense, seems to be little more than saying: Let's just assume that the human being is a computer of some kind and proceed from there. If this is what David is doing, one might wish to counter with: "Let's not assume this.

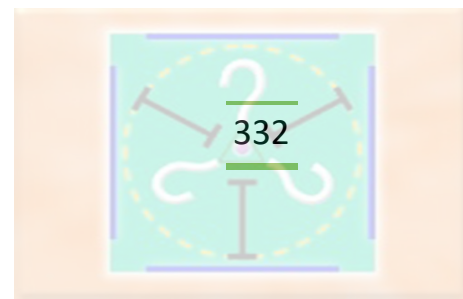
Rather, let's begin with being shown that human beings are, indeed, computers in some particular sense of that term. If someone wishes to take me on a narrative journey or down a darkened rabbit hole, then, I would like the mode of conceptual transportation that is to help carry me into the unknown to be as sound as possible.

Unfortunately, suggesting that one should treat human beings as being computers in the widest or broadest sense of this word raises an array of what seem to be important questions concerning such a possibility. Some of those questions have been outlined during the last several pages.

The Chakra System

A little later in the first chapter of *Everything You Need to Know But Have Never Been Told* David talks about the chakra system. He indicates that the term "chakra" can be translated as "wheels of light," and, then, he proceeds to list different chakras, pointing out that each chakra has a different function.

For example, he indicates that the sacral chakra, which is located in the lower belly, processes certain emotions, such as anxiety, whereas the emotions of compassion, love, and empathy are felt in the heart since this is where "the heart chakra vortex is located within the body's electromagnetic field." David doesn't say what the nature of the processing dynamics are that take place in the sacral chakra or wheel of light and, as a result, generate anxiety, nor does he say what the nature of the light is which is whirling about in its vortex within the body's electromagnetic field, nor does he specify how that light - whatever its nature might be -- interacts with the electromagnetic field to produce compassion, love, or empathy.



How does one determine that a given situation is better engaged through anxiety than through compassion, love, or empathy? Do chakras make such assessments, and, if they do, then, what contribution, if any, does the brain make with respect to such forms of assessment and processing?

The foregoing comments are not intended to cast aspersions on the chakra system of processing or activity. Rather, certain kinds of questions are being raised in conjunction with that system of processing because there is nothing which David is saying in this section of his book which would indicate that the chakra system is just a computer in the widest or broadest sense of the term.

We don't know what the nature of the light is that is manifested in any of the chakras. David says that every chakra has a different function, but we don't know if such differences are because: (a) The structural properties of each of the chakras are different while the nature of the light that is expressed through them remains the same; or, (b) if the aforementioned functional differences are because the nature of the light coming through different chakras is not the same while the structural properties of the chakras remain the same; or, (c) if the differences in functionality which are being alluded to are a combination of different modalities of light being manifested through each chakra, together with the structural differences that might be inherent in each of the chakras which, in some way, process the light that is present in any given chakra as a function of the properties of those chakras.

Given the foregoing sorts of questions concerning the chakra system, one has difficulty understanding how one might refer to that system as being some sort of computer system when the latter is thought of in its broadest, widest sense. How the light(s) associated with different chakras is transduced into anxiety in the case of the sacral chakra and transduced into compassion, empathy, and love in the case of the heart chakra is not indicated by David in specific terms.

What are the properties of the "logic gates" to which such chakras supposedly give expression? Is the light that is

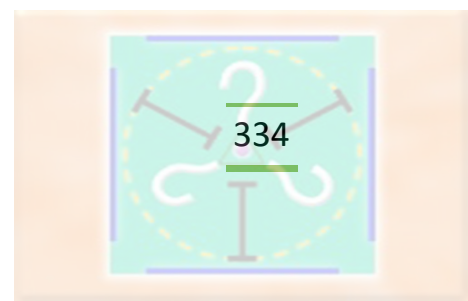


transduced through each chakra a form of energy or does that light not only provide some sort of energy, but, as well, inform the dynamics of the chakra in some fashion?

Is the light a form of force or is it a form of energy, or a bit of both? If it is a form of energy, then, what kind of energy is it and how does it become transduced into, say, electromagnetism?

In addition, David doesn't seem to spend much time providing an account of how the chakra system interacts with brain functioning. He does mention that there is a crown chakra on top of the head (and adds that this is where he had the experience of some kind of energy drilling down into his head during his anomalous experience in the Andes mountains while traveling through Peru), and he also refers to the brow chakra which is the putative sight of the so-called third-eye, but he doesn't say how, or to what extent, the activities of the crown and brow chakras shape, modulate, or organize brain functioning, nor does he say how the sacral and heart chakras – which process an array of emotions – are connected with, or have some control over, or modulating capacity with respect to, various kinds of brain activity.

Are chakras parts of some sort of computer system when they are viewed through the lenses of the notion of a computer when the latter notion is considered in the broadest, widest sense? I don't see how one can answer such a question on the basis of what David has said, nor can one understand how whatever interface occurs between the chakra system and brain activity necessarily gives expression to some kind of computer, and if one would like to maintain that such an interface does give expression to the idea of a computer when this latter notion is considered in its widest, broadest sense, then the idea of a computer becomes relatively meaningless because even if one were to claim that the chakra system and the brain as well as the interface of those two networks constitute a complex computer system, one has no idea how any of it works.



All-Possibility, All-Potential

David claims that our five senses constitute a decoding system which takes waveform information from the Cosmic Internet or Universe and turns that information into electrical information which is, then, communicated to the brain. Furthermore, various parts, sections, regions, or compartments of the brain specialize in further forms of processing information that is coming to them via the sensory transduction of the waveform information from the Cosmic Internet into electrical signals and, by means of such additional processing, the brain is able to generate digitalized images and holographic forms which human beings perceive as the world around them even though, as David claims: “There is in fact no world ‘around us’ and everything exists only in the brain an genetic structure in the form that we think we are experiencing ‘outside’ of ourselves.” (Page 22)

The brain, chakra system, genetic capabilities, and meridian network came into existence how? Whether one posits an explanation that is couched in evolutionary terms or mystical/spiritual terms, we are not solipsistic beings that created ourselves.

According to David, Infinite Awareness consists of All-Possibility and All-Potential, and, therefore: The ‘brain’, ‘chakra system’, ‘genetic capabilities’ and ‘meridian network’ were, apparently, the possibilities and potentials that just happen to emerge in our Universe. However, David doesn’t actually account for how the transition from All-Possibility and All-Potential to actuality took place in relation to any of the foregoing terms.

Was it a random event? How would one know this is the case given that All-Possibility and All-Potential would have room for both random and non-random scenarios?

If the process of going from All-Possibility and All-Potential to actuality was not random in nature, then, in what way was it not random? Are All-Possibilities and All-Potentials aware of



themselves prior to being actualized, and if they are, what determines whether one kind of possibility or potential rather than another possibility or potential emerges into actuality?

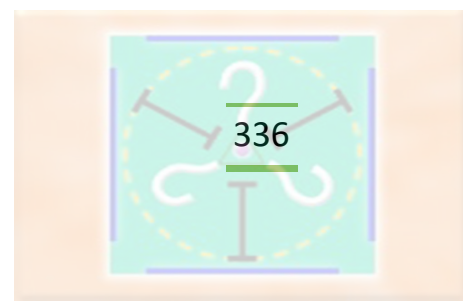
If All-Possibilities and All-Potentials are inherent in Infinite Awareness, then, surely, among those possibilities and potentials is one in which no possibility or no potential will ever be manifested. So, given the foregoing possibility or potential, then, an obvious question is why is the Universe here rather than not at all?

Did certain particular waveforms present in All-Possibility and All-Potential come into being because Infinite Awareness focused on such waveform possibilities and potentials? If so, how does such a focus turn possibility and potential into actuality and how does particularized focus emerge out of Infinite Awareness?

Did a Cosmic Waveform collapse and become manifest as particular waveforms that have the properties of a brain, or a chakra system, or genetic processes, the meridian network, and so on? If so, what was the nature of the collapse dynamic and what brought it about?

Why should one accept David's contention that there is no world "around" us and that everything exists only in the brain and the genetic system? After all, when considering the nature of All-Possibility and All-Potential, one such possibility and potential would be for there to be 'something' around us – rather than the nothing which David proposes – and, if this is the case, then, phenomenology is not just a function of what takes place within the brain and genetic system but involves an interactive dynamic of some kind between two or more realms.

David's claims to the contrary, the capacity to create virtual forms of reality does not serve as evidence to corroborate the idea that there is no world 'around' us. To create a virtual form of reality, something – usually in the form of pulsed frequencies of various kinds – is organized to impinge on the brain in certain ways and, thereby, induce it to experience through the filters, frames, and lenses which are provided by the aforementioned pulsed frequencies, and, moreover, that which organizes such a



dynamic is possible because of the existence of some kind of hardware (epigenetics, genetics, brain) that is capable of generating or processing the sort of dynamic that will be able to induce an individual to have one kind of experience rather than another.

Hallucinations, illusions, hypnotic trances, fantasies, dreams, and placebo events might seem like variations on the theme of virtual forms of reality. However, in one way, or another, human beings are, or have been, structured in such a way as to be open to those sorts of possibilities, but since there is no evidence to indicate that human beings are the ones who created themselves with the foregoing set of inclinations, then, one is forced to consider the possibility that a transcendent force or set of forces of some kind – that is forces ‘outside’ or ‘beyond’ or ‘around’ human beings – are responsible for the possibility of such virtual reality potentialities.

The focused attention of Infinite Awareness upon some aspect of All-Possibility and All-Potentiality that is given expression through possibility being transduced into actuality of some particularized kind creates a context of focused and unfocused attention. One might not necessarily have to interpret such a context in terms of spatial relationships, but one has created a differentiated set of compartmentalized relationships involving a “within” and a “without” involving contexts of focused attention.

David maintains that everything is consciousness because everything is a function of Infinite Awareness. Nonetheless, given the notion of All-Possibility and All-Potential to which David believes Infinite Awareness is capable of giving expression, then, one might note that even if one were to agree that everything is an expression of consciousness, this does not necessarily mean that everything manifests consciousness in the same way or to the same degree, otherwise there would be no need for the realms of All-Possibility or All-Potential.



Consciousness, the Brain, and Information

David further stipulates that not only is everything consciousness, everything is also connected and engaged in the process of communication. In fact, David maintains that: "... a brain is only a means of decoding information and in that sense everything has a 'brain' because everything is constantly receiving and transmitting information." (Page 24)

The Qur'an states: "The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise God and there is nothing that does not glorify God in praise, but ye understand not their manner of praise." (17:44) Is 'praise' a function of information or, alternatively, does praise necessarily involve a process of decoding information or having "a brain that is constantly receiving and transmitting information"?

Whatever kind of possibility or potential an aspect of consciousness entails, one might want to consider the idea that the essential nature of such a possibility which has become actualized, at least as a potential, constitutes a form of praise that does not necessarily require the decoding of information or the presence of a brain. In other words, the existence of a possibility as an actualized potential with an essential nature might be considered to be a form of praise, in and of itself, quite apart from issues of information, decoding, brains, awareness, and communication, and, moreover, the foregoing possibility would constitute a form of praise that we do not necessarily understand because we have no knowledge or understanding of what it is for such a possibility to become actualized as a potential with an essential nature that might, or might not, become realized.

Roger Lewin wrote an article for the journal *Science* that appeared in the December 1980 edition and was entitled: "Is Your Brain Really Necessary? The article provided an overview of certain aspects of the clinical work conducted by a British neurologist, John Lorber (1915-1996).



One of the research interests of Professor Lorber (he was on faculty at Sheffield University) involved the condition of hydrocephalus in which, usually for congenital reasons, the cerebrospinal fluid of a person is prevented from circulating properly as it circulates between the spinal column and the brain. As a result, over time, the cerebrospinal fluid begins to collect in one or more of the ventral spaces within the brain and begins to exert an outward pressure and, thereby, squeezes the brain against the skull.

Professor Lorber divided people with the foregoing condition into four categories. First, there were those individuals whose brain scans indicated a minimal amount of enlargement of their ventricles, and, then, there were individuals whose scan indicated, respectively, ventricles or spaces within the brain that occupied: (2) 50 to 70 percent of an individual's cranium; (3) 70 to 90 percent of a person's cranium space, and, finally, (4) 95% or more of the internal cranium space of an individual.

Professor Lorber indicated that category 4 constituted about 10% of the total group of the people being studied. Many of these individuals – that is, individuals whose cranium is 95%, or more, filled with cerebrospinal fluid, and, therefore, with very little brain material -- exhibited severe cognitive challenges and disabilities, and, yet, nonetheless, at least half of the individuals in that group were able to take an intelligence test and score 100, which matches the mean average score for that test.

Moreover, Professor Lorber also indicated there was one youngster from the foregoing group who scored 126 on the IQ test and who, also, had obtained a first-class honors degree in mathematics. In addition, his social capabilities were, in all respects, quite normal.

The reason why this particular young man showed up in Professor Lorber's study was because one of that individual's professors noted that the youth had a larger head size than other students and, as a result, referred the student to Professor Lorber for possible inclusion in the latter's research study. When a brain scan was performed in conjunction with that



student, instead of observing a thickness of 4.5 centimeters in the brain tissue that normally exists between the ventricles and the outer portion of the cortical surface, the researchers found just a thin sliver of brain material measuring approximately a millimeter, or so, in thickness.

In further commenting on the case of the foregoing young student, Professor Lorber indicates that he couldn't be sure whether the quantity of cerebral matter in the student's brain is 50 grams or 150 grams. However, one thing the pediatric neurologist is sure of is that irrespective of whatever the precise amount of cerebral material which might actually be present, it is substantially less -- by an order of magnitude, or more -- than the 1.5 kilograms (1500 grams) that characterizes the weight of a normal brain.

Notwithstanding a cranium which is 95% filled with cerebrospinal fluid and the presence of brain material that is a millimeter, or so, in thickness (rather than the usual 4.5 centimeters of thickness), and which weighs roughly 1450 to 1350 grams less than a normal brain of some 1500 grams, the student graduated with a honors degree in mathematics. Furthermore, there were other individuals who were in the same group and who were able to score 100 on an intelligence test.

Contrary to what David claimed in the previously cited quote, apparently, not even human beings necessarily need their brain to be able to communicate with the world. If such a possibility exists in conjunction with human beings, then, why should one suppose that the rest of Universe is in need of a brain to be able to interact with that Universe or to engage in praise of the One Who made such a Universe possible?

David rhetorically asks on page 25 of his book, near the top: "...what is the brain except a form of information," and, then, he proceeds to add: "... information can be processed in infinite different ways by infinite expressions of consciousness."

The foregoing perspective seems to be conflating information with that which information is used to represent. There might be an infinite ways of processing information, but,



the challenge is to try to ascertain which, if any, of those ways of processing information concerning the brain might be correct.

String theory has been estimated to be capable of giving rise to 10^{500} possible universes, and one might point out that among the many problems which have tied string theory up in knots there is no known, reliable, rigorous way to test that theory and show how and why our universe emerged rather than some other kind of universe. String theory is a way of processing information which is not even infinite in nature, and, yet, it has dissolved into a morass of uncertainties and things which cannot be known, and, so, to argue, as David does, that there are an infinite number of ways to process information doesn't really resolve any issue because, as is the case in string theory, being able to come up with an incredibly large number of possibilities for arranging information doesn't necessarily help one to identify the nature of the reality in which one is currently ensconced.

The Qur'an indicates: "And if all the trees of the earth were pens, and the sea, with seven more seas to help it (were ink), the words of Allah could not be exhausted. (31:27)" The problem is not infinity or the indefinitely large number of possibilities that are implied by the foregoing orientation, but, instead, the problem is to find a way of distinguishing between the Real and the illusory.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "I swear by God that this world in comparison with the world to come is as though one of you put a finger into the sea. Let that person consider what amount of water is brought out of the sea, and what remains." Again, the idea of a certain level of reality which is indefinitely large is being alluded to, but that which is being alluded to is not necessarily a function of information or the processing of information as - based on the previously noted quotes -- David seems to believe is the case.

Reality, whatever it might be, is not information. Information presupposes the existence of a reality of some kind, and, as such, information is a way of attempting to describe or



represent That which, among other things, provides the idea of information with something with which to work.

David cites an article in *Scientific American* that seeks to equate black holes and computers. According to the article everything is a computer because everything registers and processes information.

The article goes on to speculate that all elementary particles store bits of data. Moreover, whenever two, or more, particles interact, those bits of data are transformed, and, as a result, “physical existence and information are inextricably linked.”

David modifies the foregoing statement by saying that it is the illusion of physical existence and information which are entangled with one another. This is because he believes that the idea of physical existence is, in and of itself, a form of processed information.

Elementary particles are whatever they are. Data and information arise when human beings engage, or are engaged by, such particles and, during that phase of interaction, human beings have been known to generate systems for quantitatively and qualitatively keeping track (through representational forms of data and information) of different phenomena involving the human side of the interaction – systems that, sometimes, are referred to as recorded observations.

Contrary to the *Scientific American* article which David cites, elementary particles cannot be shown to store bits of data. Data, like information, is a form of description or representation that is tied to observational or instrumental methodology.

When particles interact, recorded observations might indicate that something is different from previous recorded observations involving such particles, and such differences might be captured in the form of statements and equations that give expression to, or allude to, forms of data-based and informational representation that are believed to capture something about the nature of the changes which have been observed ... observations that might have been made possible by changes or differences in the particles being observed.



Nonetheless, the observations, data, information, and so on that exist on the human side of things are nothing more than hermeneutical ways of representing or referring to whatever has helped to make possible the dynamics of whatever has been phenomenologically experienced.

To try to claim that elementary particles are involved in the dynamics of “data storage” and “informational processing” in the same way that humans are involved in those sorts of dynamics is a form of projection because the foregoing two phrases are hermeneutical artifacts or representational constructs. We don’t observe elementary particles: Storing bits of data, engaging in data transfer, or transducing such data into some sort of informational format so that those particles will be able to process that information in order to undergo this or that kind of transition, but, instead, the individual or individuals who wrote the article in *Scientific American* to which David is referring are, arbitrarily -- and without any real justification -- are conceiving of elementary particles as if the latter entities go about their existence in the same way that the authors of the article go about their own existence.

David modifies the position being put forth in the *Scientific American* article by stipulating that it is the illusion of physical existence which interacts with information because, as noted previously, the physical realm is, according to David, nothing more than a function of some sort of data- and information-processing dynamic. However, notwithstanding the change which David has introduced into the discussion, he has committed the same sort of mistake that the aforementioned *Scientific American* article has made ... in fact he has doubled down on the mistake because he is not just saying that the physical interaction of elementary particles involves the storage of data and the processing of related information as the article does, but, he also is saying that physical reality is nothing more than a function of the sort of data and information processing that takes place in the brain.



Informational Standing Waves

David says that every “Form is in-form-ation decoded from waveform states. ‘Physical’ reality including the body is made manifest through standing or stationary waves of information. (Page 25)”

Physical reality is made manifest through what kind of stationary waves of information? One is reminded of lines from the 1934 poem, *The Rock*, by T.S. Eliot which read: “Where is the wisdom that we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge that we have lost in information?”

