

The Vicious Cycle of Self-Identification

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Abstract

The nature of self-identification is discussed in the context of a quantum state of potentiality and the role of the observer. A critical distinction is drawn between the normal flow of energy in the observer's world and the effects of biased choice. This naturally leads to a discussion of the effects the focus of attention of consciousness can have on physical reality and the life force.

Key Words: self-identification, quantum state of potentiality, role of the observer, biased choice, focus of attention of consciousness, life force.

Self-identifications are patently false and the cause of bondage.

Your attachment is your bondage.

Liberation is never of the person, it is always from the person.

The person is never the subject. You can see a person but you are not a person.

The difference between the person and the witness is as between not knowing and knowing oneself.

Abandon all self-identifications. It is a vicious circle.

Only Self-realization can break it.

Nisargadatta Maharaj

Quantum theory is about the nature of observation or measurement. Quantum theory tells us the laws of physics only determine a quantum state of potentiality, which describes all possible ways in which some observable value of the quantum state can be observed. Although usually not recognized, quantum theory relies on an underlying assumption that an observer must exist.

Relativity theory tells us the observer follows a worldline through a space-time geometry as the observer makes those observations. The holographic principle tells us that every observational event on the observer's worldline is like a screen output from the holographic screen surrounding the observer at the central point of view. We can formulate the quantum state either as a sum over all possible ways in which configuration states of information can become encoded on the holographic screen, or as a sum over all possible paths of the observer through the space-time geometry, which only arises as a spatial-temporal projection of images from the screen. Every event on the observer's worldline is a decision point where a choice is made to observe an actual configuration state of information and to follow some particular path.

The big mystery in quantum theory is about how choices are made each event. An event is a decision point where the quantum state branches into all possible paths, and there is always a choice about which path to follow. The laws of physics only determine the quantum state, which describes all possible paths. If choices are made in the normal way, the path of least action is

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most likely followed. The path of least action is like the shortest distance between two points in a curved space-time geometry, like a great circle that connects two points on the surface of a sphere, and the normal way of choosing is random choice.

The fundamental nature of observation is about the choices made that choose a particular path. Every event is a decision point where the quantum state branches into all possible paths, and with every choice some particular path is followed. The path of least action is only the normal path, or the most likely path in the sense of quantum probability. That path naturally arises in the normal flow of energy characterizing the observer's world, which fundamentally arises from the accelerated expansion of space that creates the observer's world in a big bang event.

To be clear, it is the observer that follows a time-like worldline and enters into an accelerated frame of reference. It is the observer that faces a choice at every decision point about which path to follow. Either all choices are made randomly, in which case there really is no choice, or the observer has a choice to make every event and decision point about which path to follow.

If quantum theory turns out to be bogus, as Einstein believed when he stated "God does not play dice", and everything in physical reality is strictly determined by the laws of physics, then there is no choice at all. Even if quantum theory is valid, if all choices are made randomly, there still is no real choice, just a roll of the dice. The only way there can be a real choice is if the observer has the freedom to choose which path to follow. We call that freedom of choice "free will".

Is there really a choice? To answer this question is to discuss the nature of the life force. We are now out of the realm of physics; the realm of what is observed in the world, and in the realm of metaphysics; the realm of the observer of that world. The simple fact is the process of choice is not described by physics. The laws of physics only determine the quantum state of potentiality. The usual way physicists understand the process of choice is as random unbiased choice, but metaphysically speaking, there is the possibility of biased choice. Biased choice does not violate the laws of physics any more than random choice violates the laws of physics, since the process of choice is outside the laws of physics.

Physicists do not like this fact, since once choices are made in a biased way, the laws of physics lose their predictability. The laws of physics can only determine a quantum state of potentiality, which is very much like a probability distribution. A process of random choice measures that probability distribution in an unbiased way, and so allows for predictability in the sense of the most likely path, which is the path of least action. Once choices are made in a biased way, the chooser can choose things any way the chooser wants to choose things, at the whim of the chooser, and so there is no predictability in the way the choices are made.

What is the nature of this bias? To answer this question is to understand the nature of the life force. The quantum state of potentiality describes all possible paths. In some of those paths coherently organized bound states of information will form, and those bound states will tend to self-replicate their forms over a sequence of events. The nature of a bound state is called a body. A body is a coherently organized bound state of information that tends to self-replicate its form over a sequence of events while the behaviors of the body are enacted. The formation and self-replication of the form of a body is a possible path included in the quantum state of potentiality.

That possibility naturally arises because bits of information tend to align with each other and form coherently organized bound states in the normal flow of energy that characterizes the observer's world.

To be clear about things, the observer is the nature of consciousness present at the center of its world. The observer's world is defined on a bounding surface of space that acts as a holographic screen. An event on the observer's worldline is only a screen output from the observer's screen. All the bits of information that define everything in the observer's world are encoded on the observer's screen. Just as the process of choice is outside the laws of physics, the observer is outside that observable world. Only the observer can observe and choose.

How does the observer choose which path to follow? The answer is actually quite simple. Feelings of connection feel good while feelings of disconnection feel bad, so the observer is naturally biased to choose feelings of connection. As energy flows through the observer's world in the normal way, the flow of energy tends to come into alignment, and feelings of connection naturally arise. The alignment of the flow of energy leads to the formation of coherently organized bound states of information as bits of information tend to align together. Those aligned feelings of connection are perceived as emotional body feelings that arise in the observer's body and relate the observer's body to other things in the observer's world. The perception of body feelings is the only way the observer can feel connected.

The nature of the observer's bias is to choose to follow paths that lead to the expression of feelings of connection rather than disconnection. The observer naturally chooses to feel connected instead of disconnected since feelings of connection feel good while feelings of disconnection feel bad.

The nature of the life force is nothing more than the observer's bias to choose feelings of connection instead of disconnection. Fundamentally, this choice is made because feelings of connection feel good while feelings of disconnection feel bad. This bias naturally leads to the formation and self-replication of the coherently organized bound states of information we call bodies. Those bodies naturally express feelings of connection as emotional actions are enacted over a sequence of events that arise in the flow of energy. The normal flow of energy in the observer's world naturally leads to the formation and self-replication of bound states. Feelings of connection are naturally expressed as the flow of energy comes into alignment, bits of information align together, and bound states form.

Only the observer can choose feelings of connection instead of disconnection. That is the nature of the life force. This biased process of choice is outside the laws of physics just as the true nature of the observer is outside the observer's world. Only the observer can perceive its world and choose which path to follow.

How does the observer choose? Again, the answer is very simple. The observer chooses which path to follow with its focus of attention on that particular path. Just as only the observer can enter into a frame of reference, follow the path of a worldline, and make observations on that path, only the observer can choose to follow a particular path as the observer focuses its attention on that path. Choices are made as the observer focuses its attention on the path.

To be clear about things, the life force is about the preservation of life in general, not the preservation of a particular life. The flow of life arises in the normal flow of energy that characterizes the observer's world. The observer's body is only the central form of information in the observer's world, like the form of an avatar in a virtual reality world. In the sense of reincarnation, the observer may know many different central forms or bodies that arise over the course of time in its world.

Why would the observer ever choose feelings of disconnection instead of connection? The only possible answer is the observer's self-identification with the form of its body. The only thing that ever disturbs the normal functioning of the life force is if the observer identifies itself with the form of its body and chooses to defend the survival of its body as though its existence depends on it. The only thing that can disturb the normal functioning of the life force is if the observer chooses to defend the survival of a particular body rather than flow with life.

Only self-defensive expressions create feelings of disconnection. Only the observer's mistaken self-identification with the form of its body and assumption that existence depends on body survival leads the observer to defend the survival of its body as though its existence depends on it. Only that mistaken assumption can disturb the normal functioning of the life force. That assumption is the only reason the observer would choose to suffer feelings of disconnection.

If the observer does not identify itself with the form of its body, then it will only choose feelings of connection, and the observer will flow with life through the process of reincarnation. This willingness to flow with life leads to feelings of connection and aligned actions, and leads to the best of all possible worlds. The unwillingness to flow with life that arises with self-identification and self-defensive actions can only give rise to feelings of disconnection and make things worse as the normal flow of energy through the observer's world is disturbed.

The thing to be clear about is the observer is only the consciousness present at the center of its world. The observer is not only present at the birth of its current personal self, but is present at the creation of its world. The personal self is only the central form of information that appears in the observer's world. Over the course of time, the observer may know many different central forms in its world. This is a natural consequence of the one-world-per-observer paradigm, just as a consensual reality is a natural consequence of overlapping cosmic horizons.

The personal self is only a self-replicating organized form of information that develops in the observer's world due to the tendency of bits of information to align with each other and the flow of energy to come into alignment. This is a natural consequence of quantum entanglement and the principle of least action. Even if all choices are made randomly, as usually assumed in quantum theory, such organized forms of information will naturally develop, but choices are not just made randomly. There is a significant factor of bias in the decision process.

This bias arises with the focus of attention of the observer. The observer is naturally biased to choose feelings of connection instead of disconnection, since feelings of connection feel good while feelings of disconnection feel bad. If the observer identifies itself with its personal self, the observer is biased to defend the survival of its personal self as though its existence depends on it.

All the different observers that share a consensual reality together make similar decisions with their own focus of attention, and so the whole consensual process is extraordinarily complex in nature, but not purely random or accidental. Different observers not only share information in their consensual reality, but they also share in the normal flow of energy.

A personal self develops because that is the way information becomes organized into a complex form due to the complex way energy flows through the observer's world. This happens even with random choice, but the process also becomes unpredictable due to the observer's biased focus of attention on its world. There is a large degree of randomness in this process, but also a fair degree of bias, and so the process is characterized both by complexity and unpredictability. Whatever path the observer follows in its world reflects the bias of the observer. That bias can only arise with the emotional expressions of its personal self, since the only natural way to make choices is either to feel good or to defend yourself.

Past conditioning only has to do with the way information is organized and energy flows through the observer's world, but this is as valid for the conditioning that occurs within a personal self as for the conditioning that relates one personal self to the next personal self, and so there is a tendency for that bias to bleed through from one personal self into the next personal self. Past conditioning in large part reflects the observer's biased focus of attention on its world. The only way to truly end this bias is if the observer withdraws the focus of its attention away from its world, which ultimately must lead to the path of return.