How are different kinds of stationary waves of information possible? How are those waves made manifest?

Is knowledge something more than information, and, if so, in what way is that the case? What are the criteria for differentiating between noise and information?

Is the aforementioned notion of ‘differentiating criteria’ a function of something that is other than information? If this is the case, then what is this ‘something other’? If this is not the case, then isn’t any attempt to distinguish among: Noise, information, knowledge, and wisdom a rather arbitrary exercise?

If stationary waves of information are arbitrary arrangements, then, what do such waves have to do with issues of truth? Is meaning a function of information, or does information have to be encoded in certain ways in order to have meaning, and if so, what are these ‘certain ways’ and what makes them possible and what do they have to do with the nature of reality?

Does the encoding of information involve something more than information? If so, then, what is this ‘something more’?

If the encoding of information does not involve anything more than information, then, why bother with encoding it? What does encoding information do that information does not do on its own except, perhaps, to improve the efficiency and capacity of transmission.



What makes the process of decoding encoded information possible? What follows from instances in which the decoding process generates a meaning structure that is other than what was intended or meant by the original encoding process, and how does one go about determining that this is the case?

David indicates that in order to create a standing waveform, one needs some sort of blockage or wall at each end of the node through which the standing wave emerges and which is capable of creating a context which induces a waveform to: (1) Bounce back and forth between the two end-walls, (2) interact with itself as it is bouncing back and forth, and, (3) continue to repeat stages (1) and (2) so that an up-and-down oscillating waveform is maintained somewhat like the way in which the prongs or spokes on the hubcaps of cars moving at certain speeds appear to be stationary even as they are oscillating.

What kind of information is oscillating? What generated the information? Why is it oscillating? What do such oscillating standing waves of information mean?

Why does information assume the shape of a waveform? Where does the information come from that makes up different waveforms?

What are the properties of the oscillation? What makes those properties possible?

How did the walls or blockages arise that are containing the waveform oscillation? What is the nature of the force that enables such walls to prevent an oscillating waveform from escaping rather than remaining stationary?

From the perspective of some individuals – and given some of the things that David says (some of which have been quoted earlier), one has difficulty resisting the idea of placing David in this group of people -- the answer to all of the foregoing questions appears to be: “Information.” It is as if the Mr. McGuire character played by Murray Hamilton in the movie, *The Graduate*, were to utter: “Information” rather than “Plastics” as being the response du jour with respect to resolving all



possibilities, problems, aspirations, interests, opportunities, and scenarios.

However, information does not order itself. Furthermore, there doesn't seem to be any way to plausibly argue that information is aware of itself, or that it understands itself, or processes itself, or encodes itself, or decodes itself, or establishes the criteria that might help one to differentiate among noise, information, meaning, knowledge, wisdom, and truth.

The notion of information gives expression to only one possibility among All-Possibilities and gives expression to only one potential among All-Potentials. Consequently, why should one suppose that David's attempt to treat standing waves of information as being the "stuff" out of which our universe is made is correct when there are so many questions surrounding the issue of information (some of which have been mentioned over the last several pages) that do not seem to lead to defensible answers concerning the idea that standing waves of information constitute the 'stuff' of the universe?

David contends that: "...what we call the Universe is itself one big standing wave of information that oscillates – 'moves back and forth in a regular rhythm'." (Page 27) What is a person actually saying when such an individual claims that information oscillates back and forth in a regular rhythm? What causes the information to oscillate back and forth? What causes the oscillation to take place in a regular, rather than an irregular, rhythm?

What determines the frequency of the oscillation? How does this take place?

What prevents the foregoing oscillating wave from being able to escape the node through which it is being expressed? What makes possible the node through which the standing waveform of information is to be expressed?

David mentions, in passing, the work of the German biophysicist Fritz-Albert Popp who led a team which discovered, among other things, that DNA seems to oscillate or vibrate at a



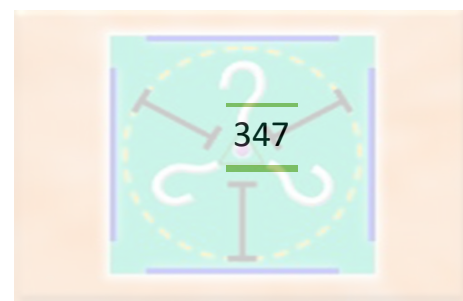
particular frequency. David comments – without any discussion, elaboration, or proof – that such oscillation: “...relates to the standing wave.”

Relates in what way to the standing waveform of information that supposedly constitutes the Universe? This appears to be nothing more than a process of attempting to generate ontology through declaration.

David develops the foregoing perspective by citing the work of the Russian biophysicist and molecular biologist, Pjotr Garjajev, and maintains that the research being alluded to shows that “... DNA not only receives and transmits information but absorbs and processes it.” However, the aforementioned research was not necessarily about the transmission, absorption, and processing of standing waveforms of information, per se, but, instead, appears to be focused on the phenomenon of being able to alter the structural character of DNA coding by transferring captured frequencies from one organism and transferring those frequencies to the DNA of another organism by means of lasers and, thereby, was able to effect a change in the latter’s DNA.

Given that David’s manner of parsing the nature of the Russian scientific research involves introducing the notion of “information” as a way of framing and filtering what took place in that research, this seems to cast such research in a light that distorts, somewhat, the actual perspective that might have been advanced through that research. Garjajev’s group indicated that there are certain homologies between the syntactical structure of languages and the structural character of the alkaline-pairs in DNA. When the right frequencies are captured by a laser, then, the language-modulated frequencies that are carried by coherent light are capable of affecting what takes place in DNA that is other than the DNA from which the captured frequencies originated (i.e., present in another organism).

The foregoing point concerning the homologies between natural language structures and the structural features of DNA and the way in which frequencies that are given expression through the medium of language can affect what takes place in



the dynamics of DNA is made by David on page 28 of his book. However, that point is made in a context that is relatively free of the vocabulary of standing waveforms and information, and the gist of my comments over the last several pages has been directed toward critically reflecting on problems entailed by David's manner of trying to frame issues concerning the nature of reality using the notions of information, standing waves, and the like.

Evolution, Population Dynamics, and the Dot Below Bey

David continues on by asserting that: "What we call evolution with species changing to stay in sync with a changing environment and developing gifts perfect for survival comes from the information interaction between the quantum field of possibility and probability, DNA and the human energetic field." (Page 27)

Since, as evolutionists readily admit, 99% of all the species that have ever been known to exist on Earth have become extinct, one has difficulty accepting the idea that the reason why species change is "to stay in sync with a changing environment." Different dimensions of a specie's population might be better able to stay in sync with changing environmental conditions while other dimensions of that same population might fall by the wayside because those dimensions have fallen out of sync with the environment, and when the collective capabilities that are present in a given specie population are no longer in sync with changing environmental conditions, then, the specie will become extinct.

Sometimes, as environmental conditions change, different segments of a given specie population will become isolated from one another and, over time, establish populations that exhibit a different mix of characteristics and properties that, among other things, prevent those segments from being able to breed with one another, and, as a result of such changes, new species sometimes emerge. Nonetheless, the emergence of such species



is a function of population dynamics and has nothing to do with “...developing gifts perfect for survival” that, supposedly, come “from the information interaction between the quantum field of possibility and probability, DNA, and” energetic fields because no one has ever provided a plausible account – in step-by-step detail – of how such new “gifts perfect for survival” ever come into existence, or why it is that such “gifts perfect for survival” are not able to stem the tide of extinction that has washed away 99 % of all species. Maintaining, as David does, that there is a dynamic involving: “information interaction between the quantum field of possibility and probability, DNA”, and some sort of energetic field doesn’t really provide much insight into how, allegedly, such a dynamic serves as the source of “gifts perfect for survival.”

David contends that: “By expanding the frequency band on which DNA is operating (by expanding our consciousness) we can connect with other realities beyond the five senses as psychics and mediums do. We can heal and be healed remotely by using our consciousness to deliver harmonizing frequencies to another’s DNA.” (Page 27)

I believe in the idea of expanded or expanding consciousness. The Qur’an indicates that: “We raise by grades (of Mercy) whom We will, and over every lord of knowledge, there is one more knowing. (12:76) and, as well, “We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and in themselves, until it is clear to them that God is the Real.” (Qur’an: 41:53)

The realities beyond the five senses to which an individual might be connected are not necessarily a function of the sort of standing waveforms of information about which David talks. Instead, the dimensions of experience to which allusions are being made in the foregoing quotes give expression to signs on the horizon and within one which are said to demarcate different dimensions of the Real which, God willing, do not involve becoming lost in information but have to do with being opened up to knowledge and wisdom.

In fact, the Sufi mystical path invites an individual to a very different scenario than the informational standing-wave notion



about which David seems to be informing individuals. More specifically, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: “All of the Revealed Books are contained in the Qur’an. And the meaning of the Qur’an is contained within surrah al-Fatihah [the opening chapter of the Qur’an], and the meaning of surrah al-Fatihah is contained in Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem [In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful], and the meaning of Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem is contained in Bismillah [In the Name of Allah], and the meaning of Bismillah is contained in the dot beneath bey [the Arabic letter with which Bismillah begins].” From the foregoing perspective, the dot beneath bey symbolizes the locus of created manifestation that constitutes the connection to realities that both encompass as well as extend beyond those that are accessible by the five senses.

In addition, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: “Truly, the Qur’an has an outward and an inward dimension – and so on, up to seven dimensions.” The Qur’an is, first and foremost, intended as an aural, not a written, tradition, and, therefore, reciting the Qur’an gives expression to all manner of frequencies which if recited properly can, if God wishes, affect every aspect of a human being’s existence, including DNA.

Consequently, I am not taking issue with the sorts of phenomena which David indicates might be possible. Rather, I am taking issue with the way in which David often goes about describing such possibilities through the language of informational philosophies or engages those possibilities through the arbitrary and, often, neologistic treatment of various ideas derived from quantum mechanics.

Frequencies, Information, and Order

David mentions, in passing, a March 2017 announcement by researchers at Columbia University, in conjunction with individuals associated with the New York Genome Center. The



announcement to which reference is being made indicated that it was both possible and feasible to employ DNA as a means of storing, copying, and accessing files that had been digitized just like one might do via a computer.

Commenting on the foregoing discovery, David talks about how, for quite some time, he had been proposing that DNA is like a computer hard drive that “stores information.” Notwithstanding his position concerning the idea of “information” and irrespective of whether one is talking about a storage device for a computer or the manner in which DNA can be used to store, copy, and access files, what is being stored is not information.

In computer-related storage devices, bits refer to something that can have only two states – on and off, magnetized and unmagnetized, yes or no, 1 or 0. None of this is about information but, rather, it is about whether something is one state or another.

When one configures bits into units of 8, called a byte, one has a unit that can assume 256 states which can be used to represent or characterize this or that: Property, condition, attribute, alpha-numeric character, or other kind of symbol. Again, none of this is a function of information but, instead, has to do with the combinatorics of states and the network of meanings and functions which one can generate through organizing the dynamics of such combinatorics in one way rather than another.

The contents of a file – when digitized and stored on an appropriate device – consists of an array of bytes that are capable of representing the letters, numbers, symbols, images, and meanings to which such an arrangement of bytes gives expression. States can be represented, and combinations of states can be represented, and numbers, letters, images, and meanings can be used to represent those states.

There is no information inherent in what is transpiring. However, principles of information theory can be used as a way of trying to describe and assign significance to the structural character of the state dynamics in such a storage device.



If one can store, copy, and access files via DNA, then, this is because the structural properties of DNA, like the properties of a storage device for a computer, enable one to create a context of combinatorics through which networks of states can be established as a function of the properties of DNA molecules together with the manner in which they interact with one another. The possibility of generating states that can have different representational meanings, properties, and structural features is what gives DNA the capacity to serve as a storage device and not the presence of something called information.

Information presupposes the existence of something which is, in some sense, “real” that has the capacity to manifest or assume an array of states which can be organized into meaningful forms or structures. So, when David indicates that, for some time, he has had the sense that DNA is like the hard drive devices that can be used in conjunction with computers that make storage, copying, and accessing functions possible, none of this is tied, in any necessary way, to the notion of information.

Upon mentioning the research that uncovered the capacity of DNA to store, copy, and provide access to various kinds of meaning-structures, David stipulates that one doesn’t “... need a university to understand reality because this information is in the Cosmic Internet all around us if people only tune-in to those frequencies.” (Page 28) Institutional research is one way to tune-in to various dimensions of reality, and there might be other, intuitive, non-scientific modalities of doing so as well, and, as previously noted, David indicates that he has had such intuitions for quite some time.

However, whether one uses scientific methods or intuitive methods, or some other form of methodological process of tuning in, one is engaged in research that involves more than frequencies, and, furthermore, the dimension of reality which one is tuning into is more than just frequencies and information. The frequencies into which one is tuning have an ordered relationship to one another and the frequencies themselves have been made possible because certain dimensions of reality



have been organized in ways that are capable of generating those frequencies, and, in addition, important functional differences are manifested as a result of the manner in which different structural arrangements yield an array of frequencies that have different significances in various contexts.

The context which one is trying to tune into, and the means one uses to tune into such a context involves networks which possess various functional capabilities. If DNA molecules did not have the properties that they do, then, DNA could not be used for storing, copying, and accessing meaning structures that have been digitized, and, presumably, the sort of structures which one would like to digitize, store, copy, and access have value because they are not just informational noise and because they enable one to perform various functions in everyday life.

Frequencies might play some role in the foregoing and one can use information-based models to describe both the frequencies and the roles they play as well as what makes such frequencies and their roles possible. Nonetheless, one cannot reduce such frameworks to being nothing more than information, frequencies, and some unspecified notion of tuning in.

Placebos

David talks about how placebos “trick the mind into believing they will be effective in curing illness and the mind’s perception of this is communicated subconsciously to the body which, then, responds to that perception and heals itself.” (Page 28) He doesn’t explain what the nature of the trick is that gives rise to the idea that the placebo will be effective or why the trick seems to work with some people and not others? Furthermore, he doesn’t account for how the mind’s perception that the placebo has curative properties is, supposedly, subconsciously transduced by the body to enable the latter to heal itself.

He is putting forth a narrative which purports to be an explanation or alludes to the idea that such an explanation is at

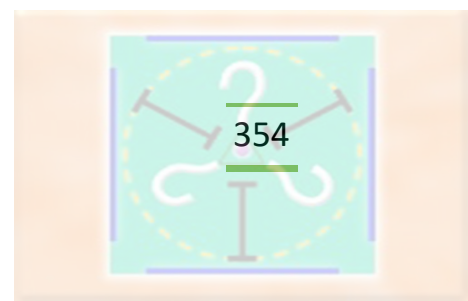


hand. The problem, however, is that key junctures of the would-be explanation are missing, and, as a result one is left with the impression that one has a narrative that is rooted in an understanding of a placebo phenomenon which is known to be real, when, in truth, such an understanding is not present, and using words like “frequency,” “tune-in,” and “information” might serve the narrative but those terms don’t advance a defensible account capable of proving that one possesses a tenable insight into understanding how everything works.

Similarly, David mentions experiments – experiments that I also have read about -- that have been performed which compare the outcomes of surgeries. Some of the surgeries have been done in accordance with standard medical practice for treating certain kinds of injuries, while other instances of surgery involving the same kind of injury and presumed need for surgical repair just use surgery to open up the part of anatomy which has been injured and only pretend to perform surgical-related activities while waiting out the period of time which normally would be required to complete such surgery, and, then, the physicians bring the surgery process to an end as would occur during actual, rather than counterfeit, surgery.

The aforementioned studies indicate that, on average, people who undergo the pseudo-surgery tend to recover from their injuries as well as do those individuals who undergo the “real” surgical procedure. David’s comment with respect to such experiments is: “Everything in all infinite existence is consciousness/awareness interacting with itself.”

Unfortunately, he doesn’t spell out the details of how consciousness/awareness interacts with itself to be able to give expression to the foregoing phenomenon. Nor does he account for why, or how, some people don’t seem to have gotten the memo about the foregoing anomaly and, as a result, don’t appear to benefit from the pseudo-surgery, just as not everyone seems to respond to placebos to the same degree, if at all.



Information Processing

At this point in the discussion, David introduces the topic of crystals and notes that just as crystals have been used in technologies involving transmission and reception of signals, so too, all of the cells in the human body have crystalline elements which are capable of encoding, transmitting, receiving, processing, and decoding the information which is present in the Cosmic Internet or Universe, including frequencies – such as those said to be involved with realities beyond the five senses – that are accessed through the crystalline dimensions of the pineal gland and its alleged relation to the “third eye.” Moreover, biophotons -- which have to do with the manner in which certain aspects of the communication dynamics within organisms seem to be a function of light-related phenomena – have a role to play in the way crystalline elements in cells transmit and receive signals of one kind or another from within or without the organism.

However, contrary to the perspective being advanced by David, the crystalline elements and biophotons that are involved in various modes of communication are not encoding, transmitting, receiving, processing, and decoding information but, instead, are interacting, according to their nature and capabilities, with whatever form of dynamics that is being expressed through a given form of phenomenon, and it is those dynamics (whether biological, quantum, or a function of some other kind of dimensional dynamics) that underwrite what is taking place in any given form of communication, not information.

If David likes, he can use the vocabulary of information-based forms of description to develop a narrative concerning such phenomena. However, one should not confuse the foregoing sort of narrative with that to which the narrative is alluding or making reference.

I agree with Tesla – whom David quotes – when the former individual asserts that the brain is nothing more than a receiver. Unfortunately, David seems to muddy the functional and



ontological waters somewhat when he seeks to expand on Tesla's position by adding: "Consciousness does not come from the brain but through the brain which is a processor of information both from the five senses and consciousness beyond this reality." (Page 29)

To begin with, the brain is not necessarily responsible for processing dimensions of reality that fall outside or beyond the five senses. David mentions a number of chakras that have something to do with engaging such extra-sensory dimensions of reality, and, previously, I have referred to faculties within the human being – but not necessarily within the biological form of the body – such as: The heart, the sirr, the kafi, the aqfah, and the spirit, or ruh – that Sufis believe interact with dimensions of reality beyond those of the five senses.

Secondly, whatever the brain is doing, it is not processing information – although, as noted earlier, the notion of information can be used as a way of trying to describe what the brain appears to be doing. Moreover, whatever the nature of the consciousness is beyond the realms of the five senses, such consciousness is not sending information to the brain, but, rather what is being communicated entails forms of dynamics which are different from the dynamics of the five senses and, therefore, not necessarily capable of being received, processed, or understood by the faculties of the brain.

The 'Observer' and 'Decoder' Effects

David makes a distinction between what he refers to as the "Observer Effect" and the "Decoder Effect." The "Observer Effect" has to do with the belief of some physicists and philosophers that "reality" only occurs when an observer is present to collapse, in one way or another, the wave function which contains the possibilities for what could happen so that reality will be enabled to precipitate or manifest in the particularized form that actually occurs. The "Decoder effect" on the other hand is what takes place when the process of



observation activates the decoding part of the brain which engages the information in the waveform being observed and translates or transduces such information into a detailed, holographic form that constitutes the phenomenological medium of experience.