The observer's world is like a virtual reality composed of images projected from a computer screen and animated over a sequence of screen outputs in the flow of energy. A consensual reality with many observers, each at the center of its own holographic screen, is possible since the ultimate bounding surface of space that limits the observer's world is a cosmic horizon, and different cosmic horizons can overlap with each other, become entangled, and share information.

This sharing of information is just like an interactive computer network that allows different observers to interact with each other even though each observer only observes its own holographic screen. The computer network is composed of all the holographic screens, and is energized by the flow of energy that arises from the accelerated expansion of space itself that places each observer in an accelerated frame of reference and gives rise to each observer's cosmic horizon. This is just like an interactive computer network generated virtual reality world displayed on multiple computer screens and observed by multiple observers.

In the sense of an interactive computer network generated virtual reality world displayed on multiple computer screens and observed by multiple observers, the observer's choices about which things to observe in its world is what makes that interactive virtual reality game interesting to play. The observer makes those choices with the focus of attention of its consciousness on its world.

An event on the observer's accelerated worldline is only a screen output from its holographic screen, just like the animation of screen outputs from a digital computer screen. The perception of space arises from the spatial relationships between the images projected from the screen, and

the perception of time from the animation of events that connect different screen outputs. This animation of events arises with the flow of energy that characterizes the observer's world, which fundamentally arises from the acceleration of space itself that drives the expansion of the observer's world from the big bang event.

This explanation pretty much solves the puzzle of time. As the observer follows an accelerated worldline, a sequence of screen outputs arises over a sequence of events from the observer's holographic screen. Each event is a screen output. The screen outputs are animated over a sequence of events, just like the screen outputs of a computer. The flow of time is only a sequence of events that arise in the flow of energy that characterizes the observer's accelerated worldline. In this sense, the flow of time is only an animation of screen outputs. That animation of events is only possible because the observer follows an accelerated worldline.

The observer is always present now, and for this event. The observer follows a worldline through the space and time constructed around the observer. Space and time are constructed around the observer with each screen output from the holographic screen that surrounds the observer at the central point of view. The perception of space arises from the spatial relationships of projected images, and the flow of time as an ordered sequence of events on the observer's worldline, which is a sequence of screen outputs. The flow of energy through the observer's world connects each event to the next event in the flow of time. The observer is always present now and only remembers the past and anticipates the future. As energy flows through the observer's world and the cosmic horizon inflates in size, entropy tends to increase, which gives rise to memory in the form of coherently organized forms of information.

The quantum state of potentiality is only a sum over all possible ways in which information can become organized on the observer's holographic screen. Each event on the observer's worldline is a decision point where choices are made, and lead to the display of a particular configuration state of information with each screen output. If different choices are made, then the observer follows a different path through space and time and the observer's world appears different due to the different ways information is organized on the observer's screen. Whatever choices are made give rise to the observer's world. The many world interpretation of quantum theory can be understood in the sense of making different choices.

In non-dual metaphysics, the observer is referred to as the Self, but to be clear about things, the observer is nothing it can perceive in its world. The observer is nothing more than the consciousness present at the center of its world. All the animated images of things the observer can perceive in its world are only forms of information projected from the observer's holographic screen to the central point of view of the observer. Due to the nature of coherent organization, the observer's world is always organized around the central form of a body. The observer's body is always the central image, like the central character of a movie, or the image of an avatar in an interactive computer network generated virtual reality world displayed on a computer screen.

We usually think that organs of sensory perception in our body relay information about the world we perceive to our brain, but the holographic principle tells us all the information for everything the observer perceives in its world is defined on its holographic screen. There still is a relay of information about the observer's world but that relay of information is divisible into external

sensory perceptions of the observer's world and internal emotional perceptions of the observer's body. This division into external and internal is key to the process of self-identification.

The mental construction of a body-based self-concept can only occur with this division of external from internal. This division is what allows for the sense of being embodied and for the mental construction of the self-concept of being an embodied person in the world emotionally related to other things in the world.

How does this division of external from internal occur? To understand this division we need to look more closely at emotional expressions. Emotional expressions can only arise in the flow of energy. The expression of emotion is the flow of energy that animates the form of the observer's body and emotionally relates the observer's body to other things in the observer's world. A key aspect of all emotional expressions is their coherent organization.

The expression of emotion is the way the flow of energy through the observer's body is coherently organized as that emotional energy flows through the form of the observer's body. Only the coherent organization of the flow of energy allows for coherent self-replication of the form of the observer's body over a sequence of events while behaviors of the body are enacted. Emotional actions always relate the observer's body to other things in the observer's world.

In a consensual reality shared by many observers, each observer observes the localized flow of emotional energy through the form of its own body, and each observer chooses to express certain emotions with its focus of attention on that central form. The global flow of energy through the consensual reality that arises from all these localized expressions is intrinsically connected. This is possible in the consensual reality since all energy ultimately arises from dark energy.

The exponential expansion of space that creates each observer's world in a big bang event also gives rise to each observer's cosmic horizon, and as the cosmic horizons can overlap with each other, the worlds of different observers not only can share information together, but also can share in the global flow of energy.

The observer not only perceives the coherently organized form of its body, but also the coherently organized flow of emotional energy through its body that allows for the coherent self-replication of the form of its body over a sequence of events, while those emotional actions relate its body to other things in its world. The key aspect of the expression of emotions is that the observer perceives the emotional body feelings that arise with all emotional expressions. The observer is only perceiving the flow of emotional energy that animates the form of its body, but that perception of the flow of energy leads to a strange phenomena. With that perception of emotional body feelings, the observer feels like it is self-limited to the form of its body. That is the meaning the observer gives to that perception.