Allusions are made by David to an experiment conducted in Australia which purportedly demonstrates that the world doesn't exist until it is observed. An obvious question concerning the foregoing perspective is how would one know whether, or not, reality exists if one is not looking at it since every way of attempting to test, measure, or indicate that reality is not present is a form of observing.

Apparently, the experiment being alluded to supposedly shows that a "particle's behavior changes based on what we see." How does one determine that there is some sort of "pre-observational" state that changes through observation if there is no reality prior to observation?

How does one know that observation changes something that, allegedly, does not exist until it is observed? How can one change that which does not exist because an observation has not, yet, been made?

Is this a matter of comparing what the standard model for quantum mechanics predicts for a given set of circumstances with what is empirically observed in the actual circumstances? If so, making a calculation using the standard model concerning expected results is a form of observation.

To calculate the nature of a change, one has to know the condition of something before it changes. If that something doesn't exist before an observation is made, then, what is the nature of the change?

David contends that: "Perceptions of the observer influence the way we decode reality from the information probabilities and possibilities encoded in the Cosmic Internet." (Page 30) However, if there is no reality prior to observation, then, there are no probabilities or possibilities which exist either, and as soon as some sorts of probabilities and possibilities exist, this is



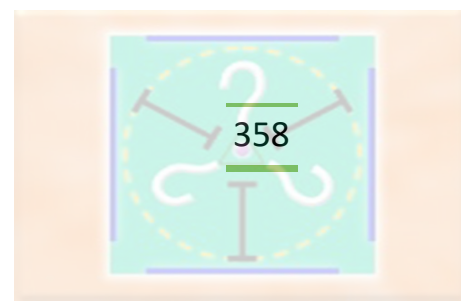
because someone has used the standard model of quantum mechanics to make a calculation, and this constitutes a way of looking at reality through the frames, lenses, and filters of probabilities and possibilities.

Furthermore, although the standard model of quantum dynamics uses possibilities and probabilities to descriptively represent reality, how do we know that reality actually is a function of probabilities and possibilities? Moreover, David claims that: “When we are not ‘looking’ (decoding) then reality is always in a waveform state,” (Page 30) but he doesn’t explain how he knows that reality is a waveform when we aren’t looking at it, and, furthermore, if – as David has indicated in his book – reality doesn’t exist prior to observing it, then, how can waveforms exist prior to observation, that is, when we aren’t looking at them?

In addition, David states that: “... the act of ‘observation’ or focus activates the decoding systems of the body-brain,” but at another point in the same discussion, he also has worded things in a way which seems to indicate that: “‘looking’ (decoding)” (Page 30) are equivalent to one another. In whichever way David might wish to proceed with respect to the relationship between observation and the decoding process, he doesn’t explain what observation actually entails or how it activates the decoding system.

If nothing exists prior to the process of observation, then what makes observation possible? Moreover, if, as David has stated in his book, that observation somehow activates the decoding system, and if nothing exists prior to the act of observation, then, how does observation induce the decoding system to come into existence, and, in addition, one would like to know what it is that an individual is looking at or decoding if nothing exists prior to the act of observation?

David contends that: “Only when we decode waveform information into what is holographic information does the ‘3D’ world that we know appear to us – in our own minds.” (Page 30) However, he does not provide an account of how the sensory process of decoding the dynamics of waveforms (not the



dynamics of “waveform information” to which David alludes) leads to the emergence of a ‘3D’ or holographic phenomenology (not the “holographic information” that David mentions), nor does he offer an explanation for how there can be any degree of intersubjective agreement among people given that, on the one hand, he maintains that observation induces reality to become manifest but, on the other hand, he also indicates that observation has the capacity to change reality.

To contend that observation can change reality as it happens is one thing – a perspective with which many people might agree. To try to maintain that observation changes reality before it becomes manifest is another kettle of fish -- a perspective that leaves one scratching one’s head as one tries to figure out the sort of dynamics that might make such a phenomenon possible.

In passing, David briefly mentions his book *“The Perception Deception”* and stipulates that it is through the manipulation of perception that certain beings seek to control the manner in which human beings go about the perceptual process and, thereby, such an exercise in manipulation places constraints on what can and cannot be understood and, thereby, frames what can be seen, discussed, and understood. He, then, goes on to make approving reference to the work of George Berkeley (1685-1753) and indicates how Bishop Berkeley believed material reality is an illusion and that: “The only things we perceive are our perceptions.”

Although Bishop Berkeley spoke at some length in his writing about why he believed that perceptions are the only reality (a philosophical position which has been embraced as well as critiqued), David doesn’t introduce or develop any of those ideas. So, the question naturally arises: How does the perceptual process produce perceptions and what enables human beings to have the capacity to perceive anything at all?

Irrespective of whether one is talking about “observation,” “decoding,” “information,” or “perception” the problems are the same. What makes any of these capacities possible and how did such capacities come into being and to what extent is it possible to establish some sort of intersubjective agreement by means of



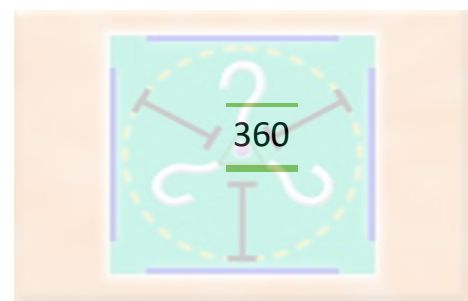
such capacities amongst different observers, decoders, or perceivers?

One could agree with David's perspective that one way to control what a given person thinks or believes is to manipulate or control the way in which such an individual is permitted to engage the perceptual process. Nonetheless, over, at least, the last 5-6,000 years there have been a multiplicity of philosophical, religious, mystical, political, scientific, economic, mythological, artistic, literary, and historical perspectives that have been advanced which offer different possibilities for how one should go about observing, decoding, or perceiving reality, and, therefore, one would like to know why one should suppose that David's perspective is, somehow, the correct way to engage the issues of observing, decoding, or perceiving the nature of reality?

Andrew Truscott's Observation Experiment

David refers to the previously mentioned: "your entire life is an illusion" research of Professor Andrew Truscott in Australia and indicates that the foregoing experiment seems to demonstrate that when one does a variation of the John Wheeler double-slit test one can show that an atom does not necessarily travel from point A to point B in the way that one might suppose because a measurement at the end of the atom's journey apparently has the capacity to alter the character of the dynamic (i.e., whether it is traveling as a particle or as a wave) that an atom seems to follow before reaching the point of measurement, but a dynamic whose nature apparently was only determined after the measurement was made.

The scattering dimension of the original double-slit experiment performed by Wheeler has been replaced by a number of laser beams in the Truscott experiment. Two of the laser beams are counter-propagating (meaning that they move in opposite directions), while another laser beam is controlled by a random number generator.

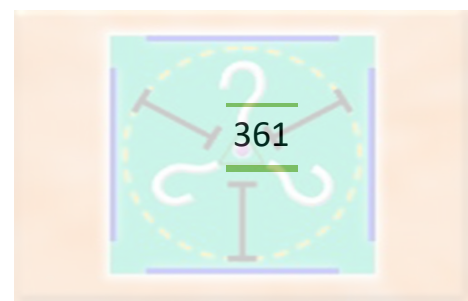


If the random-number laser beam is active, then conditions are created in conjunction with the counter-propagating laser beams that, collectively, are capable of inducing patterns of interference which can give rise to wave-like behavior in which an atom would seem to have gone through multiple paths simultaneously on the atom's way to its destination or point of measurement. On the other hand, if the laser beam controlled by the random-number generator is not active, then conditions will exist that give rise to particle-like behavior – i.e., as if the atom followed only a single path toward its destination or point of measurement.

However, the random-number controlled laser beam is only generated after the measurement has been made at the end of the atom's journey. This aspect of the experiment gives rise to the possibility that it is the measurement process which is determining whether, or not, the conditions for interference are, or are not, present.

One alternative possibility to consider with respect to the Truscott experiment is whether, or not, the measurement process is entangled, in any way, with the random-number generator. If it were, and the nature of the entanglement were substantial enough, then, the measurement that takes place at the termination point might have a determinate sort of shaping impact on the kind of result that is produced by the random-number generator.

If the foregoing possibility were the case, then, the measurement process hasn't altered the nature of the atom's behavior but, instead, the measurement process involves an entanglement dynamic which has the capacity to induce a random-number generator outcome that is consistent with the nature of the measurement. In a sense, the measurement or observation would have entrained the dynamics of the random-number generator to give rise to a process that resonates with or reflects the dynamics of the observation or measurement process (a form of the previously mentioned notion of "frequency following behavior").



Considered individually, elementary particles and even atoms might have a certain amount of 'instability' as far as which modality of dynamic – particle or wave properties -- will be given expression on any given occasion. Circumstances might induce them to become manifest in one way rather than the other, or, alternatively, on their own, maybe, sometimes whatever algorithmic dynamic makes the manifested behavior of the elementary particle or atom possible will, like an unpredictable coin-flip, give expression to one dimension of possibility rather than another (i.e., wave or particle).

When, however, one is dealing with a complex setting – such as exists in the experiment conducted by Professor Truscott – it might be that all of the components of that experiment set in motion an array of chaotic attractor basins that are, sometimes, capable of inducing: Elementary particles, or atoms which have been isolated, or coherent beams of light, or random-number generators to behave according to the properties of those attractor basins that are created during the experiment and, conceivably, different dimensions of the experiment might come under the influence of such attractor basin dynamics. Thus, when a coherent light beam whose appearance or non-appearance in the experiment is a function of a random-number generator which triggers what will happen in conjunction with the laser beam only after a measurement has been made, then, perhaps, the random-number generator is sometimes – maybe even frequently -- subject, for unknown reasons, to being affected by the dynamics of a measurement process, and, therefore, even though the random-number generator only releases its determining algorithm for whether a laser beam will turn on or off after a measurement has been made, it could be the chaotic attractor basin dynamic generated by the process of measurement which interferes with the random-number generator and entrains the latter, by way of the dynamics of the chaotic attractor basin which is generated by the measurement process, to produce a result that is consistent with the nature of the measurement that has been made. If one is willing to contemplate the possibility of a measurement being able to alter (through means that we do not understand and after the fact)



the way an atom behaves (allegedly, before the fact of measurement), then, why not be willing to contemplate the possibility that dynamic processes involving measurements and random-number generators might be entangled in some way that we do not understand and that what might have been altered is not the behavior of an atom but the performance of a random-number generator?

Random-number generators are only considered random because we don't know or can't predict the algorithms that will be used to produce a given outcome. If an entanglement dynamic affected the way a random-number generator operates but did so in a manner that escaped the ability of a researcher to detect or predict, then, to a researcher, the random-number generator would still appear to be operating "randomly" (it really is a pseudo-form of randomness) even though the device was caught up in a process in which its algorithms were being affected in a causally determinate manner.

Another facet of the set-up in the Truscott experiment has to do with hermeneutical assessments concerning whether, or not, nothing really exists until the measurement or observation takes place. If an observation or measurement really does have the capacity to alter the path that a particle takes or be able to affect whether a given entity will behave like a particle or like a wave, then, if nothing exists prior to the observation or measurement, how does the observation or measurement create the qualitative and quantitative properties that are being captured in the process of measurement? On the other hand, if there is no reality prior to measurement or observation, then, in what way can one say that something is being altered as a result of the measurement?

A further possibility to reflect upon is the following consideration. When one encounters a seeming paradox like the idea that a given dimension of reality can be said to have the capacity to be able to manifest two kinds of phenomena that appear to be mutually exclusive (as is the case with the notions of particles and waves), then, this might be an indication that we don't properly understand such phenomena and, therefore, we



are confronted with a situation which highlights the need for the right kind of insight and discovery to occur before we will come to the point of grasping how there can be a dimension of reality that, depending on circumstances, can be manifested in seemingly contradictory ways.

In other words, perhaps, there is some facet of reality which, presently, is hidden from us or that we do not quite see or understand, but when we engage the issue from the appropriate vantage point, then, what appears contradictory is understood not to be contradictory. This might be similar to what is said to be happening with some people who, after reflecting, for some time, on a kōan that has been introduced to challenge the way in which an individual goes about conceptually framing experience, and, then, suddenly, the person, arrives at, or is brought to, an insight which enables the individual to become open to how the resolve, or learn from, the apparent contradictions that appeared to be entailed by the kōan.

What is paradoxical about reality is not necessarily the nature of reality. Rather, what might be paradoxical is the way in which we try to methodologically engage reality and the problems which such a methodology creates for being able to come to a proper understanding of a given issue.

When electrons engage, or are engaged by, a magnetic field they behave in a way which is similar to what happens in the classical world when certain kinds of charged objects have rotation and, out of such a context, a magnetic field emerges. Physicists began to use the term spin to describe the behavior of elementary particles which were being deflected by a magnetic field, but the property of “spin” that is manifested in elementary particles gives expression to a form of angular momentum that has some anomalous features and, consequently, if one pushes the idea of spin far enough, the analogy between, say, electrons and charged rotating body breaks down and one cannot really say that the electron is spinning ... but, nevertheless, the notion of ‘spin’ continued to be used.

A similar sort of situation exists in conjunction with the movement of electrons in relation to the nucleus with which



they are associated. Many people speak of electrons as orbiting the nucleus of an atom, much like planets orbit a star, but no one actually knows how electrons move with respect to such nuclei because there are a variety of quantum rules or constraints governing what electrons can and can't do while in "orbit" that undermine the notion that electrons move according to some sort of continuous, smooth movement similar to that of a planet orbiting a star, and as a result, although precise answers can be given for where an electron will end up in a given set of circumstances, exactly how the electron gets to where it eventually shows up is mired in a cloud of unknowing.

Nonetheless, many people continue to speak of electrons as if they orbited the nucleus like planets orbit the sun even though this sort of dynamic notion is inconsistent with many other aspects of an electron's behavior. So, like the 'spin' notion associated with, say, electrons which has continued to be used despite the problems associated with such an idea in relation to the quantum properties of an electron, the concept of electron's having planet-like orbits has stuck despite being inconsistent with respect to a variety of other behavioral properties that electrons exhibit in relation to a given nucleus.

Similar to the terms "spin" and "orbit" in conjunction with, say, electrons, the language of "particle" and "waves" lingers on even as experimental results indicate that many phenomena on the quantum level cannot be reduced to an either/or sort of dichotomy. Something else, of an unknown nature, is going on – just as something else of an unknown nature is going on with respect to the notions of "spin" and "orbit" – but we continue to use language that entails problems of one kind or another.

Reality – whatever it turns out to be – is not obligated to conform to the way we use language. Rather, the language we use should conform with, and reflect, the way in which reality actually is, but as Ludwig Wittgenstein indicated nearly a hundred years ago, the language games we play are often at the heart of many philosophical – and scientific – problems.

The Qur'an states: "What is there after the Real, save error? (10:32)" Language, concepts, and perceptions are the ways in



which error is often introduced into our attempts to seek the truth concerning the nature of our relationship with Reality, because like “spin,” “orbit,” “particle,” and “wave,” there comes a point when the terms of language often lose their usefulness in explicating the nature of reality and, instead, begin to give rise to various kinds of difficulties.

Our: Senses, languages, and concepts, are entry points through which to pursue the search for the truth concerning the nature of our relationship with Reality or Being. However, as David’s brief discussion of chakras indicated earlier in the first chapter of *Everything You Need To Know But Have Never Been Told* and as my earlier, brief allusions to the Sufi perspective concerning the inner faculties of the heart, sirr, kafi, aqfah, and spirit indicated, there might be inner dimensions of human capacity concerning knowing and grasping different facets of our relationship with Reality or Being that extend beyond senses, languages, and concepts.

There is nothing in the Truscott Australian experiment in quantum physics which demonstrates that reality does not exist as long as it is not observed. What, perhaps, that experiment did show is there appears to be something taking place in such experiments that we don’t understand and, consequently, claiming that the foregoing experiment proves that things don’t exist outside of observation or measurement could be premature.

David, himself, posited the idea of an Infinite Awareness that entails All-Possibility and All-Potential, and, therefore, just as Bishop Berkeley proposed that it was God’s Conscious Presence which served as the Source of Constancy for the many realities which individual human perception might lose track of, or which human beings do not necessarily see, or which they might not comprehend, so too, one could argue that Infinite Awareness provides a backdrop of Constant Perception in which human beings participate to varying degrees, and, therefore, one cannot necessarily claim that reality does not exist unless it is observed or measured by a human being, but one might wish to say that



the methods we use to engage reality often shape how we understand what is being observed or measured.

Professor Truscott can't explain why his experiment works in the way it does. To say that reality doesn't exist independently of our observation or measurement might make sense on one level, but proceeding in this manner on all levels tends to open up a lot of potential problems as well.

For example consider the following possibility. One has a lab. One runs an experiment. One writes up the experiment on the lab's computer, and, then, one leaves the lab.

Apparently, according to Professor Truscott, once one leaves the lab, the experiment, the write-up, and the computer no longer exist because they are not being observed. The only trace of such events is in one's memory, and as soon as one begins to think about something else, such memories disappear, and, then, presumably, such memories no longer exist because they are not being observed, and, given that they no longer exist, then, how do such memories get re-generated when one wishes to start thinking about ... what was it now?

Continuing on, in accordance with the "logic" of the conclusion that appears to have been reached in the Truscott experiment, if, after leaving the lab, one becomes occupied with one's family – who, until one observed them, apparently didn't exist because one was preoccupied with the experiment and, as a result, didn't think about them, and, if one is not thinking about – that is observing – one's family, then, according to the perspective being given expression in Professor Truscott's interpretation of the aforementioned experiment, one's family has no reality. Finally, keeping to the logic of the Truscott way of parsing his experiment, if -- after going home to a house that, somehow, was just brought into existence by one's perceptions or observations – one decides to go out for supper, then, apparently, the restaurant doesn't actually come into existence until one's perceptions somehow are able to bring the restaurant, the staff, the customers, the food, and the bill into existence through the act of observation.



One goes back to work the next day and re-creates the lab that had ceased to exist the minute one shut the door to it previously. A question which one might ask with respect to the lab is: Has anything changed?

Have one's observations somehow altered what is, now, being perceived? Is one now dealing with a mini-Mandela Effect in which something that one previously believed to be true is, now, no longer the case according to the observational capabilities of memory which, apparently, did not exist when not being experienced?

Okay, one participated in a rather complex experiment which, apparently, was able to generate effects that induced the experimenter to conclude that there might be occasions in which, on some level, what is considered to be a concrete form of reality is, instead, a function of observation and measurement and which will not come into existence unless a certain kind of measurement or observation is present. But, despite running the same experiment a number of times, the experimenter can't figure out how observation generates what is observed or brings into existence that which is observed or brings into existence that which leads to the manifestation of the properties of a given observational state, and, consequently, one begins to wonder what actually is taking place or took place.

The topic of memory, touched on earlier, can help illustrate the nature of some of the wonderment that takes place in relation to the foregoing kinds of issues. More specifically, if one is not observing a memory, then, supposedly, according to David and the researchers in Australia, such a memory no longer exists.

If it no longer exists, then, how does one re-create a memory that does not exist so that it can reflect -- more or less (in a non-Mandela Effect manner) -- what other people are able to re-create in a similar fashion as they also bring forth such "memories" from the realm of non-existence. Yet, memories are brought into conscious awareness for much of each day by billions of individuals in a way that often can be intersubjectively corroborated in conjunction with other people



in relation to what happened in such-and-such a manner, at such-and-such time, in such-and-such a location, having such-and-such properties and characteristics.

The problem of: Explaining how memories don't exist as long as we don't "recall" them, and that such a "recall" process is not really a matter of recalling something but appears – based on the Professor Truscott experiment -- to involve inventing the phenomenology of a memory whole cloth as a result of the ability of some dimension within us to be able to use unknown "materials" and dynamics to generate the details of a memory that before the instance of "recall" or observation, didn't exist, is a variation on the problem of trying to explain how seemingly "physical/material" realities which are out of sight and mind do not actually exist – according to the logic of the Truscott interpretation of his experiment -- but, somehow apparently, we are able to instantaneously create such "realities" – down to the quantum level -- upon observing "something" that does not actually exist but is brought into existence through the dynamics of observation, measurement, or perception.

If one cannot provide a defensible, intelligible account for how the process of observation brings into manifested existence whatever is observed, then, what justifies Professor Truscott claiming that the conclusion: 'reality doesn't exist until it is observed' constitutes the correct understanding of the Australian version of the Wheeler double-slit experiment. Acknowledging that an Australian variation of the Wheeler double-slit experiment produces results which indicate that something strange is taking place for which we don't necessarily have any ready, irrefutable explanation is one thing. However, claiming the foregoing experiment proves that some facet of reality does not exist until such a facet is observed leads one down a problematic cul-de-sac in which one is faced with the problem of trying to come up with an explanation for how observation enables reality to make the transition from non-existence to manifested existence for absolutely every facet of human experience, and this seems to be quite another matter altogether.



Moreover, even if one were to accept the idea that a particular dimension of reality doesn't exist under certain circumstances until it is observed, then, how does one know that what can be shown to be the case on the level of quantum events -- under specialized Australian laboratory conditions involving: Near-absolute zero temperatures, Einstein-Bose condensates, lasers, a random-number generator, and a measuring device of some kind -- necessarily carries over to what will happen in relation to events on the non-quantum level of classical phenomena involving the possibilities that: Labs which one exits, nonetheless, continue to exist while not being worked in and observed; or, that families which have not been thought about while one is working might also continue to exist even though they are not being observed when one is not thinking about them; or, that one might not have to manufacture, by means of observation, a restaurant, staff, food, and so on every time one goes out to eat?

Quantum physicists have never arrived at any sense of consensus with respect to how to plausibly resolve the problem of making the transition from: (a) The quantum level with all of its strange properties involving "spin," "orbits," "entities that can manifest both wave-like and particle-like behavior", and so on, to: (b) The classical level of every-day phenomenology in which quantum weirdness does not appear to be present and, therefore, those elements of weirdness have, in some sense, been smoothed out or constrained in a manner that appears to have some resonance, at least to a degree, with the way in which infinities become renormalized and removed from various quantum calculations as the discussion shifts its focus from the quantum/mathematical realm to the classical world.

The choice with which we appear to be confronted is between, on the one hand, (1) having just one kind of problem to resolve or explain -- namely, the anomalous result of the Australian Truscott experiment -- and, on the other hand, (2) having trillions of problems to resolve or explain because if one accepts Truscott's interpretation of his own experiment -- namely, that reality does not exist until it is observed -- then,

one must find a way to explain how observation generates realities that did not exist prior to the observation ... in other words, one must explain how every observation made by human beings brings into existence that which is being observed.

David Icke can, if he wishes, claim, along with Professor Truscott, that the latter's experiment demonstrates that reality does not exist until it is observed. This is one of the possible choices to which expression is being given in the foregoing paragraph.

Nonetheless, such a choice is not devoid of an array of problems involving the issue of explanation (some of which have been noted in the previous discussion) for which neither David nor Professor Truscott appear to have any plausible, intelligible responses. The existence of these sorts of unresolved problems constitutes, in and of themselves, a credible reason for not being inclined to accept the conclusion at which David has arrived concerning the alleged nature of the relationship among: Observation, the Truscott experiment, and the nature of Reality, Being, or Existence.

One can acknowledge the various features of the Truscott experiment -- including the strange, anomalous nature of the relationship between observation and whether, or not, the random-number generated laser beam has been turned on or left off following the occurrence of the measurement or observation. Nonetheless, there is nothing in the Truscott experiment which seems to necessitate accepting the idea, as a general principle governing all levels of existence, that reality doesn't exist until observation has taken place, either in relation to the quantum events or in relation to what transpires on the classical level of every-day 'reality.'

Reality might not operate in the way we think it does, and research, such as the Professor Truscott experiment, might generate results that challenge how we think about reality, but the existence of anomalous findings -- such as the ones that are present in the Truscott experiment -- do not necessarily force one to suppose that reality is functionally dependent on



observation or measurement – especially if there are other ways of thinking about, understanding, or interpreting those kinds of results (and the previous discussion has offered a number of possibilities in this regard). On the other hand, what is observed might very well depend on how our methods of observation, as well as our ways of hermeneutically engaging or perceiving those methods, tend to: Frame, filter, shape, orient, and even limit how one thinks about or perceives the nature of reality.

Collapsing the Wave Function

David Icke claims that waves appear to collapse into particles when the former are observed due to the process of decoding that is taking place through the dynamics of perception which brings together the mind and energetic information. However, the waves that collapse are not physical waves but mathematical ones.

In 1925, Erwin Schrödinger developed a partial differential wave function that takes into consideration measurements involving the position, momentum, mass, energy, spin and time associated with a given elementary particle in order to be able to generate a quantity which is descriptive of the state of a given elementary particle as it evolves or dynamically unfolds in the context of a particular time and space. The year after the foregoing function became known in the physics world, Max Born proposed that Schrödinger's wave equation might best be understood as providing a way to predict the probability that a given outcome of the wave function would occur in a given observation or measurement, and, therefore, the so-called collapse of the wave function describes a wave of probability rather than a physical wave.

The Born rule – the proposal that the Schrödinger wave function is about the probability of finding a particular outcome in a given experiment, measurement, or observation – is what actually ties quantum theory to the empirical properties of real-world experiments. However, there is no underlying



mathematical theory which can show one how to derive the Born rule from the Schrödinger wave function or to derive the latter from the Born rule, and, consequently, the Born rule is a felicitous, intuitive heuristic that, for unknown reasons, provides the Schrödinger wave function with its *raison d'être* and, therefore, effective usefulness.

The Born-oriented Schrödinger wave function is not about waves or particles, *per se*. Instead, it provides a way of calculating the probability that a given set of measurements will evolve in one way rather than another. So, when David claims that waves will appear to collapse into particles as a result of observation, he appears to be conflating different facets of quantum theory.

Furthermore, when David talks about the process of perception which brings together energetic information and the mind through the dynamic of decoding, one has a little difficulty trying to figure out what he actually means. For instance, at this point of his discussion (Page 32) he uses the term “mind” when, earlier in the chapter, he tended to use the word “brain”, and while he might believe that the mind and brain are equivalent to one another, there are many individuals who might wish to distinguish the brain and the mind even though the two concepts might be considered to be related to one another in various ways.

In addition, one wonders what might be meant by the notion of “energetic information”. Moreover, one also might question exactly how the process of focused observation brings mind and energetic information together through the dynamic of decoding.

Observation or perception involves more than sensory dynamics. In fact, there is considerable evidence to indicate that beliefs, values, interests, biases, assumptions, and expectations can all impact, and alter in certain ways, what the senses see as the former act as frames, filters, and lens through which the sensory capabilities of an individual engage ‘the world.’

Although there are times in which what is sensed comes from a dimension of an individual that is due to something other

(e.g., intuition, unveiling, insight) than being a function of sensory representation concerning the world being engaged, more often than not, however, decoding tends to be an interpretive process. Even if one were to suppose that our senses grasp the world in an unsullied – although, perhaps, limited – fashion, nevertheless, our theories, beliefs, motivations, emotions, needs, commitments begin to infiltrate sensory information and introduce various kinds of distorting forces that shape how we understand what we are supposedly sensing.

Consequently, when one says that observation collapses the wave function, what exactly is one saying? How does observation collapse the wave function? What is the nature of the observational dynamic? What is the nature of the relationship between observation and perception?

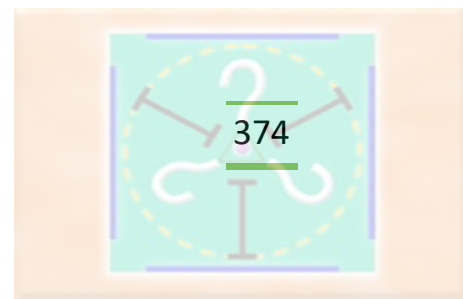
Is observation wholly a construct of the mind/brain? Or, are there elements which the world presents to our perceptual dynamics that are engaged and transformed in certain ways that do not necessarily remove all traces of what the world was presenting to the observer.

How much distortion is introduced into the dynamics of perception by the brain and/or mind? Is David's description of what transpires during the process of decoding an accurate reflection of what occurs, or is it a narrative of sorts which mixes together things which might be true with things that might not be true?

David's perspective lacks a considerable amount of detail at this point. Moreover, the manner in which his perspective is being delineated (i.e., the language being used) makes trying to figure out what he actually is saying difficult.

He does say that the outcome of the decoding process "depends on the perceptions and state of mind of the observer." (Page 32) Unfortunately, he doesn't unpack the detailed nature of that dependency.

David also states that: "Everything is waves. The Cosmic Internet is a waveform energetic information construct that



provides an information blueprint for what we call the world.” (Page 32) However, he offers no proof that everything is, in fact, waves.

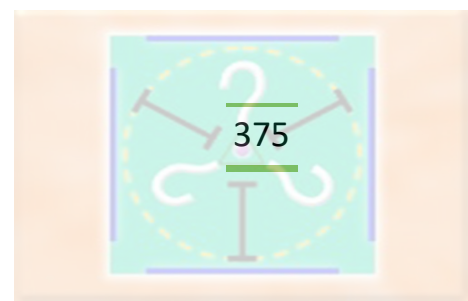
He does provide a number of quotations from various individuals who say things that are similar to what he is saying. Nonetheless, putting forth such quotes does not serve as proof of much of anything except that certain individuals perceive Reality, Being, or Existence in linguistic terms that are similar to the ones which David uses.

Holographs

In passing, David mentions Michael Talbot’s book, *The Holographic Universe*. David considers the foregoing work to constitute a persuasive way of organizing the work of a lot of individuals who David considers to be “open-minded” researchers that all seem to be conceptually pointing in the direction of the idea that “physical reality is really a holographic illusion.”

A holograph emerges from a process or dynamic in which a light that has been directed toward an object of some kind and is, subsequently (i.e., following its interaction with the target object), brought together with a coherent reference wave of light, and, then, the dynamics of the interaction of the two beams of light are recorded as a field of interference patterns which, when appropriately decoded by the coherent light of a laser, can generate a three-dimensional re-configuration of the original object that is capable of being rotated and viewed from almost any visual orientation one cares to choose.

There are several dimensions to a holograph. On the one hand, there is the field of interference patterns which is created (and recorded) as a function of the way in which a beam of light that has engaged some given object or objects is permitted to interact with a reference wave of coherent light that has not encountered that same object. On the other hand, there are: The units of laser technology; the objects being engaged by light; the



material/mechanical/reflective elements that enable the object light to interact with a reference wave, and a disc or medium that is capable of registering the interference patterns that are created when the object wave and the reference wave are brought together.

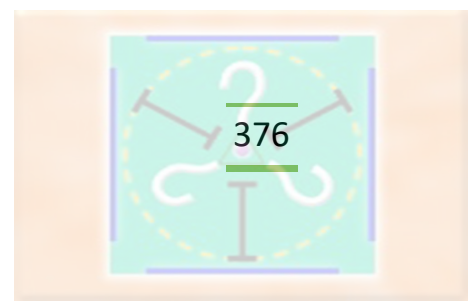
The notion of a “holographic illusion” alludes to only the final field of interference patterns that is being generated during the recording stage of the dynamic of holography. The “holographic illusion” presupposes a reality of some kind that is capable of generating such an illusion when a coherent light source transforms the interference patterns into a visual re-creation of the original object.

If we exist in a holographic universe, then what is the nature of the “technology” that makes the illusion of a universe possible? What is the nature of the “reality” that is capable of generating the images of a universe that seem real but are not?

David proceeds to provide an anecdote from the Michael Talbot book in which the father of the author had organized a gathering of friends to which the father had invited a hypnotist. At a certain point during the gathering, the hypnotist placed one of the people who was present at the gathering in a hypnotic trance and, then, gave that person a post-hypnotic suggestion which stipulated that the individual in the trance would not be able to see his own daughter when awakened from the hypnotic state.

The person was brought out of one aspect of the trance and awakened. However, the individual was still in some facet of the trance because when his daughter was standing in front of him and he was asked if he could see her, he said he did not see his daughter.

When the hypnotist placed his own hand in the lower part of the girl’s back when she was standing in front of her father and asked once more whether, or not, the person who previously had been hypnotized could see his daughter, he said: “No” again and when asked what he did see, the man said that he saw a watch, and when asked to read the inscription on the watch on



the hypnotist's wrist that was hidden behind the girl's body, the father gave the inscription that was on the watch.

The foregoing anecdote conveys an interesting story, but its connection with the issue of a holographic universe is a little fuzzy. David doesn't say where the inscription appeared on the watch, although one might presume that it would have been on the exterior of the watch casing, on the underside of that casing opposite the watch face.

If so, then the inscription was not only blocked from the father's view by the body of his daughter, but, as well was either also blocked by the wrist of the hypnotist, as well as, was blocked by the face of the watch casing, or, depending on how the watch was positioned on the wrist of the hypnotist, the inscription on the watch might have been blocked by just the watch casing. Whichever of the foregoing possibilities might have been the case, I'm not familiar with any holograph in which one would be able to see what had not been engaged by the object beam of light during the process of holography, and, seemingly, the inscription on the underside of the watch casing would not have been exposed to light -- not only because of the watch face but, as well because the body (at least in the form of a wrist and perhaps more) of the hypnotist and the body of the man's daughter would have been shielding the underside of the watch from being exposed to light.

How did the man who had been hypnotized know what was inscribed on the watch that had been placed behind his daughter's back? This is a good question, but, I'm not sure the answer has much to do with holography.

Furthermore, even if the previous story did have something to do with holography, the – let us assume -- holographic image through which the hypnotized man was viewing the world, was created how? What sort of "reality" is making such an illusion possible?

Is a holographic image an illusion? If what is shown is what was intended to be seen, in what sense is it an illusion?



The holograph is not giving a misleading or false impression of something. In fact, notwithstanding the limitations of the holographic process, the holographic image is revealing or presenting as much of the original object as the holograph has the capacity to reveal or present, and, in this sense, and as far as it goes, the holographic image reflects certain aspects of reality rather than constituting an illusory depiction of that which it is referencing.

The holograph is more detailed, and permits one to see more aspects of an object or scene, than does a photograph, and, yet, most people don't consider the photograph to be an illusion. Moreover, both the holograph and the photograph presuppose the existence of a technology that is capable of enabling someone to translate one set of objects into a different set of objects which reflect -- to varying degrees of accuracy depending on the quality of the technology -- the character of that which is being translated into another medium.

If one wishes to refer to the universe as a holographic object, then do so. But, when doing so, be sure to describe the technology or realities that make such an object possible.

Are quarks, gluons, the weak force, electromagnetism, gravitation, and the Higgs field a holographic rendering of something? If so, what is being rendered?

The Sufis write about and discuss the 'way' – each form of mysticism has its own vocabulary and idiosyncratic manner of giving expression to this 'way' ["To everyone, We have appointed a Law and a way (Qur'an, 5:48)] -- in which there are, as previously noted, fixed forms of possibility referred to as "ayn al-thabita" which are brought to the condition of being manifested phenomena through the command of "Qun" or "Be" and which are provided with qualitative and quantitative properties as the lights of the Names of God are directed to shine through those forms and animate them. This created holographic-like reality is both illusory and not-illusory in the sense that while, on the one hand, it is what it appears to be and has, within certain limits, a substantial reality that can be engaged in a variety of ways and is associated with an array of



possible, realizable ramifications, nonetheless, on the other hand, that created reality is also tiered and, as such, one level has the capacity to conceal or hide deeper or higher realities, and in this latter sense, created reality does have the capacity to be illusory and, therefore, lead astray those who have been induced to allow themselves to be misled by, or limited to, the phenomena that take place on a given level of Being.

In the Qur'an one finds the following words: "We created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in play. (44:38)" However, God also indicates: "The life of the world is but a pastime and a game. Lo! The home of the hereafter – that is life, if they but knew. (29:64)" So, existence has both illusory and non-illusory dimensions.

On page 35 of *Everything You Need to Know But Have Never Been Told* David says: "... the Universe is a digital hologram and, as such, had to have been created by some form of intelligence." Irrespective of whether, or not, one considers the Universe to be a digital hologram and putting aside the issue of what, exactly, one means by the notion of the Universe, nevertheless, one might be willing to agree with David that whatever made the phenomenal world possible is a form of intelligence and not the result of a random set of events.

Simulation And Virtuality

David goes on to state: "... We live in the equivalent of a computer simulation like the one portrayed in the *Matrix* movies. ... I use the term 'computer' but what controls the simulation is far beyond anything we would perceive as a computer." (Page 35) Since David has spent a fair amount of time in the first chapter of the aforementioned book pointing out the computer-like properties of different facets of Reality (and I have spent a fair amount of time questioning those efforts), one is more than a little surprised to see him jettison the computer concept and just state that the way in which the



Universe is controlled is through a dynamic that is far beyond anything that one would consider to be a computer.

A writer can certainly use and develop analogies to try to explain issues that are not necessarily easily understood. Nevertheless, when a writer, initially spends time developing and employing such analogies – as David does in relation to the issue of computers -- and, then, proceeds to indicate that the foregoing analogy might not actually be all that relevant to the way in which things work – as David appears to be doing now -- one tends to become a little confused about the precise nature of the writer’s perspective.

David also has begun using the term “simulation” in conjunction with the notion of a “holograph”. Irrespective of which word is used, there is some sort of reality to which the words are alluding that makes the holograph or simulation possible.

The term “simulation” is often used in conjunction with the systems, frameworks, and networks that are constructed through computer programming as ways of modeling various aspects of the world or lived-experience. However, given David’s previous statement indicating that he would like to move away from likening the dynamics of different aspects of the “Cosmic Internet” to the operations of a computer, then, presumably, the notion of simulation is alluding to something else.