This raises an important question: how does meaning arise? Who gives meaning to its perceptions? Just as only the observer can perceive its world and only the observer can choose which things in its world to perceive, only the observer can give meaning to those perceptions.

The meaning the observer gives to the things it perceives in its world arises with the flow of energy through its world. Only the flow of energy through the observer's world connects one event to the next event, and allows the observer to give meaning to those animated actions. Only the flow of energy creates the context within which meaning is given.

The nature of that meaning always arises within an emotional context. Only the flow of emotional energy through the observer's body allows the observer to give emotional meaning to the actions of its body. To state it simply, to act is to give meaning. Only emotional actions relate the observer's body to other things in its world. Those emotional actions always create the context within which meaning is given. Only that flow of emotional energy creates the context within which the observer gives emotional meaning to events as that flow of energy connects one event to the next event in the observer's animated world. The observer gives meaning as the observer perceives the flow of energy that connects events.

The nature of context tells us that there really is no way to separate actions from the consciousness that perceives those actions. There is no way to separate the content of consciousness from the consciousness that knows about that content. Aligned actions can only arise with the development of the coherent organization of information, which always develops within the context of the flow of energy. The development of coherent organization inherently requires the formation of a bound state of information that we call a body, and only the coherent flow of energy through that body allows for the aligned actions that we call emotional expressions of that body. This development only arises under the scrutiny and the observation of the consciousness that perceives the actions of that body.

The inverse statement of *to act is to give meaning* is *actions follow from clear seeing*. Aligned actions can only arise as the observer of those actions clearly sees the way in which things are connected and the way energy flows to connect those things. The energetic connections are the nature of the context that allows meaning to be given to actions, but those aligned actions can only arise when those connections are clearly seen. Clearly seeing those connections allows for the expression of aligned actions. In the sense of symmetry breaking, there is always a critical process that allows for the development of these connections.

We recognize such critical periods in the development of biological organisms. Critical periods of development characterize the human mind, such as language development. An interesting fact about the development of the human mind is that before the age of about two to three years old, a human child cannot differentiate between different sized objects and the same sized object as it appears at different distances. It is as though an object in space is displayed as the projection of a shadow on a two dimensional screen. There is no recognition of a change in the third dimensional distance to the object as the object appears to change in size.

The idea of distance in the third dimension has not yet developed. There is only recognition of size. The ability to recognize a change in the third dimensional distance to the object only arises contemporaneously with the development of language and a self-concept, which occurs in a critical period of development.

This not only points out the necessity of the development of context in order to develop a language based self-concept, but also shows how that context can only arise with the development of coherent organization of information. Only coherent organization allows meaning to be given to emotional actions, but this coherent organization is also what allows for the phenomena of holography².

Only the observer gives emotional meaning to events as the observer perceives the flow of energy underlying all emotional actions. Those actions only arise with the observer's focus of attention. Only the focus of attention of the observer's consciousness gives rise to the choices that are made underlying all emotional actions. Only the observer gives meaning to those actions, and only the observer chooses those actions with its focus of attention. The nature of that emotional meaning is belief. To say *to act is to give meaning* is exactly the same as to say *perceiving is believing*. The observer believes whatever it perceives.

Beliefs only arise with perceptions. The nature of perception is knowledge, and only the observer perceives and knows about that knowledge. That knowledge can become extraordinarily complex due to the nature of complexity underlying the development of the coherent organization of information, as that organization develops in a biological organism. The ultimate example of this knowledge is the development of a mentally constructed body-based self-concept. A perceivable self-concept is self-knowledge the observer of the mind knows about itself, but in reality is only an emotionally energized belief the observer believes about itself.

This is where something very peculiar can happen. The observer can identify itself with the form of its body. More exactly, the observer identifies itself with the mentally constructed self-concept of being an embodied person in its world that is emotionally related to other things in its world. The fundamental reason the observer can identify itself with its mentally constructed self-concept is because the observer really feels self-limited to the form of its body as it perceives the emotional body feelings that arise with the expression of emotional actions.

This peculiar process of self-identification can only arise because the observer knows something about itself that is untrue. The observer knows itself to be an embodied personal self that is emotionally related to other things in its world. That is the nature of the false self-knowledge. Once this self-identification occurs, the emotional expressions tend to become self-defensive in nature and defend body survival as though the existence of the observer depends on it. The truth of the situation is that the existence of the observer depends on nothing it perceives in its world, which is very much like an interactive computer network generated virtual reality world displayed on a digital computer screen. The animated form of the observer's personal self is only the central image displayed on the screen.

In reality, the observer is only watching the animation of images from its central point of view at the center of its world. Everything that appears to happen in that world is observer-dependent, and depends on the relative frame of reference of the observer, but the observer's own timeless existence is absolute and depends on nothing it perceives in that animated world. The only true knowledge the observer can ever know about itself is the true nature of its existence. Only when the observer finally realizes the truth about itself can it know itself as it really is, nothing more than the consciousness present at the center of its world.