What is being simulated? Well, if the world is illusory, then, presumably, what is being simulated is, in some sense, “reality” or, at least, an individual is being induced to treat the simulation as being real, but, if there is nothing about the simulation that simulates some form of substantial reality, then, the simulation would not seem to actually be a simulation of something. Instead, it appears to just be an illusion of some kind in which one, or more, individuals appear to have become lost.

Rather than being a simulation, what David seems to be alluding to might be some form of virtual reality ... that is, he seems to be alluding to a form of “reality” which is apparent to the senses in the form of phenomenological experiences but is



not, in any way, independent of those manufactured sensory, emotional, and conceptual experiences. In fact, what David appears to be alluding to seems to be more akin to some sort of hypnotic state in which “reality” becomes a function of the directives which are being given to a subject by a hypnotist and in this respect resonates with the hypnosis anecdote that David gave when talking about Michael Talbot’s book, *The Holographic Universe*.

Similarly, when considering David’s discussion of holographs, one wonders what the “object” is which is being re-created in the form of a holograph that is not actually the real ‘thing’ but only a ghostly and limited rendition of that “object”? The matrix, to which the aforementioned title of the movie refers, is not a holograph but seems, instead, to give expression to a medium that constructs -- and, thereby, controls -- what people can sense, think, and feel

Can one generate a holograph of something that does not actually exist? The holodeck of Star Trek fame is not actually a generator of holographs but gives expression to virtual reality programs that are so detailed, concrete, consequential, and life-like that one can’t tell if one is dealing with an imagined reality or one is dealing with something that is not some sort of virtual, transient, terminable, programmed creation.

David tries to use the language of ‘simulations’ and ‘holographs’ to develop his perspective. However, just as David wants to distance himself somewhat from the computer analogy that, earlier in the first chapter of his book, had been used to illustrate various points, I’m not sure that the notions of either “simulation” or “holograph” will be able to satisfactorily explain what he seems to be alluding to – namely, an intelligence that controls how we experience, frame, and understand our existence and does so in a way that transcends anything that might be considered to be computer-like in nature.



Holographic Reality

Over the course of a number of pages, David explores different aspects of holography. He begins his discussion by referencing a number of articles in mainstream journals such as: *New Scientist*, in the UK, and *Scientific American*, in the United States. David describes how the articles to which he is alluding explore the idea that human beings could be holographs.

He also alludes to a 2017 article which covers the work of some researchers from England, Canada, and Italy who, allegedly, "... had found substantial evidence that we are part of a massive illusion akin to watching a 3D movie projected from a 2D screen." (Page 37) Unfortunately, David doesn't say what the nature of the foregoing evidence is, and, moreover, just because several other mainstream science magazines (noted earlier) have featured articles concerning the possibility that human beings are holographic in nature doesn't necessarily confirm anything more than that a number of people are entertaining similar possibilities.

David proceeds to point out how his own perspective concerning the foregoing topic departs from so-called holographic "orthodoxy" since he believes that the holographic universe is not an external phenomenon, but, instead, only comes into being within the mind when human beings decode waveform information being streamed through the Cosmic Internet. Consequently, according to David, the "Universe is not a hologram," (Page 37) but, instead, constitutes waveform information which the mind decodes into phenomenological experience that gives expression to the actual hologram.

Once again, one should note that no evidence, demonstration, or arguments are presented during David's discussion concerning the material involving holograms which might induce one to be persuaded by what he is saying. He might be right, but as things stand, all he has accomplished is to put forth declarative sentences that need to be corroborated in some way.



Furthermore, although David maintains that the universe is nothing but waveform information, he provides no evidence to demonstrate that his claim is true. In addition, he does not offer any sort of discussion which offers an explanation as to how the decoding process that, supposedly, takes place in the mind (brain??) is able to generate a hologram.

David does mention, in passing, some Japanese research that has been able to produce holograms which “you can appear to touch” (Page 38) without elaborating on what might be meant by the idea of being able to “appear to touch” something. In addition, David also refers to some thoughts of a Professor Skenderis who feels that the progress which has been made in generating holographic reality is so revolutionary that it might provide insights into how to reconcile quantum dynamics and general relativity (gravitation), and, then, David moves on to note how some scientists at Ibaraki University in Japan have “found compelling evidence that the Universe is a holographic projection” (Page 38) – without mentioning what the nature of such compelling evidence is -- before switching gears and commenting that he has been making all of the foregoing points for more than fifteen years.

None of the possibilities that are mentioned by David demonstrate how the universe consists of nothing but waveforms, nor do any of the mentioned possibilities show how the mind (brain??) generates holograms within itself through the process of decoding waveform information. Moreover, if anything, David has just muddied the conceptual waters a little bit because one page earlier in his book he was saying that the “Universe is not a hologram,” and, now, he is referencing to research in Japan which, allegedly, entails “compelling evidence that the Universe is a holographic projection,” and, then, he indicates that he has been advancing precisely these kinds of ideas for some 15 years.

So, what is actually the case? Is the Universe a hologram or not, and irrespective of which side of the argument David might, ultimately, wish to take, what is the nature of the evidence that is capable of demonstrating that either the Universe is a



holographic projection or that the mind generates a hologram within itself?

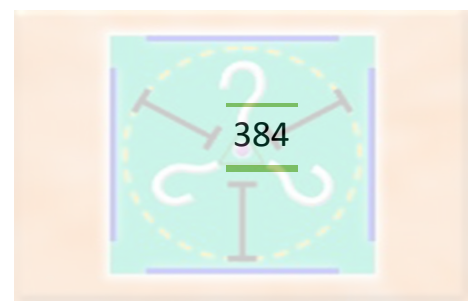
Next, David touches on an amazing feature of holographs which involves their capacity to be broken down into smaller and smaller pieces and, yet – despite a certain loss of resolution – each of the smaller pieces is still able to give expression to the whole of whatever object or scene had been holographically recorded earlier. He follows up on the foregoing property by claiming that skilled acupuncturists and palm readers are able to “see,” or access, the whole through engaging certain, limited aspects of that whole, and, then, he asserts that this is possible “because the body is a hologram. (Page 38)”

What enables skilled acupuncturists and palm readers to do, what they do (to whatever extent they are able to do it), is up for debate. Citing the fact that (1) holographs can be broken down into smaller and smaller pieces and, yet, those pieces can still recreate the whole, and, then, (2) juxtaposing that fact next to declarative statements concerning the activities of skilled acupuncturists and palm readers, and, then, (3) concluding that what connects the second statement with the first one is that the body is a hologram because skilled acupuncturists and palm readers couldn't do what they do if the body weren't a hologram is a problematic way of trying to demonstrate the validity of such a conclusion.

We don't necessarily know why acupuncture works on some occasions but not others. We don't know why a palm reader might get something right on one occasion and either get things wrong on another occasion or come up empty altogether.

David offers plenty of possibilities, theories, and hypotheses concerning the foregoing kind of phenomena and related issues. Unfortunately, nowhere in the first chapter of his book, does one find any concrete evidence that is capable of substantiating, in an irrefutable manner, what is being said in that chapter.

To be sure, the foregoing kind of evidence might be forthcoming later on his book. Notwithstanding such a possibility, my initial sense of his work is that if he had been able to provide evidence which had the capacity to support



what he is saying in Chapter One – a chapter which is titled “The Biggest Need-To-Know – then, he would have done so because David is developing the material being presented in that chapter to serve as foundational research for purposes of lending support to everything else that is to be explored and discussed in subsequent chapters.

Connection

David indicates that Leonardo da Vinci has been quoted as saying words to the effect that: “We must realize that everything is connected to everything else.” (Page 39) A quote from Cicero is also included which indicates that: “Everything is interconnected.” (Page 39)

David, then, notes how the process of decoding waveform reality passes through various iterations, running from the original waveform information from the Cosmic Internet down through: “particle/atomic/electrical/digital, and, finally, holographic forms of decoding, but he also indicates that these different forms or constructs give expression to the same information, thereby, presumably, showing that everything is connected – quod erat demonstrandum (that which was to be demonstrated) – and, thereby, bringing the reader back to the previously quoted words of da Vinci and Cicero.

According to David: “Atoms are only a phase in the decoding process that turns waveform information into holographic information in the same way that computers decode different encoded information from discs, data sticks, or the Internet into what we see on the screen.” (Page 39) Apparently, everything must (tongue in cheek) be connected because, once again, the reader has been brought back to being confronted with computer analogies despite being informed a few pages earlier that what is actually transpiring in human beings and the universe transcends anything that might be seen as being computer-like in nature.



In conjunction with the foregoing quote, one might well ask: Why do human beings pass through the same phases of: Particles, atoms, electrical, and holograms”, again and again, while engaged in the process of decoding waveforms? Whether a person uses the terms: “waveform”, “information”, “physical”, “material”, “stuff”, “field”, “frequency”, “brain”, “mind”, “awareness”, “energy”, “force”, “reality”, “encoding”, “decoding”, and “construct ” – whether individually or in some sort of combination with one another -- there seems to be a dimension of invariability (that seems largely independent of human control) which is being manifested through experience that has the capacity to shape, modulate, frame, filter, and/or orient the way in which one seeks the truth concerning the nature of one’s relationship with Being. Presumably, until one understands how this dynamic dimension of independent invariability works, we aren’t really in any position to say how things are ‘connected’.

The Methodology of Mathematics, The Methodology of Character

At this point, David mentions the work of Max Tegmark and provides a quote from the latter individual that claims: “The Universe can be entirely described by numbers and math.” (Page 39) Even if one were inclined to accept such a statement (which I am not), nevertheless, being able to entirely describe the universe does not necessarily mean that one understands the nature of what is being “entirely described” or how what is being described has been made possible.

In addition, although Max Tegmark has written a book entitled: “*Our Mathematical Universe*,” one would like to understand how Dr. Tegmark knows that the Universe, in its entirety, and throughout its many possible levels and dimensions, is necessarily mathematical in character. For instance, if there are spiritual levels of the Universe which manifest qualities in mysterious and anomalous ways and which operate according to unknown, possibly inexplicable, forms of dynamics, then, how does one know that such manifested



phenomena are capable of being captured by numbers and math?

The Qur'an says: "We have neglected nothing in the Book." (6:38) The Qur'an also stipulates that: "Only those who possess the kernels remember." (39:9)

In effect, the Book is an encoded form of the Universe. If Max Tegmark is correct, then, the "kernels" being referred to in the foregoing Quranic passage might, ultimately, be describable in terms of numbers and maths.

Of course, what has been encoded would require decoding of an appropriate kind, and, in addition, even if the Book were in part, or wholly, decoded, not everyone who is exposed to it would necessarily understand what is being described. On the other hand, if Max Tegmark is wrong, then, the extent to which numbers and mathematics can be used to describe the Universe, let alone understand it, might be quite limited.

The Sufi teachers whom I have encountered – I have met a few who are, I believe, quite genuine, and, as well, I have met a few who, in my opinion, are not authentic – don't appear to teach much in the way of numbers and math. Authentic Sufi guides teach character and adab (etiquette).

In fact, authentic shaykhs often teach character and adab through their own personal example and way of being or living. On the other hand, inauthentic, would-be guides – quite irrespective of how much of the Qur'an, the literature of hadiths (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him), Islamic history, or Sufi lore they might know -- tend to talk about character and adab but have difficulty observing – that is, living in accordance with -- such practices.

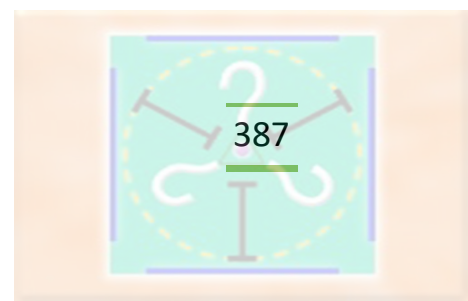
The opening 10 verses of Sura Shams (the Chapter Sun) can be translated as follows:

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

I swear by the sun and its brilliance,

And the moon when it follows the sun,

And the day when it shows it,



And the night when it draws a veil over it,
And the heaven and Him Who made it,
And the earth and Him Who spread it,
And the Soul and Him Who made it perfect,
Then He inspired it to understand what is right,
Indeed, the one who purifies it will be successful,
And the one who corrupts it will, indeed, fail.

(91:1-10)

My spiritual guide – the one who exhibited (i.e., lived in accordance with) character and adab – often said that the etiquette of the Qur’an is such that when God wishes to emphasize something’s importance, oaths are used. Nowhere else in the Qur’an will one find as many consecutive oaths as the ones which appear at the beginning of Sura Shams, and, therefore what follows those oaths is exceedingly important.

More specifically, on the one hand, we are being informed that the Soul which becomes purified – through, for instance, the acquisition of qualities such as character and adab -- will have succeeded in life. On the other hand, we also are being told that the Soul which becomes corrupted – fails to acquire the principles of character and adab that struggle against such corruption -- will have failed in the purpose of life.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: Do not attend the circle of a learned person unless that individual asks you to give up five things in favor of accepting five other things:

- doubt in favor of belief;
- hypocrisy in favor of sincerity;
- worldliness in favor of asceticism;
- pride in favor of humility;
- enmity in favor of love.



One might like to take note of how the foregoing Hadith indicates that a person can be learned and still be steeped in issues of doubt, hypocrisy, worldliness, pride, and enmity, but one might also note that the five qualities to which an authentic, learned guide will invite one – namely, belief, sincerity, asceticism, humility and love -- are all entailed by that to which the first ten verses of Sura Shams are seeking to draw the attention of an individual ... the process of purifying the Soul.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is also reported to have said: “Knowledge is of two kinds: Formal knowledge which does not go beyond verbal profession. It is the evidence of God against those people who profess such knowledge, and according to it, God will judge them; and genuine knowledge, which is deep-rooted in the heart – this is the knowledge which is most useful.” Knowledge can only be genuine when it is deep-rooted in the heart, and the only way in which such knowledge can take root in the heart is if the Soul has been purified through the spiritual practices of observing, among other things, the requirements of character and adab or etiquette.

Is the knowledge being alluded to by the Prophet in the foregoing Hadith a matter of numbers and maths as Mark Tegmark believes? The Qur’an indicates: “And God taught Adam all the Names, then, showed them to the angels, saying: Inform me of the names of these, if ye are truthful. They said: “Be glorified! We have no knowledge saving that which Thou has taught us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Knower, the Wise. God said: “O Adam! Inform them of their names, God said: Did I not tell you that I know the secret of the heavens and the earth?” (2: 31-33)

The science of names which God had vouchsafed to Adam (peace be upon him) – and to whomsoever else God wishes -- is rooted in the Names of Allah because, from the Sufi perspective, all things come into being through the dynamics of those Names, and, in addition, the secret of the heavens and the earth are contained in those Names.



Names resonate with the Divine command “Qun:” – “Be”. Such resonances might have various kinds of frequencies associated with them.

Nevertheless, one should keep in mind that spiritual frequencies or higher-order frequencies might not entail the same sort of dynamics as do the frequencies which are present in the realm of Nasut (the lowest level of Creation ... the point of departure for the existential spiritual journey), and, consequently, while lower-order frequencies might be describable by means of numbers and maths, this need not be the case in relation to the higher-order, or spiritual, frequencies.

The latter frequencies are associated with realities that are a function of considerations that are other than the principles which govern the behavior of fermions and bosons whose dynamics have been described through the use of numbers and maths. One might also add, that there are a lot of physicists who can carry out the complex calculations involving such numbers and maths, but, nonetheless, they still might have little or no understanding concerning what actually enables the outcomes that are being calculated through numbers and maths to have the properties that such outcomes do or why different elements (such as Planck’s constant, the strong force, the weak force, the gravitational constant, and the fine structure constant) have the values that they do.

Time

David next turns his attention to the issue of time. He begins by noting that “Our very lives are defined by the passage of time as we go through the aging process (computer cycle.” (Page 40)

Notwithstanding the issue of whether, or not, one should liken the ageing process to a computer cycle – especially since David, himself, appeared to indicate that the computer analogy might not be a useful way of describing what he believes is actually taking place in human beings -- David follows up on the



way in which time seems to limit human existence by hinting about a form of revolutionary relief with respect to the manner in which time seems to define so much of our lives and states that: "... time does not exist except as a decoded concept in the human mind." (Page 40)

What waveform in the Cosmic Internet is being decoded into the form of a temporal construct? What makes such a waveform possible, and what enables the human mind to decode that waveform as having to do with the phenomenology of temporality?

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "Do not curse time, for time is one of the Attributes of God." Since the Prophet also has said (and this was quoted earlier) that one is permitted to reflect on all things, but one is not permitted to reflect on the nature of the Divine Essence, one might suppose that the notion of an attribute is not necessarily something that describes Essence but is a phenomenon that God's Essence makes possible in some fashion and, therefore, is attributable to Divinity.

However one understands the foregoing issue concerning the nature of a Divine attribute, the Prophet has indicated that one should not curse time because time is one of God's attributes. To claim, as David does, that time does not exist except as a construct of the mind when it decodes certain waveforms does not exactly seem to be a form of cursing time, but, at the same time, the foregoing Prophetic observation concerning the issue of temporality would seem to raise the possibility that David might not have gotten the issue quite right when he asserted that time does not exist except as a construct of the human mind and, conceivably, whatever time might be, it might have a reality that is not necessarily a function of the human being's mental activity.

I'm not asking the reader to blindly accept what the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is saying with respect to the issue of time. Instead, the reader is being asked to consider the possibility that the understanding being put forth by David concerning the topic of time might not be correct, and there are

alternative possibilities that one might wish to consider before reaching any conclusions concerning the nature of time.

According to David, “The illusion of time is created by the way the brain constructs its decoded images in a form were one seems to lead to the other. This can be likened to still frames passing through a projector to give the illusion of movement.” (Page 40)

The foregoing explanation is problematic. First of all, in one sense there is no illusion of movement when still frames of film are passed through a projector because, in fact, there is a form of movement that is present – namely, the process of automatically inducing the still frames to be fed through the projector at a certain rate by virtue of either an electric motor or a hand crank.

An illusion does arise when the still frames are run through the projector at the right speed (so that a certain number of frames per second – say 24fps – are processed, but several other frame rates will work as well). More specifically, when a person’s eyes are exposed to film footage (consisting of a series of still images) that is running at the right number of frames per second, a person’s eyes will not be able to parse, or separate out, the visual material into individual still frames and, instead, an individual experiences a gestalt-like sense of continuity (sometimes referred to as “persistence of vision”) that connects the package of individual images which are running at 24 fps and treats them as whole or gestalt.

Each frame alters the visual information to which we are exposed little by little, and these changes are collated into a composite phenomenological experience consisting of the contents of 24 frames of images that are being processed in a second. Although, subliminally, we take notice of the changes in position of objects from one frame to the next, nonetheless, unless those frames are separated by $1/16^{\text{th}}$ of a second, or more, we interpret any changes in position that might be present from one frame to the next as constituting a form of motion rather than just being small differences in the image properties that are actually present in each of the still frames.



Given the foregoing considerations, one might be being led down a cul-de-sac when one is being told that the way the mind generates time (as the mind decodes, let us say, certain Cosmic Internet waveforms) is, according to David, somewhat like what happens when the minds of human beings generate motion in conjunction with still frame footage. However, we know that the still frames of the film are not being engaged as individual still frames but, rather, movement has been introduced into the process through a movie projector or a hand crank, and it is the rate at which such images are processed by the projector that by-passes the ability of the human visual system to see the individual frames that are present in the film footage, and, instead, a composite of information is assembled into a phenomenological experience that is being experienced as visual movement when no such actual movement is taking place. However, no comparable system has been proposed for the human mind which can explain how a sense of time emerges when it is not present in the waveforms to which one is being exposed.

Furthermore, a projector assists film footage -- consisting of still images -- to move at a certain rate, and this rate of frames per second, together with the mind's inclination toward operating in accordance with the 'persistence of vision' tendency in circumstances like that which are being controlled by the aforementioned projector or hand crank, have made the experience of visual motion possible. What plays the comparable role of the projector or hand crank in the human mind with respect to the issue of temporal experience, and what is the property that is present in human beings which induces people to experience the feed from the temporal projector as being frames of temporality or units of time?

Despite the absence in David's discussion of any sort of explanation concerning how human beings are able to translate non-temporal waveforms into temporal phenomenology, David continues on and states: "There is no time, only the NOW, one infinite 'moment' in which all exists. Concepts of past and future are just that -- concepts." (Page 40)



As indicated previously, one would like to know how the mind's alleged capacity works to be able to generate the time that is needed to process waveforms. In other words, the dynamics of decoding seem to presuppose the need for the presence of temporality because without the presence of time to enable decoding to take place, one has difficulty understanding how decoding of any kind is able to occur.

Decoding seems to be an inherently time-dependent process. How does one generate the construct of time without this requiring time in order to be accomplished?

A possibly more straightforward alternative to what David is proposing might be to suppose that one of the possibilities or potentials that exist in the Infinite Awareness is for the eternal Now to be able to partition or compartmentalize Itself according to whatever cosmological, biological, chemical, physical, conceptual, or emotional metric of temporality that is desired.

Time is part of what makes dynamics possible since without time there can be no dynamics. Change is inherent in any form of dynamics, and any dimension of change presupposes the presence of time or duration.

In addition, just as an external source (e.g., a theater owner or someone who owned or had access to the requisite technology) had to introduce a working movie projector to provide human beings with the opportunity to experience motion pictures, so too, God might serve as the "external" Source which provides the temporal projector that runs the still frames of the eternal Now at a frame rate that can be experienced phenomenologically as the past, present, and future, while human beings engage those temporal compartments according to the inclinations and capabilities which are present in human beings for decoding such forms of compartmentalization, just as human beings used, among other faculties, their capacity for 'persistence of vision' to interact with the previously discussed movie projector's operation of 24 frames per second and, in tandem, the two helped give rise to the emergence of the phenomenology of moving images.

David states that: "... clocks are created by humans and not by non-existent time. This is the clock-time illusion." (Page 41) Einstein claimed that "time is what a clock measures." Both statements are flip-sides of the same problematic, suspect coin.

Time is one of the fundamental elements or phenomena which the existence of clocks presupposes, and each kind of clock – including Einstein's relativistic-vulnerable clocks -- engages such an opportunity in its own inimitable style. Clocks might well be created by human beings, but the only reason someone decided to create such a metric instrument is because there was something already in existence that such an invention could leverage in the latter's own limited manner and according to whatever purposes might be served through that kind of invention.

In an attempt to defend his notions about time being a human creation, David mentions some examples, including one drawn from his own life as a professional goal keeper in English football, that describe how athletes, among others, are sometimes capable of slowing down the way in which they engage time so that the individual is able to process and assess what is taking place with much greater detail, accuracy, and success. However, one can acknowledge the reality of such experiences without being forced to conclude that human beings are creating time.

Time, as a function of the Eternal Now, continues to operate in a compartmentalized fashion that gives rise to: The present (in the form of an ever-vanishing something); the past (a former edition of the present), and the future (something that might emerge in the form of a new present). What changes in the examples cited by David is the manner in which an individual engages the way time – something that is, ultimately, independent of human beings – transforms or manifests itself.

Contrary to what David says, the focus of the athlete is not collapsing the wave function. Instead, the wave function of time is being spread out or expanded within the phenomenology of an individual so that more possibilities than normal can be considered, assessed, and dealt with.



Time remains whatever it is. What changes is the frame rate or angle of phenomenological orientation through which the Eternal Now is being engaged.

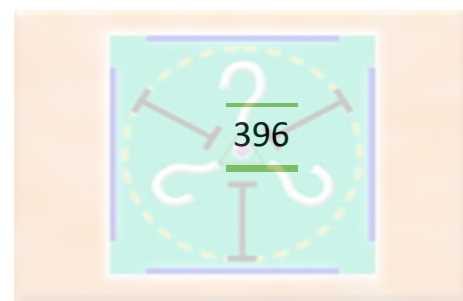
This change in frame rate might be due to some shift in focus that is initiated by the individual (a possibility explored to varying degrees by, among others, the psychologist Robert Ornstein back in the 1970-80s). Or, such a change in frame-rate processing might be a gift of the Eternal Now ... or, perhaps, a combination of the foregoing two possibilities is responsible.

The degrees of freedom and constraint which are present in the nature of time remain what they are, quite independently of human beings. The phenomenological experience of time is a function of how those degrees of freedom and constraint are engaged by any given organism.

Entanglement and Non-Locality

David purports to explain the phenomenon of “entanglement” in which: “... two so-called ‘entangled’ particles, ‘billions of miles’ apart can react to each other instantly. ... This is not the result of the speed of communication across distance, but the fact that the particles only exist in the observer’s decoding processes. They are not ‘billions of miles’ apart, but within a few cubic centimeters of the brain where visual reality is decoded.” (Page 43)

How does one measure something that is instantaneous? Conceivably, if one were able slow down the temporal aspect of an event as one viewed it through successively smaller and smaller portals of temporality such as: The nano level (10^{-9}), or the pico level (10^{-12}), or the femto level (10^{-15}), or the atto level (10^{-18}), or the zepto level (10^{-21}), or the yocto level (10^{-24}), or the Planck level of temporality (5.39×10^{-44} -- the amount of time it takes light to travel one Planck length: 1.616255×10^{-35} meters), or some other miniscule level of temporality that was shorter than the foregoing possibilities, one might find that what one thought was instantaneous actually wasn’t ... that some tiny



fraction of duration was involved. In fact, if one had the necessary instrumentation, one could continue to refine the temporal viewing window to just this side of infinity and check whether, or not, what one thought was instantaneous actually was instantaneous.

Notwithstanding the foregoing considerations, particles do not have to be billions of miles apart to exhibit the property of entanglement. However, the distance between the two does have to exceed the distance which light can travel in a given unit of time because if this were not the case, then, one might be able to explain the phenomenon of entanglement as, somehow, being a function of some signal or message that was being communicated from one particle to the other by means of light.

When one has a distance that is greater than can be traversed by light in a given metric of time, and, yet, one is able to empirically demonstrate that two particles seem to be intertwined with one another in a way that is faster than light can travel, then, irrespective of whatever else might be making such a relationship possible, one cannot attribute the phenomenon to light. In other words, if one accepts the idea that the speed of light cannot be exceeded (as many, if not most, physicists do), and if one has eliminated the possibility that light might have established a line of communication between two particles by making sure that the distance between those entities cannot be traversed by something traveling at the speed of light prior to observing a given form of entanglement behavior taking place, then, whatever is responsible for the entanglement phenomenon entails something other than the condition of locality.

The property of locality has to do with the forces and influences which can be shown to be characteristic of a given space. For example, one of the physical limits which is placed on locality in modern physics has to do with whether, or not, the dynamics of a given space operate in accordance with the speed of light.

If events in two places, take place more quickly than can be accounted for by the speed with which light traverses a given

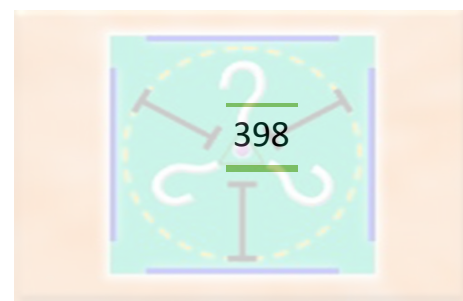


distance in a given amount of time, then, the events are said to be non-local in nature. Such events were referred to by Einstein as giving expression to phenomena that exhibit 'spooky action at a distance' because, once light is eliminated as a possible connecting or signaling link between two locations, no one understood how such events and locations might be connected.

If one restricts the notion of dimensionality to being spatial in character with time somehow occupying three directions of spatial possibility, then, one has difficulty trying to figure out how non-local phenomena are related. One's process of reflecting on the issue might be constrained because some individuals feel forced to conceptually operate only in terms of geometric-topological notions of space involving, for example: Kaluza-Klein dimensions; strings; Calabi-Yau spaces, along with the dynamics of compactification; and, Ed Whitten's proposal concerning M-theory, all of which are considered to be orthogonal in a generalized sense in which all dimensions are considered to be spatial in one perpendicular directional sense or another.

If dimensions, in general, are qualitatively different -- as is the case with space and time -- then, it is possible that what links two non-local events involves dimensions which are not spatial in character. Considered from the foregoing sort of perspective, the non-locality of entanglement phenomena might have something to do with the way qualitatively different dimensions interact with one another such that if two locations share, or are permeated by, a non-spatial dimension -- as time seems to pervade space (or vice versa) -- then, whatever force or energy links particles that are entangled might be communicated by means of a dimensional property other than space which is shared in common by two locations that are non-local in nature.

For instance, the Names of Allah all entail qualitatively different forms of dynamics relative to each other because the characters of their respective forms of functionality are considered to be different (Thus, the use of different Names). In this sense, each Name might be considered to give expression to



a different qualitative “dimension” of existence even as all of these “dimensions” are made possible by one and the same Source and, as well, are able to interact within, or through, different non-local conditions as space and time seem able to do.

David seems to want to make entanglement a function of spatial dimensions in a geometric/topological sense. As a result, he argues that the entangled elements are really only a few cubic centimeters apart in the brain of the observer, and, consequently, the condition of locality is not actually being violated because the decoding program in the observer changes the way that time and the speed of light are perceived to interact – making entanglement a function of how something is decoded rather than being a function of distances and speeds that violate the condition of locality.

However, David doesn’t really make clear how or why an observer would change his, her, or their way of interacting with time and the speed of light at the same time that two events are demonstrated to be connected with one another in a manner that appears to be non-local in nature. Why (and how) does the decoding program of the brain change to accommodate issues of time, space, and the speed of light, so that the entanglement phenomenon doesn’t violate the condition of locality?

A few paragraphs later in his book, David seems to speak in a way that contradicts the perspective that he just sought to establish. More specifically, he stipulates: “There is no space in the same way that there is no time. ... All you are observing are computer codes on a disk or data stick being decoded into images on the screen. ... ‘Space,’ as with ‘time’ is part of the illusory construct that the mind uses to define holographic reality. In the act of manifesting apparent objects from the waveform field, the illusion of space naturally appears to be real. Remember that what we call space is not a ‘thing,’ but is instead defined only by holographic images in our mind.” (Page 44)

Apparently, the few centimeters of cubic space in the brain to which David referred earlier in conjunction with his discussion of the human experience of time and the



phenomenon of entanglement, doesn't actually exist. Space is just a way of decoding Cosmic Internet waveforms that are presented to us.

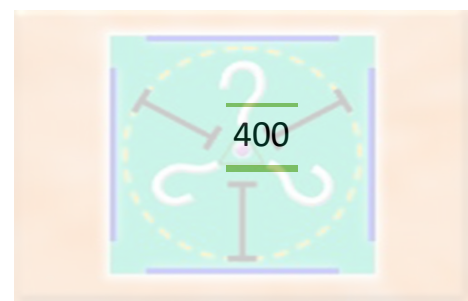
David doesn't address the issue of why human beings should decode things in the way they do or how they came to pursue the decoding process in such a fashion or how the process of decoding actually works or what makes such a process possible. Nor does he address the issue of whether, or not, the waveforms of the Cosmic Internet might be constructed in such a way as to provide the degrees of freedom and constraint in Its waveforms that would make possible the holographic generation of the space and time phenomena provided that the right kind of decoding dynamic were to engage the waveforms of the Cosmic Internet in just the right way.

If there is no space and time, where – or how -- does the brain exist in relation to the Cosmic Internet waveforms that are to be decoded? Moreover, how does the decoding process operate as a dynamic if there is no such thing as time?

Why should David maintain that the “illusion of space naturally appears to be real” or that such an illusion would be a “natural” way to process a waveform that is inherently devoid of time and space? How does one even have a waveform – Cosmic or otherwise – that exists independently of space and time? – and, one might want to keep in mind that if one were to consider the possibility that God is not a waveform, then, questions similar to the metaphysical ones that are being directed toward David's perspective concerning how the issues of waveforms, time, and, space are related to one another do not seem to be all that relevant with respect to the issue of God's existence.

Do holographic images occupy space in some sense? If not, what is the nature of the perceptual process that induces them to emerge in some non-spatial fashion?

As was intimated earlier, if there is no space or time, then, what enables a decoding process to take place and engage a Cosmic Internet waveform so that the phenomena of space and time can be perceptually generated? The capacity to generate a perception of space and time would seem to presuppose the



existence of a few ontological properties of space and time that are not a function of perceptual processes ... ontological properties which seem to be necessary in order to make such perceptual processes possible.

David recalls his Peruvian drug experience and says: “The ‘ayahuasca Voice said: ‘Why do you fly from point A to point B when you are point A and point B and everything in between.’” (Page 44) Leaving aside the issue of whether, or not, what the Voice is saying is true or can be trusted or, even if true and trustworthy, can ensure us that the individual who is hearing what is being said also understands what is being said and does so in the way that the Voice understands what is being said, why talk at all about points A and point B and everything in between when space and time do not exist, and what does it mean to be all of these things?

At this point, David refers to the comments of someone who had a near-death encounter involving an out-of-body experience in which there was: “... no time ... no sequence of events, no such thing as limitation, of distance, of period, of place. I could be anywhere I wanted to be simultaneously.” (Page 44) Without wishing to say that the foregoing possibilities might not be true, or could not be true, or did not happen, why should one suppose that what is being related in the form of an anomalous experience is true simply because someone had an experience in which such possibilities seemed to give expression to the way things were or could be – at least as far as that experience is concerned?

Do we necessarily even understand what the significance of the foregoing sort of experience actually involves or entails? Was the near-death experience an indication that what took place alludes to the way things could be -- or are -- right now if one were only to observe requirements x, y, and z?

Alternatively, did the aforementioned out-of-body experience serve as an indication that what took place might be characteristic of the way in which some other facet or dimension of Reality or Being operates if one were able to access such a dimension, or if one were permitted to access such



a realm of Being, on a regular basis beyond the confines of a near-death experience? Or, was the experience being related through the near-death experience an indication that there is a mysterious relationship between the observer and the Universe in which possibility or potential can be turned into actuality, but one must choose how to proceed because one could be induced to move in any number of possible directions ... and, therefore, one should be careful about the choices that one makes in relation to any particular journey one might wish to take?

Scalar Fields

Toward the end of Chapter One, David introduces the idea of scalar fields. He notes that various people have different ideas about what scalar fields actually are and that there is a certain amount of controversy surrounding the topic.

However, he indicates that the way in which he is using the foregoing term is as a way of alluding to That which makes everything possible and capable of being manifested. This encompasses: Wave forms, quantum dynamics, holographic “realities”, processes of encoding or decoding, and so on.

Without going into any detail – although, in passing, he does say that he will come back to the scalar issue later on in his book -- David differentiates between a scalar field and scalar energy. For him, a scalar field is That which is everywhere at the same time even though it is beyond time, and, so, everything that occurs in the field is instantaneously present throughout every aspect of the field.

He states that: “The instantaneous absorption of information puts a scalar field way beyond the speed of light.” (Page 44) While the foregoing indicates that the scalar field would appear to be a non-localized form of reality (i.e., it transcends the condition of locality that the speed of light places on physical phenomena), one is not quite sure what is meant by the idea of the field ‘absorbing’ information, as if – seemingly -- the latter were not already in the field as either an active or



potential reality. However, if phenomena, or the potential for manifested phenomena, are everywhere at the same time, and if the scalar field is the source of everything, then there is nothing to be absorbed which can show up instantaneously everywhere because whatever is present in one “place” or “space” is already present everywhere and, as such, cannot be absorbed into the scalar field.

In addition, there is also the problem – which already has been touched upon several times previously during the course of this meditative exercise – that surrounds the manner in which the term “information” is being used in David’s book as if it had some sort of substantive, ontological existence as a kind of “stuff” of the scalar field. As noted previously, the notion of “information” is really just an individual’s way – in the present case, David’s way -- of parsing or describing the phenomena which are, somehow, capable of being made manifest in the scalar field, but since the notion of information gives expression to nothing more than a description, information really has no existence apart from such a descriptive process.

Furthermore, David often appears to use the term “information” as a stand-in for being almost anything he would like it to be without having to deal with the ramifications that ensue from the fact that information is a function of the metric that is used to parse or describe whatever it is that the term “information” is being used for as a stand-in. The notion of “information” is rather a vague, amorphous, will-o’-the-wisp term, and it can only be critically reflected upon and explored when one knows what the metric is that is being used to particularize that to which the term alludes.

Waveforms are not a form of information. Rather, information is a way – which might, or might not, be correct – of describing the nature and dynamics of waveforms.

Similarly, holographic ‘realities’ are not a function of information. Instead, information can be used – in a heuristic fashion or in a problematic manner -- as a way of trying to describe the nature and dynamics of holographic ‘realities.’



Whatever a scalar field might be, it is not a function of information. Rather, the scalar field is what makes systems of information and their descriptive uses possible.

The remainder of David's book – namely, *Everything You Need To Know But Have Never Been Told* – appears to involve a certain amount of critical reflection concerning various religious traditions. As a result, one might hypothesize that his critical stance toward the sort of nonsense that sometimes is present in those traditions (the sort of nonsense which I – and others who belong to one, or another, of the religious traditions with which he wishes to find fault -- might be quite prepared to agree with him on) could induce him to shy away from the notion of God and incline him toward pursuing the idea of a scalar field as the ultimate explanation for all possibilities, potentials, and actualities.

On page 2 of his book – and the following issue has been touched upon earlier in this meditative exercise – David stated that: “Themes of religion ... are *basically* correct, emphasis often on the *basically*,” but, as noted earlier, he did not elaborate on what was entailed by the notion of “basically.” He followed up on the foregoing statement by claiming: “We should not be worshipping anybody or anything when we are the anybody/everybody and the anything/everything.”

There is often considerable confusion among many people who are interested in metaphysics and mysticism concerning the nature of the relationship between Divinity and that to which the command “Qun” – “Be” – is directed. And, before proceeding, one might note that even in Buddhism there is a strong current of tariki – or ‘Other Power’ – that accompanies the idea of jariki (“Self Power”) even though a variety of people often tend to associate the latter idea (i.e., Self Power) rather than the former notion (Other Power) with that spiritual tradition.