Inherent in the mental construction of self-referential thoughts is the absurdity of a paradox of self-reference. That absurdity arises as the observer of the mental screen identifies itself with a body-based self-concept inherent in the expression of self-referential thoughts. The observer is nothing more than the consciousness present at the central point of view and only perceives images projected from the holographic screen surrounding itself, which arises in the observer's accelerated frame of reference. The only true knowledge the observer can ever know about itself is its own sense of being present, which is its own sense of I-am-ness.

The expression of self-referential thoughts is very much like the animation of images displayed on a screen, like the animation of images of a virtual reality world displayed on a computer screen. The central character of that animation expresses the thought "I am this particular person in this world that is emotionally related to other things in this world". The observer of the animation believes this nonsense about itself as it identifies itself with the central character. In a very real sense, this is only possible because the observer has suspended disbelief. The phenomena of self-identification arises with the willing suspension of disbelief.

This willing suspension of disbelief is like a hypnotic trance state induced as the observer focuses its attention on its animated self-concept. The only way this hypnotic spell can be broken is with disbelief, which ultimately requires the observer to withdraw the focus of its attention away from its self-concept. The spell is ultimately broken when the observer focuses its attention on its own sense of being present as the consciousness present at the center of its world.

The mentally constructed self-concept of being an embodied person in the world that is emotionally related to other things in the observer's world is not what the observer is, but what the observer knows about itself. That is the nature of the false self-knowledge. The observer knows something about itself that is untrue. The only true knowledge the observer can ever know about itself is that it exists.

To be clear about things, body survival is only the coherent self-replication of the form of the body over a sequence of events. Body survival has to do with the way information is coherently organized on the observer's holographic screen, and the way emotional energy coherently flows through the form of the observer's body to allow for that self-replication of body form over a sequence of events.

Every expression of emotion or personal will is a choice. Everything the observer can do in its world is a choice. The observer can choose what to do in its world, but the choices only arise as the observer chooses what to observe in its world. The observer chooses what to observe in its world with its focus of attention. The process of choice only arises with its focus of attention.

Why would the observer ever choose feelings of disconnection over connection? The only way to answer this question is to explore the nature of self-identification. The really big questions are: what identifies itself with what, and what drives that process of self-identification? Since we are now in the realm of metaphysics, the answers are no longer deducible from basic scientific principles, but have a distinct metaphysical quality to them, the quality of consciousness.

The natural way to choose is to choose feelings of connection, since connected feelings feel good. This leads to the best of all possible worlds as the observer's choices come into alignment with unbiased choices. The only way this natural process is disturbed is if the observer identifies itself with the form of its body.

The observer only chooses feelings of disconnection instead of connection in order to defend body survival. That is where its focus of attention is focused when the observer identifies itself with the form of its body. All self-defensive expressions create more feelings of disconnection as the flow of emotional energy through the observer's body goes out of alignment with the normal flow of energy in the observer's world. The only reason the observer makes this choice is because the observer mistakenly assumes its existence arises from its body.

The choices the observer makes with the expression of personal will reveal its character. The observer's character is like the central character of a movie or its avatar in an animated virtual reality world displayed on a computer screen the observer is only observing. The observer makes the choices that reveal its character with the focus of its attention on its world. The expression of personal will always reveals the character of the observer's personal self.

The expression of personal will is always biased. What is the nature of this bias? There are two very different ways in which the bias can be expressed. The first way is closely related to the unbiased expression of will. As long as the choices are made randomly, things will tend to follow the path of least action, which is the most energy efficient way for things to act since it expends the least amount of energy. As things follow the path of least action, the flow of energy through things tends to come into alignment. This is the normal way for energy to flow through the observer's world. As long as the flow of energy is in alignment, the observer will perceive feelings of connection that arise from that alignment.

Feelings of connection feel good while feelings of disconnection feel bad, so the observer is naturally biased to choose feelings of connection over disconnection, which tends to bring the observer's choices into alignment with the normal flow of things and the unbiased expression of will. This aligned state is often called the integrated state. As long as the observer's choices stay in alignment with the normal flow of things in the observer's world, aligned actions are expressed and feelings of connection are perceived. The integrated state is often referred to as harmonious because of its alignment with the unbiased expression of will.

The normal flow of energy in the observer's world tends to come into alignment as long as choices are made in an unbiased way, since that is the most energy efficient way for energy to flow, which is the nature of the path of least action. Any biased choice that interferes with the normal flow of energy is thus a waste of time and energy. This waste of time and energy is the meaning of the wasteland in the grail legend. The integrated state is the meaning of the grail.

The best of all possible worlds arises with the unbiased expression of will. This is the natural consequence of a holographic world, where the flow of energy tends to come into alignment and bits of information tend to align together with unbiased choices. This is really the only way the localized flow of energy through the observer's body can come into alignment with the normal flow of energy in the observer's world.

Only this alignment of localized flow with global flow allows for the expression of aligned actions and the perception of feelings of connection. All expressions of self-defensive personal will only interfere with the normal expression of unbiased will and tend to make things worse. Everything the observer can do in its world in the sense of expressing self-defensive personal will is a brief localized disturbance in the normal flow of things, and tends to make things worse.

All self-defensive expressions of personal will interfere with the normal flow of things in the observer's world and the normal unbiased expression of will. These self-defensive expressions are always an expression of futility, like trying to stop a tidal wave by throwing a rock at the tidal wave. The unbiased expression of will arises with the acceleration of space itself that creates the observer's world in a big bang event and drives the expansion of the observer's world. That expansion is the nature of the tidal wave. All expressions of self-defensive personal will are an act of futility as they have absolutely no chance of stopping the tidal wave.

Even worse, self-defensive expressions of personal will only lead to feelings of disconnection that feel bad. The observer only chooses to suffer bad feelings because it mistakenly attributes its existence to arise from its body. Ironically, it only continues to make that false assumption if it continues to express self-defensive personal will. That is the nature of the vicious cycle.

This brings us back to the question of why the observer chooses to feel disconnected rather than connected even though feelings of disconnection feel bad while feelings of connection feel good. The only possible answer is the process of self-identification that arises with the expression of self-defensive personal will. The observer identifies itself with the form of its body because it really feels like it is self-limited to the form of its body as it perceives the body feelings arising with emotional expressions. The feeling of being embodied leads to a false assumption. The observer mistakenly attributes its existence to arise from its body. The expression of self-defensive personal will arises to defend the survival of the observer's body as though its existence depends on it. This leads to a vicious cycle. The observer feels compelled to defend its body survival as though its existence depends on it, which perpetuates its self-identification.

The vicious cycle of the observer's self-identification with the form of its body only arises with self-defensive expressions of personal will. As the observer perceives the emotional body feelings arising with self-defensive expressions, the observer feels self-limited to the form of its body and mistakenly attributes its existence to arise from its body. That false assumption perpetuates its self-identification with the form of its body and the expression of self-defensive personal will in order to defend its body survival as though its existence depends on it.

The process of self-identification can only arise with self-defensive expressions of personal will. That is the only way the observer can feel self-limited to the form of its body as it perceives the body feelings that arise with self-defensive expressions. These self-defensive expressions are inherent in all self-referential thoughts arising in the observer's mind that emotionally relate its body-based self-concept to the concept of other things in its world. Only the mental construction of self-concerned thoughts gives rise to the observer's body-based self-concept. Only the observer can identify itself with its mentally constructed body-based self-concept.

Once this self-identification arises the observer then feels compelled to defend the survival of its body as though its existence depends on it, which only perpetuates the vicious cycle. Any kind of self-defensive expression gives rise to the observer's self-identification, which only gives rise to more self-defensive expressions, and so the vicious cycle goes round and round.

At the deepest emotional level possible, these self-defensive expressions arise from the fear of non-existence. In the process of identifying itself with its body, the observer attributes its existence to arise from its body. This is obviously a mistaken assumption for reasons that we've already discussed, but as we'll see when we discuss the observer's underlying reality, there really is something to this fear of non-existence. This is the fear of being nothing.

Self-defensive expressions naturally arise in bodies as part of the natural process that allows for the self-replication of the form of a coherently organized body, but once the observer identifies itself with the form of its body, this natural process becomes exaggerated and distorted, like the out-of-control amplification that occurs in a positive feedback loop. This distortion arises in mental imagination. With every self-concerned thought constructed in mental imagination, another self-defensive emotion is expressed in the body, and that emotional energy is utilized by the mind to construct more self-concerned thoughts. The body not only responds to actual threats to its survival in the moment, but also responds to imagined threats. This kind of vicious cycle perpetuates the self-defensive expressions.

Stimulus and response is a natural consequence of coherent organization. If we think of the mental landscape as a phase space, that landscape is characterized by peaks and valleys. An emotional response is like an attractor that drains a basin of attraction, just like a river drains a mountain range. The mental landscape is characterized by many different attractors and basins of attraction. A particular stimulus is an initial condition that occurs within some basin of attraction. Energy flows over time from that initial condition toward a particular attractor, which leads to a particular kind of response. Both the attractors and the basins of attraction are conditioned, in that they can only develop with the mental development of coherent organization, which always develops within the framework of environmental conditions.

This classical description of the mental landscape in terms of attractors and basins of attraction is too limited, since every event is a decision point where the quantum state branches into all possible paths. The classical path is the path of least action. If we think of the mind as a mental screen that encodes bits of information, every mental event is a decision point where the state of information for the mind branches into all possible states, due to all the different ways in which information can become encoded on the different pixels that comprise the mental screen.

If we think of the mind as a mental screen, images of mental imagination arise through the same kind of body-based processes that allow for the self-replication of the form of the body. For the purpose of a self-concept, the most important image is a body-based self-image. A self-concept only arises in the mind if a body-based self-image is held in mental imagination over a sequence of mental events, which requires the coherent self-replication of the form of that self-image. A self-concept arises in a self-referential thought, as a body-based self-image is emotionally related to images of other things held in mental imagination. In self-referential thoughts, a body-based self-image is emotionally related to other mental images with emotional body feelings.

The construction of self-referential thoughts in mental imagination is inherently problematic. The desire to control things is especially counter-productive. The desire to control things is expressed in order to force things to satisfy desires, but since nothing ever really wants to be controlled, eventually all things will frustrate any attempts to control them. The desire to control things in order to force things to satisfy desires eventually leads to the frustration of desires. Also problematic is the conflicted nature of self-concerned thoughts. Things that are initially desired can easily turn into things that are feared or hated due to the rapidly changing nature of mental imagination and changes in emotional context. Expressions of mental imagination are also immature, as they develop early in life during critical periods of development. But the biggest problem with mental imagination is its inherent absurdity, as the observer of the mental screen identifies itself with the form of a body-based self-image it perceives as displayed on the mental screen with the construction of all self-referential thoughts.