Leaving aside the foregoing considerations, the reader might, or might not, be cognizant of how Muslims use two ways of categorizing the notion of hadith (sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him). First, there are those



sayings which are attributed – whether correctly or not – to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and, secondly, there are those sayings which are said to have been uttered through the mouth of the Prophet but which are not attributed to him but, rather, are attributed to Divinity speaking through him, and these sorts of sayings are known as “Hadith Qudsi.”

Let’s engage several of these latter kinds of sayings. For example, one such hadith qudsi indicates: “In the beginning, I was alone, and I am now as I was in the beginning,” while another of this category of sayings states: “I am Ahmed without meem (m).”

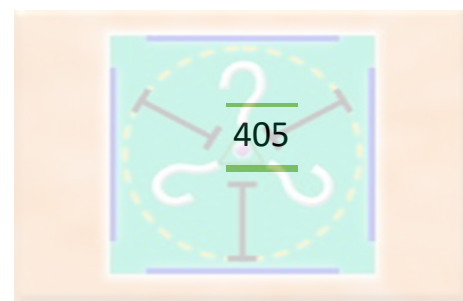
In each of the foregoing two statements, the Source of the words is believed to be God. Muhammad (peace be upon him) constitutes the locus of manifestation through which words emerge, and in this sense gives expression to another dimension of the Quranic verse: “Nor doth he (Muhammad) speak of his own accord.” (53:3)

Starting with the latter saying, one should understand that Ahmed is one of the names of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). When the letter meem (m) is removed from the foregoing name, what remains in the transliterated word ‘Ahad,’ which can be translated as: ‘The Only.’

In the first hadith qudsi cited above God is indicating that irrespective of whether one is talking about a phase prior to Creation or one is talking about a phase after which Creation has emerged, nonetheless, in both cases, God is alone. There is only, and has only ever been, one, substantive reality, and that is God.

Creation has no reality of its own. It exists only by virtue of the way in which the command “Qun” – “Be” – addresses a fixed potential – ‘ayn al-thabita – and dresses this phantom reality in the existential clothing that has been woven through the dynamics of the Divine Names or Divine faculties which constitute the prism through which Divine Light shines to give rise to the illusion of multiplicity.

The characters that occupy a novel or story exist only through the creative dynamic of the novelist or story-teller and



have no existence apart from that creative context, and, as a result, one would not be inclined to confuse such fictionalized entities with the author or authoress who made them possible and who created the plot twists and turns that sets the context or stage upon which such characters carry out their roles. So too, one should not confuse the One Who creates the Universe – and all of its diverse dimensions – with the ones who are given manifested existence in order to be able to populate and participate in Universe narrative.

Moreover, one cannot reduce the author or authoress down to whatever characters and stories are created by the novelist or story-teller. There are many properties, qualities, and characteristics (such as family life, hobbies, other interests, community life, friends, and so on) that exist in such creators that are independent of their creations.

So too, God cannot be reduced down to what is created but has an existence that is entirely independent of such creation. Another hadith qudsi stipulates: “I was a hidden treasure and loved to be known, so I brought forth creation,” and, consequently, whatever is known or can be known is an expression of that hidden treasure.”

The ‘ayn al-thabita, or fixed formed possibilities, to which the command “Qun” – “Be” – might be delivered is part of the hidden treasure. Nonetheless, one cannot suppose that the nature of the hidden treasure can be exhausted by such fixed forms, and, therefore, no matter which dimension of the hidden treasure might be considered, there is always That which transcends it.

A further hadith qudsi indicates: “I conform to the opinion that My servant has of Me,” Presumably, part of what such a saying is directing our attention to reflect upon is that, perhaps, one should be careful of the opinion one has of Divinity, and, possibly, some of those opinions might be better suited to the essential potential of a human being than are other possible opinions.

The Qur’an states: “Say: Surely, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the



worlds.” (6:162) The Qur’an also stipulates: “I have not created human beings nor jinn except that they may worship Me.” (51:56-57)

To worship is to struggle toward realizing the essential potential that exists within one so that one might, God willing, use that potential in accordance with the degrees of freedom and constraints that are present in such a potential. To worship is to be in a constant state of remembrance concerning the Presence of Divinity, and for this to be possible, one must: Purify the nafs [the tendencies within us that rebel against the Truth – “Truly, the soul commands unto evil, (Qur’an, 12:53)”]; acquire the qualities of character; observe the principles of adab (etiquette); and work, with God’s assistance, toward cleansing, calibrating, and activating the different faculties (such as the mind, heart, sirr, kafi, aqfah, and ruh or spirit) through which one comes to be aware – via different modalities of knowledge, insight, unveiling, and spiritual stations -- of the Divine Presence.

The foregoing comments provide a summary, of sorts, concerning the truth about the nature of one’s relationship with Reality, Being, or Existence from a Sufi perspective. When one’s fitra or essential nature is properly realized, there is a deep sense of sacredness that ties the individual to one’s Creator, and this dimension of sacredness is part of what is worshipped because it gives expression to the nature of a relationship that is immersed in Divine Presence whether one acknowledges this or not, for as the Qur’an indicates: “Where so ever you turn, there is the face of God.” (2:115)

Consequently, when David says: “We should not be worshipping anybody or anything when we are the “anybody/everybody and the anything/everything,” (Page 2) I would have to disagree with him on two counts. Firstly, I would disagree that there is nothing independent of human beings which should be worshipped, and, secondly, I would disagree that we are the “anybody/everybody and the anything/everything” which -- according to the implication in



David's foregoing statement that appears to be present in his foregoing words -- ought to be worshipped.

The Sufis maintain that there is a distinction between the Creator and the created. The only reason that we have existence is because such existence (via the command of "Qun") was given to us, and that existence was not something which we had, or have, independently of the 'giving' process.

'Ayn al-thabita refers to non-existent possibilities and potentials. The "ontological" station that non-existent possibilities have is the same sort of "ontological" station that possible characters in a play or story might have – which is, to say, nothing much to speak of unless they become actual characters in the on-going production – actors who can be introduced, modified, and removed from the dynamics of the story as the Author/Producer/Director deems fit.

Even as the sound of "Qun" – "Be" – changes our existential or ontological phase relationship, so to speak, with essential potential, the relative significance of the roles to which we each are called to fill is frequently exaggerated by the delusional babblings of the ego/nafs that has assumed the part of an agent and publicist for one's soul. As a result we – in the form of our ego/nafs tend to forget that: "What is with you comes to an end, but what is with God remains." (Qur'an, 16:96)

From the perspective of the Sufis, the only way in which whatever aspects of the "hidden treasure" come to be known is through the realization of the essential potential or fitra of a given fixed form. Sufis also maintain that such realization is only possible if the command of Qun – "Be" puts such a potential into existential play.

Sufis believe that each of us has a role to play – each in one's own unique manner and according to one's essential capacity – which consists of two dimensions. One dimension is alluded to in the Quranic verse: "Who is the one who will lend to God a goodly loan?" (57:11) The goodly loan is the essential potential which exists within a human being and that has been called into existence by "Qun" – "Be." The goodly loan is that which has been loaned in a primordial way by God.



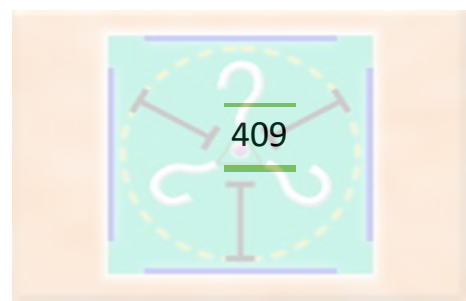
The other dimension of the role to which one is being called by “Qun” –“Be” -- is touched upon in the following Quranic ayat or verse: “God commands you to deliver trusts back to their owner.” (4:58) One dimension of the trust that is being referenced through this verse has to do with the potential of one’s essential nature or fitra.

In order to properly observe the etiquette, or adab, entailed by the loaning of such a trust, or goodly loan, by Allah -- as one is being asked to do in the previously cited Quranic verse -- one must seek to journey through the stages of being: Muslim (One who surrenders to the truth through actively observing the five pillars of practice in a context of half a dozen, or so, articles of faith); Mu’min (one who sees by the light of Allah when, for example the faculties of the heart and sirr are purified); Muh’sin (one who observes the principles of character and etiquette – adab -- through struggling to purify, calibrate, realize, and activate, God willing, various inner faculties, such as the spirit or ruh.)

The owner of that trust is God. The appropriate manner of delivering that trust back to its owner is in the form of a realized or fulfilled condition.

The role to which the command of “Qun” – “Be” – is calling one – in other words, being willing to give a goodly loan to Allah and to deliver a primordial trust back to its owner -- is a demanding one. Indeed, as the Qur’an indicates: “We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth, and they refused to bear it, being afraid thereof, but human beings accepted to bear it. Humankind is, indeed, extremely oppressive and ignorant.” (33:72) Furthermore: “Lo! We have placed all that is on earth as an ornament thereof, that We may try them: Which of them is best in conduct.” (Qur’an, 18:7)

One should not construe anything that has been said in the foregoing discussion as being an attempt to claim that only Sufis – or, at least, some of them -- know the truth of things. As the Qur’an indicates: “Verily, we have sent messengers before thee, among them are some of whom We have told thee, and some of



whom we did not tell thee” (40:78), and, as well: “...every nation had an apostle.” (10:47)

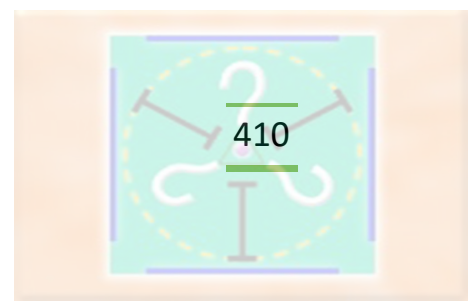
There are some 25 prophets that are mentioned by name in the Qur’an. Some Muslim commentaries allude to 120,000 prophets who, at one time or another, were ordained by God to call people to the truth concerning the nature of the relationship between human beings and Reality or Being.

The 120,000 figure doesn’t mean that anything and everything counts as an authentic spiritual teaching, prophet (*nabī*), or messenger (*rasul*) of God. Nonetheless, considerable latitude is being introduced which could encompass any number of authentic spiritual luminaries who might have existed in different localities and in many different periods of time, across thousands of years.

In mathematics, the term “transform” is often used to refer to the way in which mathematical functions in one domain might be closely related to mathematical functions in another domain. Similarly, the functional practices, values, purposes, beliefs, principles, and so on of any given authentic spiritual tradition tend to be related to the functional practices, values, purposes, beliefs, and principles of other authentic spiritual traditions as a transform in which symmetry is retained so that despite whatever surface differences might be present (which are often due to theological considerations rather than Divine guidance), the internal dynamics entailed by the character of those functions and domains, remain, essentially the same.

Whether one could treat David’s notion of a scalar field as being some sort of transform of the notion of Divinity entails a fairly complex and problematic set of issues. Furthermore, as far as the material in Chapter One of his aforementioned book is concerned, there does not seem to be any straightforward way of resolving those complexities and problems.

David does argue, in the ensuing chapters of his book, that there are forces in play which are seeking to prevent human beings from having access to the truth concerning the nature of the relationship between human beings and Reality or Being, and to this extent, Sufis are likely to agree with him. For



example, he introduces the notion of shape-shifters who are engaged in the aforementioned attempt to oppress human beings and keep the latter from learning the truth concerning the nature of the relationship between human beings and Reality.

The Qur'an mentions a species of beings, made of smokeless fire (Qur'an, 55:15) who -- as is the case with some human beings -- are also confronted with the challenge of whether, or how, to engage in the struggle that is necessary if one wishes to return the trust, or goodly loan, that has been vouchsafed to them by God. Like human beings, there are some individuals from among the jinn who seek to love, serve, and worship Divinity, but, as well, there are other individuals among the jinn, as is also true with respect to human beings, who are not interested in doing what is necessary to realize their essential nature or fitra, and, in fact, pursue life in a manner that is completely contrary to the foregoing set of considerations.

Jinn have the capacity to shape-shift and, as a result, assume different perceptual forms. They also have the capacity to enter the bloodstream of human beings and adversely affect the emotional and psychological well-being of those individuals.

There are jinn who -- like one of their leaders, Iblis (Satan) -- have a hatred for human beings and have vowed to lead human beings to spiritual and physical destruction. These beings seek to oppose, oppress, imprison, mislead, and undermine human beings in any way the former beings can.

Some jinn are characterized by the quality of longevity. For example, Iblis/Satan is reported to have existed for hundreds of thousands of years prior to the appearance of human beings but also has continued to exist after the appearance of human beings ... and, indeed, is still believed to be busy with his affairs of seduction in relation to humankind.

Someone once said that, perhaps, Iblis'/Satan's greatest feat of "magic" is to have induced many human beings to believe he doesn't exist. Be that as it may, Iblis/Satan might have gotten a substantial amount of assistance from those human beings who found the whole idea of his existence a rather inconvenient



possibility and, as a result, distanced themselves from a perspective that might have required them to rigorously take moral or spiritual steps to protect themselves from a relentless adversary who, like other would-be, abusive entities, won't take "No" for an answer.

I haven't read enough of David's ideas to hazard a guess as to whether the shape-shifters talked about in the Qur'an as well as by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are the same as, or a transform of, the sorts of shape-shifting beings about which David talks in his various books. If the two categories of oppressors and deceivers are not the same, then, conceivably, there might be more species of beings other than just those human beings and jinn who, unfortunately, have allowed themselves to become corrupted, and, as a result, seek to corrupt, if not destroy, everyone else. [Sura 2: verse 168 states: "... do not follow in the footsteps of Iblis. He is an avowed enemy to you." And, Sura 35, verse 8 asks: "Is the individual, the evil of whose deeds is made fair-seeming unto that person so that the individual deemeth them good, other than Iblis's/Satan's dupe?"]

Water and Interaction

At one point, toward the end of Chapter One, David introduces the topic of medicine/health and, in the process, throws some shade at mainstream medicine – which some people refer to as Rockefeller Medicine because of the way much of modern medical understanding and practice tends to operate out of a paradigm which was (and continues to be) shaped by the assumptions, prejudices, and biases, as well as the financial, economic, academic, social, and political interests that motivated the 1910 Rockefeller-backed *Flexner Report* concerning the application and teaching of medicine in America. While, in general terms, I tend to agree with many of the criticisms to which David gives voice, sometimes his way of expressing them seems problematic.



For example, while attempting to offer reasons for engaging issues of medicine and health in ways that are alternative to the manner in which modern medicine tends to be engaged, David mentions some research that was conducted at the Aerospace Institute in Stuttgart, Germany concerning certain aspects of energy dynamics in flowers. David indicates that the foregoing research involved dipping flowers into a tank of water, removing the flowers from the water, and, then, photographing drops of water that fell from the flower.

The German researchers discovered that an energy signature found in the plants could also be found, and photographed, in all of the drops of water that had come in touch with the flower after the latter had been dipped in water. He refers to this as being another example of the holographic principle at work, and, as well, says: “The information of the flower was retained in the water even when the flower (‘substance’) had been removed, and the same happens with homeopathy.” (Page 49)

Given that David is writing for a general, and not a specialized, audience, one can understand why he might want to stay away from too much technical detail when providing an overview of the aforementioned German research, but in proceeding in the way that he does, he also tends to leave quite a few issues unresolved. For example, since he doesn’t specify what the precise nature of the information associated with the flower is – and “energetic information” doesn’t really provide the specificity that one needs – and, moreover, because he doesn’t explain the nature of the photographic process that is being used in the research, one is not in a position to determine if what is going on in the experiment is holographic in nature, or not.

Presumably, if there is a holographic angle to the aforementioned German research, then, whatever is present in the water that has been in touch with the flower carries with it various interference patterns that can be imprinted on a disc and from which a detailed image of the original flower can be reproduced. Whether, or not, something like the foregoing

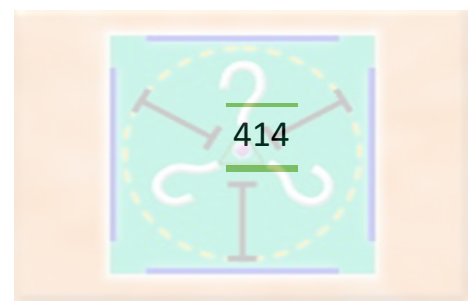


possibility was part of the German research is not very clear in what David says about the experiment.

Similarly, in order for the aforementioned German research to carry implications for the practice of homeopathy – as well as for the issue of holography – then, one would have had to have shown that when one takes smaller and smaller portions of a given drop of water that had been in touch with the flower at some point, then, the image of the flower should still be derivable or recoverable from the disc or other device that was capable of recording the dynamics at play in the smaller and smaller drops of water and, thereby, make possible the retrieval of an image of the flower from these smaller and smaller droplets of water.

The foregoing – in one form or another – doesn't seem to be present in the German experiments. There might be facets of the German experiment that resonate with the foregoing possibility, but, based on what David has said in the first chapter of his book, one can't really tell for sure whether, or not, this is the case.

Notwithstanding the foregoing uncertainties, there has been some research that has been completed in which a solution containing a substance that is said to be biologically active can be titrated down to the point where no trace of that substance can be chemically detected and, yet, whatever the nature of the biological activity is which is associated with such a substance, nonetheless, that activity is still present in the titrated solution and has the same potency as the original solution. Although the German experiment being described by David does not really appear to constitute a demonstration of the foregoing homeopathic principle, nevertheless, the research he describes might have some resonance with, or implications for, homeopathy since a phenomenon is being exhibited in the German research which indicates that at least some of the properties of a flower -- those that can be photographed -- can be transferred to a drop of water, and, therefore, conceivably other properties of the flower might also be transferrable to water, just as properties of a given biologically active substance



has been shown to be transferable to a solution from which such a substance has been – as far as chemical detection is concerned – removed from the solution.

Unfortunately, one can't really get a good conceptual grasp concerning the likelihood that any of the foregoing conditions hold with respect to what David says about the German experiment because all of the important details are obfuscated by the notion of "energetic information." As a result, one is not really sure what the nature of the "energetic information" is which is being transferred from the flower to the drop of water or what the nature of the photograph is that, somehow, captures that "energetic information."

This same kind of vagueness and amorphousness seems to characterize many facets of David's discussion throughout Chapter One. Consequently, this reader often had difficulty pinning down just what he is actually saying or trying to say ... or, to borrow – loosely -- from Leonard Cohen once again, what David says: '... feels real but is not exactly there, or is there but not exactly real.'

David does expand on the foregoing German experiment by describing how the researchers induced members of the local community "to take four droplets from a tank of water and put them in a dish with their name on. When these drops were photographed each set of four were different from the other sets, but each of the four from each person were virtually identical in their energetic signals." (Pages 49-50)

The process through which droplets of water were taken from a tank and transferred to a dish was not described by David. Moreover, although he indicates that the four drops of water from each person carried an energy signature of some kind that was different from the energy signature associated with other people participating in the experiment, and while the four drops from any given individual were said to be virtually the same as far as the energy signatures associated with individuals were concerned, David doesn't indicate whether, or not, the energy signature of the participants was taken and, if so, how.