Self-defensive expressions of personal will are an interference with the normal flow of things, and only lead to feelings of disconnection as the flow of emotional energy through the observer's body goes out of alignment with the normal flow of energy in the observer's world. Expressions of personal will arise with the desire to hold onto things, control things, oppose things and defend things. These kinds of self-defensive emotional expressions relate the observer's body to other things in the observer's world. The observer can only feel embodied and identify itself with the form of its body if these kinds of self-defensive expressions of personal will are expressed.

The observer can only identify itself with the form of its body because it really feels self-limited to the form of its body as it perceives emotional body feelings arising with expressions of personal will. Those emotional expressions always relate the observer's body to other things in the observer's world. The observer attaches itself to its world with those emotional expressions, which always relate its body to other things in its world. The nature of that attachment process is its desire to hold onto things, control things, oppose things and defend things.

Only a process of detachment allows the observer to de-identify itself from its self-concept and to detach itself from its world. Detachment is a process of letting go and doing nothing in a personal sense. When expressions of self-defensive personal will come to an end and are no longer expressed, the observer no longer feels self-limited to the form of its body and can no longer identify itself with the form of its body. In this desireless state, the observer can only know itself as the consciousness present at the center of its world.

The observer can only know itself as somebody in its world with the expression of personal will. The observer can only appear to be somebody in its world if it expresses personal will and chooses to do something in its world. If the observer chooses to do nothing in its world in a personal sense, then it knows itself as nobody, nothing but the consciousness present at the center of its world.

The observer's world is a holographic projection of images from a holographic screen to the central point of view of the observer. Those images arise due to coherent organization of information and appear three dimensional even though all the information for the images is encoded on a two dimensional bounding surface of space. The ultimate bounding surface

limiting the observer's world is its cosmic horizon, which arises from the acceleration of space itself that drives the expansion of the observer's world from the big bang event. The acceleration of space is the source of the normal flow of energy characterizing the observer's world, and ultimately drives all the physical and biological processes in that world. All the projected images of the observer's world are animated in this flow of energy.

The observer follows an accelerated worldline due to the acceleration of space itself. In a very real sense, the observer is attached to the accelerated frame of reference that arises with the expansion of space. Although this may seem weird, the observer's willingness to let go and undergo a detachment process arises with the observer's willingness to enter into an ultimate state of free fall. Horizon complementarity tells us that when the observer enters into an ultimate state of free fall, the observer's holographic screen disappears, and all the images of the observer's world as projected from the screen to the observer also disappear.

The observer is nothing more than the consciousness present at the center of its world. While all the perceivable things in the observer's world appear as images projected from its holographic screen, and all those images are animated over a sequence of events in the flow of energy, the observer itself is nothing that it can perceive in its world, and it is not animated. The observer's consciousness is timelessly present at the center of its world, nothing more than the perceiving point itself, while the observer's world is only composed of the animated images projected from its holographic screen, like shadows projected onto a wall.

If the observer's world is like a projection of images from a holographic screen, with all the information for that world ultimately encoded on its cosmic horizon, then what illuminates that hologram? What illuminates all the images that are projected from the screen to the central point of view of the observer? The only possible answer is the light of consciousness itself.

What is the observer's focus of attention focused on when the observer chooses to do nothing? The observer's focus of attention is focused on its own sense of being present. The focus of attention of consciousness is focused on the light of consciousness itself. This shift in the focus of attention away from its world and towards its own true nature is described as the process of turning around in all metaphysical discussions of spiritual existence. With this shift in the focus of its attention, the observer does nothing in its world, and everything in its world plays out as an expression of unbiased will. In that divine light, the observer's world appears like an animated movie displayed on a screen that it only perceives.

In this process of looking within and focusing its attention on its own sense of being present, the observer rejects all the false self-knowledge it knows about itself and only accepts the truth about itself. It rejects its mentally constructed self-concept of being an embodied personal self that is emotionally related to other things in its world. Once it clearly sees the truth that it is nothing more than the consciousness present at the center of its world that perceives everything in its world, its surrender naturally follows. It clearly sees that it only defends the survival of an illusion of what it is with its self-defensive expressions of personal will, and that the defense of that illusion is always a waste of its time and energy.

At this point, the observer clearly sees that the desire to defend the survival of that illusion is only motivated by the fear of non-existence. Once the observer clearly sees the true nature of existence, of what it is, it also sees that it really has nothing to lose, it really has nothing to defend, and it really has nothing to fear.

Without self-defensive expressions of personal will, self-identification with a personal self is not possible. This state of being is referred to as innocence prior to truth realization and wisdom after truth realization. The self-identified state is called delusion, since the observer identifies itself with an illusion of what it is.

Without self-defensive expressions of personal will that interfere with the normal unbiased expression of will, the flow of energy in the observer's world comes into alignment, aligned actions are naturally expressed, and feelings of connection are perceived. In this sense, only love can transcend fear.

There is something very odd about this process of looking within. As the observer looks within, it withdraws the focus of its attention away from its world. As the observer withdraws attention from its world and looks within, it sees the beliefs it believes about itself, the self-knowledge it knows about itself, and the self-concepts with which it identifies itself. All this self-knowledge is false, as it is something the observer perceives and knows about itself, but is not what it is.