If one doesn't know what the energy signature of a given person is, then, although one might be willing to acknowledge that there are differences in the energy signature from one subject to the next that are being captured by the water, and although one might be willing to acknowledge that the energy signature of the four drops that are associated with any given individual might be virtually the same, nonetheless, without a baseline comparison value concerning what the energy signature of a given human being is, then, one doesn't know what is causing the differences being observed. The energy properties of the means through which water is taken from the tank, and the energy properties of the dish into which the water is dropped, and the location of those dishes relative to other objects in the lab that have various kinds of energy properties, as well as the time of day, the nature of the weather at the time the water was drawn and transferred to a dish, the type of clothes being worn by a given subject, and so on, all might be contributing to the energy signature being photographed in the water.

Identifiable differences might be detectable, but one can't be sure what is responsible for those differences, and, similarly, if one presumes that all four drops are put in the dish at roughly the same time, then, the virtually identical nature of those drops shouldn't be surprising because they are all being released into the dish under, roughly speaking, the same circumstances of energy dynamics that are taking place in, and around, the subject who is transferring the water into the dish. Nevertheless, the virtually identical nature of the energetic signature of those drops might just reflect a general set of particularized energy conditions in relation to each trial subject's performance in conjunction with the experimental task that is actually causing different energy signatures to emerge and be photographed rather than reflecting something uniquely specific concerning the energy signature of each individual experimental participant.

With respect to the latter experiment, David concludes: "This is how we are interacting with our energetic environment



and each other second after illusory second at the waveform level of the Cosmic Internet as we ‘download’ and ‘post’ information.” (Page 50) Notwithstanding what David is stating in the foregoing quote, the “how” of the aforementioned notion of “interacting with our energetic environment” is never actually specifically specified or demonstrated by David.

Presumably, everything on this level of existence has an energetic signature associated with it. Consequently, everything that is in the general vicinity of the experiment being described by David is likely to be contributing to whatever energy signature is being photographed, and, therefore, even though one might expect a certain degree of differences as well as similarities to reflect the different and common variable elements which are present during each trial of the experiment, one can’t necessarily be sure how the energy signature is being shaped and modulated by the array of variables that are present within the experimental setting.

Did different lab assistants assist the various subjects -- even if this assistance was only in the form of general instructions concerning where to draw the water, and what one should use to draw the droplets, and where one was to deposit four samples of the water? Did the same person take the photographs or were they done by different individuals?

If everything interacts energetically with everything else (and like David I do believe this is the case), then, why would one suppose that the only thing showing up in the photographs has to do with the energy signature of a given human subject? Since it is obvious from the images which are given in David’s book at this point that the photographs being taken are not holographs, then, really, we don’t actually know or understand, precisely, what is contained in, or being represented through, the energy signature that has been captured by the photograph or what the extent and character of the energy contribution to that signature is by any given object in the laboratory where the experiment is being carried out.

If one, somehow, were able to generate a holograph using a drop of water that had been placed in a given dish by a



particular subject and, thereby, re-create, in visual form, the setting surrounding the water at the time of the experiment, this could be a way of linking different aspects of the energy signature being depicted in the photograph to various elements in the lab. However, in the absence of such a feat of technological wizardry, one can't be entirely sure what is contributing to the differences in the energy signatures of the different drops of water associated with different subjects.

One might suspect – and even be correct in what one suspects -- that one knows what is taking place in the experiment. However, under the circumstances that have been described, one can't necessarily empirically verify that what one considers to be so might actually be the case in the aforementioned German experiment.

Unless one goes back to the original research documents and takes a look at the observations, measurements, devices, methods, and so on that were used to frame the experiments, then, the “energetic information” to which David alludes is devoid of the particulars that are needed to try to figure out what might be generating those signatures. Therefore, using the term “energetic information” as a way of describing what is transpiring in the experiment appears to be obfuscating the situation, and, as a result, one becomes free to interpret the nature of that “energetic information” in almost any way that one likes (e.g., as David does -- that holographic or homeopathic principles are involved) rather than being able to understand: How energy is being transferred and what kinds of energy are being transferred and what happens to that energy under different circumstances or the extent to which any of the energy interaction is illusory in nature as David supposes to be the case.

The foregoing German experiments are followed up with a brief discussion concerning some of the research of Dr. Masaru Emoto who developed a way of photographing the impact which certain kinds of stimuli appeared to have on the way in which ice crystals formed. Words with different emotional values were written on the side of a container that contained water which was subjected to cold temperatures, and at a certain point



during the process of crystal formation in the water -- as the latter substance froze -- a photograph was taken of the freezing water.

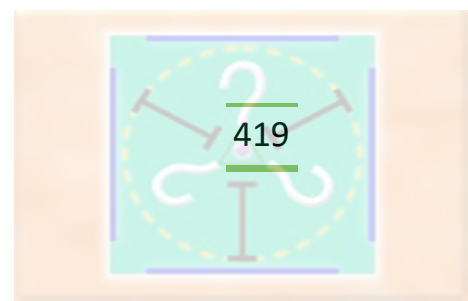
Words written on the side of the container that carried a positive or constructive emotional valence appeared to give rise to crystals that were perfectly formed whereas words placed on the side of the container that were negative appeared to become associated with crystals that formed less perfectly or even chaotically. Let's accept the foregoing experiments at face value and ask the question: What is the nature of the dynamic that is taking place?

More specifically, is the water responding to the written word or words on the side of the container or is the water responding to something else? If the words were written in different languages, are we to assume that the water is capable of understanding a multiplicity of languages, or are we to even assume that water is capable of understanding the Japanese or English that might have been used to write the word or words appearing on the side of the water containers that were to be frozen?

David states: "Everything in its base state – even written words – is waveform energy (information)." (Page 50) What constitutes the base state of the written words on the side of the water container that is to be frozen?

Is the base state of those words on the side of the container a function of language or of thought or of emotion or of intent or some combination of those possibilities that is transferred, somehow, to the written words on the piece of paper that is affixed to the side of the container? Can one suppose that the formation of the ice crystal necessarily has anything to do with the piece of paper that has a word or words written on it rather than, say, what is going on in the person as that individual goes about writing out the word or words on the water container and placing the container in a freezer of some kind?

Furthermore, is it possible that it is not the linguistic dimension of the word or words which is being written that is of paramount importance, but, rather, what matters are the



cognitive processes that lead to the writing of a word or words on the side of the container? If thought is – or can be to some extent -- independent of language, then, it might only be the nature of the energy dynamics which are giving expression to thoughts and emotions prior to language formation that are affecting the character of the water crystals that form, and, if so, then this would tend to indicate that, perhaps, what is important is not the language in which something is written (i.e., water might not be a polyglot), but, instead, has something to do with the manner in which non-linguistic considerations such as, say, the frequencies associated with certain kinds of thoughts or emotions impact the water in the container.

Another issue that arises in conjunction with the foregoing experiment has to do with the specific nature of the dynamic in which the thought, emotion, or intent of the experimenter have an impact on the water. It is one thing to acknowledge that, yes, some sort of interaction seems to be taking place between the individual and the water, but one is raising another issue entirely when one asks questions about the character of that interaction and what enables water to receive something from the experimenter and translate that “something” into some kind of crystal formation.

One might also wonder about how water is able to “focus” in on one thought or emotion rather than another. In other words, there tend to be a lot of things taking place in an individual at any given time during the course of: Considering what word or words are to be written on the side of a water container; making a decision and selecting a word; writing the word on a piece of paper and attaching it to the side of the container; placing the container in the freezing unit; waiting until one is ready to take a photograph; and, then, taking the photograph.

During the foregoing set of steps, one has had time to: Have a few memories; make a few plans with respect to, for instance, fixing lunch or making supper or going out on the town after the experiment is done; wonder about whether, or not, the experiment will turn out in one way or another; think about how to present one’s research to an audience; regret not having



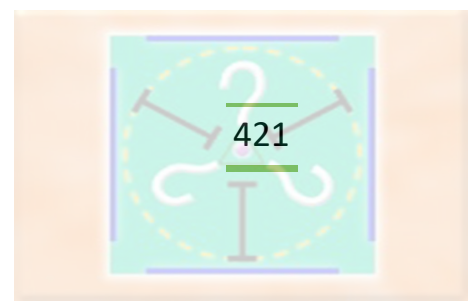
done this or that; be happy, or sad, about what has happened to this or that person, and so on. Why should the water only “pick up on,” or respond to, or be impacted by a single thought or emotion that is present along with, or entangled among, many other thoughts and emotions that are present in a person’s mind over the period of time that takes place as an individual goes about the different steps of the experiment.?

One also cannot necessarily rule out what is transpiring around the person who is conducting the experiment as having some kind of impact on the nature of the crystal that forms. Maybe the lab technician down the hall is thinking about something, or maybe a student or a secretary or an assistant or an administrator who is in the vicinity has this or that thought or emotion that might be impacting the water in the container, and, could there be some sort of inverse square law governing the extent of the impact which proximate thoughts or emotions might have on the crystals that form in the ice.

Given that there are a multiplicity of possible stimuli surrounding the water container during the various steps of the experiment, how does one show that the water is responding to just one aspect (a particular word or emotion or intention) of what is transpiring in the person conducting the experiment? Alternatively, is the forgoing dynamic a matter of how the water receives stimuli or a function of how some sort of external structure or form is imposed on the water, or perhaps, a combination of the two?

Why would water form one kind of a crystal rather than another in response to a given stimuli? What is the nature of the dynamic that translates an external stimulus or set of stimuli, to a certain kind of crystal formation?

Since various kinds of crystals formed during different phases of the Dr. Emoto experiments and given that ice – like snowflakes -- do not necessarily give expression to precisely the same sort of structural formation from one instance to the next, then, how did the forces that underlay such differences combine or interact with the forces and dynamics that led to the aspects



of crystalline formation that, supposedly, were a function of the thoughts or emotions of the researcher?

One can observe that there are differences taking place depending on the kind of stimulus or stimuli to which water is exposed. One just doesn't actually know what those differences necessarily mean or how they come about.

At this juncture in his discussion, David indicates that "intent" has a possible role to play in the sort of crystal formation that takes place in water. "Saying: 'I hate you with a joke and a smile does not generate the same frequency as saying the same with intent and venom.'" (Page 50) One can acknowledge the foregoing point and still ask: "So, what is the intent with which Dr. Emoto or an assistant placed a given word or words on the side of a water container prior to being frozen?" Can one suppose that there was much emotional difference in the mind of Dr. Emoto when he placed the word "love" on the paper attached to the water container compared with when he placed the word "hate" on the paper that was attached to the water container, and if there were not much intentional difference in the placing of the two words, to what is the water actually responding - intent, language, meaning devoid of intent and language - and is the water responding to the thoughts/meanings associated with the written words or is the water responding to the written words per se?

Various ramifications that ensue from the foregoing possibilities are brought into clear view by David when he, next, talks about prayer and states: "... prayer can (not necessarily will but can) focus attention or perception on the quantum field of possibility and probability and manifest an experienced reality that appears to be your prayers answered. They are not answered by some deity in the sky, but your own reality-decoding potential from the infinite well of infinite possibility." (Page 51)

David knows the foregoing understanding is true how? Is it knowledge or a hypothesis that is being advanced?

How does prayer - whatever it is considered to be - "focus attention or perception on the quantum field of possibility and



probability” and induce manifested expression of a particular “experienced reality”? What is the nature of the dynamic? How does prayer organize the possibilities and probabilities of the quantum field to manifest a given experienced reality?

Based on what is said in Chapter One, David, at best, seems only to be alluding to the possibility of something that he can’t actually demonstrate to be true. Or, alternatively, if he believes that he can demonstrate the truth of what he says, he certainly doesn’t say much – at least not in Chapter One – concerning the alleged dynamics between, on the one hand, focused attention and perception, and, on the other hand, the manner in which the possibilities and probabilities of the quantum field become tamed by such focused attention and perception.

The experiments of Dr. Emoto tend to show that there is some sort of interaction taking place between the stimuli to which water is exposed and the nature of the crystalline structure which is manifested. What the precise character of this interaction entails is not entirely clear.

As an old proverb indicates, there is a potential for ‘many a slip twix cup and lip.’ Similarly, there are many ways in which thoughts and/or emotions interact with what transpires in the universe, and I’m not convinced that the research of Dr. Emoto demonstrates how David is right as far as what constitutes the character of prayer and its relationship with Reality or Being is concerned.

Is what David is saying at this point a possibility? Yes, it is, but it is not the only possibility, and contrary to David’s comment about “some deity in the sky” answering prayers, one might note that the notion of Deity which, seemingly, he seeks to disparage but Who is capable of answering prayers, is not in the sky, but, rather, is That which makes the sky possible, just as the scalar field that David talked about previously in Chapter One supposedly makes the quantum field possible toward which “focused attention and perception” are supposedly directed for purposes of becoming manifest.



Normalcy, Card Reading, and Throwing Runes

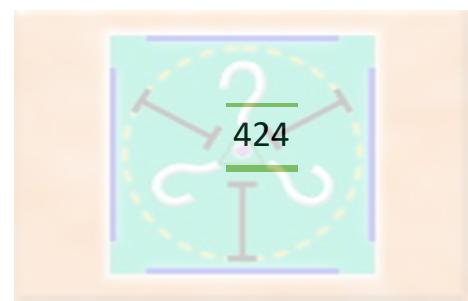
David proceeds from the issue of prayer to the notion of 'normality.' He says that: "Normal is only what we normally experience and nothing more. ... if you breach the walls of such downloaded deception you realize that what is called 'paranormal' is the real normal and the way things really are." (Page 52)

He goes on to maintain that: "'Normal' dismisses the arts of divination such as tarot cards and rune stones because 'normal' does not understand how they work." (Page 53) However, whether, or not, David actually understands what others do not is an open question.

For example, he contends that: "Interaction during a tarot card reading or when the runes are thrown is happening at the electromagnetic waveform level of reality." (Page 53) Even if one were to grant David his supposition that there is some kind of interaction between, on the one hand, a tarot card reading or the throwing of rune stones and, on the other hand, an individual, David has no way to prove or demonstrate that the form of interaction that makes everything work - to whatever extent it does -- in the aforementioned two activities is exclusively a matter of electromagnetic dynamics.

He states, with considerable confidence, that: "What the card symbolically represents and is expressed electromagnetically makes a connection with a similar frequency within our own electromagnetic field which in turn represents something in our mental and emotional state." (Page 53) However, David doesn't specify what the nature of the "connection with the similar frequency" is with respect to the individual who is being provided with a reading, nor does he provide any details concerning the nature of such a frequency connection in our electromagnetic field and in what way this "represents something in our mental and emotional state."

Everything is stated in a vague, amorphous manner. One can read into such a cloudy description almost any kind of idea one



might like to promulgate as an alleged explanation for what is supposedly taking place.

He maintains that: “A spread of cards on the table is a visual representation of the probabilities and possibilities poised to be manifested by our energetic field and awareness through our mental and emotional state of perception.” (Page 53) Or, the spread of cards on the table could be nothing more than a function of a particular shuffled arrangement which either has nothing to do with the “probabilities and possibilities poised to be manifested by our energetic field and awareness” or which does have ‘something’ to do with what is going on in the individual for whom a reading is being given but the tarot card reader has to figure out what the nature of that “something” is.

Let’s put aside the possibility that the person giving the reading is a con artist who specializes in the form of prestidigitation which is able to separate people from their money, and, therefore, let’s assume that the individual who is reading the cards is gifted, in some sense, with respect to being able to understand which possibilities in the cards spread out on the table refer to different possibilities in the individual’s life for whom a reading is giving, as well as understands how the former possibilities relate to the latter possibilities. How does David know that the insight of the reader is nothing more than an electromagnetic phenomenon? There is nothing which David has presented in Chapter One – a chapter which he entitled: ‘The Biggest Need-To-Know – in the book: *Everything You Need To Know But Have Never Been Told* which demonstrates that what is going on in such a “paranormal” event is nothing more than a synchronization of electromagnetic activity or a dynamic, of some kind, that is able to read the possibilities of the quantum field so that one can “see” that one way of engaging the cards is better than another way of engaging the cards that are spread out on the table?



Scientism and Religion

David brings his explorations in Chapter One to a close by pointing out that when people like Richard Dawkins criticize religion such individuals are doing so from the vantage point of their own religion – namely, “scientism.” David further says: “Both versions of religion have an immovable belief system that repels all borders with an unquestioning certainty ...” (Page 56) He later adds: “The ‘scientific’ and ‘normal’ definitions of ‘reason, rational, and logical’ are all expressions of the same perceptual prison” (Page 56)

On the basis of what has been presented in the Introduction and Chapter One of his aforementioned book, one has difficulty not being willing to become inclined to consider what David is doing in Chapter One of his book as being any different from what those who are caught up in scientism or various fundamentalist, rigid, literalist understandings of religion are saying and doing. What David considers to be ‘scientific’, ‘normal,’ ‘reasonable’, ‘rational,’ and ‘logical’ appears to be rooted in a conceptual framework that, in its own inimitable manner, entails as much “unquestioning” or “unquestioned” assumptions, beliefs, values, and certainties as do “scientism” and many forms of religious dogma.

David offers a quote from Blaise Pascal who is reported to have said: “The end point of rationality is to demonstrate the limits of rationality” (Page 56) and, then, adds: “Well, it is to those who are conscious beyond the programming.” (Page 56)

Neither Pascal nor David says what the nature of rationality is or what its limits are. Moreover, neither individual actually indicates what is to emerge when the limits of rationality, whatever they might be, have been reached.

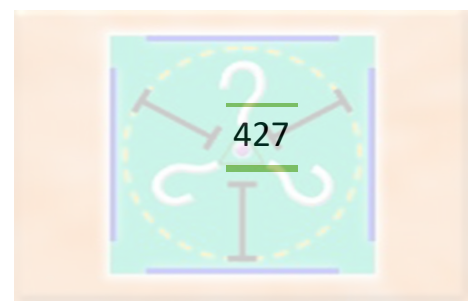
Given the foregoing quote, David appears to believe he has attained a level of understanding that allows him to assert that he knows what the limits of rationality are and that he is able to do this because he has traveled beyond his programming. However, seemingly, all we really have to go on here is his word,



and, there are quite a few things that he gives expression to in the form of words in Chapter One of his book that do not appear to be all that tenable or necessarily free from having been programmed

In the process of saying the foregoing, my thoughts drift back to the anomalous experiences that David described in the opening pages of his book and with respect to which he indicated that, for months, things were downloaded into him, and, so, one can't help but consider the possibility that what was downloaded might just have been another kind of programming of unknown provenance.

A Quranic ayat that is applicable to David and to me at this juncture is the following. "We shall surely question them, everyone, about what they were doing." (15:92-93) Perhaps, one of the possible differences between David and myself is that he doesn't appear to believe he will be questioned about what he is doing, whereas I do believe that some form of accountability is on a horizon that might not be temporal or spatial in character but shall become manifest irrespective of whether, or not, I wish this to be what is present in the cards that Existence is spreading on the table or the runes which are being thrown by Being.



| A Sufi Synopsis |