In clearly seeing the falseness of that self-knowledge, the observer has no choice but to reject that false knowledge, which is the negation process. The observer looks within, discriminates the true from the false, and rejects the false. That false knowledge is removed from the inner space. At first it may seem that there is nothing there in the inner space except for false self-knowledge, but that is not quite true. There is one thing within the inner space that is real and cannot be removed. That one thing is the observer's own sense of being present as the consciousness present at the center of its world.

The odd thing about this process of looking within is that the perceiving point is looking for itself. The observer looks within, rejects all the false self-knowledge it knows about itself, and finds nothing. The truth is the observer can know nothing about itself except that it exists, a truth the observer confirms as it focuses its attention on its own timeless sense of being present. The observer cannot know what it is. The observer can only be what it is, nothing but consciousness.

This process of looking within to find its true nature is the ultimate kind of soul-searching. The observer is searching for itself. The observer enters into a dark night of the soul as it rejects all the false self-knowledge it knows about itself and finds nothing. The only way out of this darkness is with its acceptance of the truth. Only the observer can accept the truth that it is nothing but consciousness.

Negation is not enough to complete the detachment process. As long as more self-defensive expressions of personal will are expressed, there are more self-identifications to negate. The shift in the focus of attention that occurs with looking within is only possible with surrender. The surrender process only goes forward as emotional energy is withdrawn from self-defensive

expressions of personal will. The withdrawal of that emotional energy can only occur with the withdrawal of the observer's focus of attention on its self-defensive expressions.

As the observer withdraws its attention from its self-defensive expressions, emotional energy is also withdrawn from those expressions. The withdrawal of emotional energy away from its self-defensive expressions occurs naturally as the observer begins to see the true nature of what it is.

This shift in its focus of attention onto its own sense of being present occurs as the observer begins to clearly see the true nature of what it is. The observer sees that it is nothing but a timelessly existing presence of consciousness.

With this shift in the focus of attention, the observer also clearly sees what it is not; that it is not the animated form of a personal self that appears in the world it perceives. The animated form of a personal self can only become animated with the expression of personal will. It may feel like the observer is self-limited to the form of an animated personal self as the observer perceives emotional feelings that arise in the animation, but that is not what the observer is. There is only the emotional feeling of being a personal self related to other things in the world.

If emotional energy is withdrawn from expressions of personal will, the form of the personal self is de-animated and the feeling of being a personal self comes to an end. If the observer shifts the focus of its attention away from its world and withdraws emotional energy from its world, the animated form of its personal self is de-animated. The feeling of being a personal self can come to an end, but the observer cannot stop existing. In reality, only an illusion comes to an end.

Ultimately, only the observer's shift in the focus of its attention onto its own sense of being present transcends its mistaken self-identification with the animated form of its body-based personal self, just as only its surrender can transcend its self-defensive expressions of personal will. This looking within to discover the true nature of itself is called turning around, which is the meaning of the word repent in all metaphysical discussions of spiritual existence. The only real sin is the sin of self-identification from which all self-defensive expressions arise.

The negation process can only go forward with surrender. Once the observer surrenders, it stops expressing self-defensive personal will. The observer puts its trust in unbiased will to sort out what is for the best, and accepts the outcome of any situation as an expression of unbiased will. The observer accepts whatever it is given with gratitude. Just as important to the process, the observer becomes devoted to the divine. It becomes devoted to the divine presence that is present in all things, including itself. That divine presence is its own consciousness. Its devotion to that divine presence of consciousness leads it to shift the focus of its attention away from its world and onto its own sense of being present.

Whether the observer gets there through a process of negation, surrender, or a combination of the two processes, it always ends up in the same place, itself. An observer that knows itself as the consciousness present at the center of its world is called enlightened. What is the underlying reality or source of that divine light?

Knowing oneself as the light of consciousness present at the center of one's world is called enlightenment. Enlightenment follows from the disappearance of one's world and truth realization. This topic is discussed in the next article.

Nisargadatta gives expression to this timeless wisdom:

Mere knowledge is not enough; the knower must be known.

Without knowledge of the knower there can be no peace.

I know myself as I am in reality.

I am neither the body nor the mind. I am beyond all these.

You are accustomed to deal with things, physical and mental.

I am not a thing, nor are you.

We are neither matter nor energy, neither body nor mind.

Once you have a glimpse of your own being you will not find me difficult to understand.

You must gain your own experience.

We believe so many things on hearsay. We never cared to verify.

You are the source of reality—a dimensionless center of perception that imparts reality to whatever it perceives—a pure witness that watches what is going on and remains unaffected. It is only imagination and self-identification with the imagined that encloses and converts the inner watcher into a person.

The person is merely the result of a misunderstanding.

In reality there is no such thing.

Feelings, thoughts and actions race before the watcher in endless succession.

In reality there is no person, only the watcher identifying itself.

See the person you imagine yourself to be as a part of the world you perceive within your mind and look at the mind from the outside, for you are not the mind.

When you refuse to play the game you are out of it.

Find the immutable center where all movement takes birth.

Be the axis at the center—not whirling at the periphery.

Nothing stops you except fear.

You are afraid of impersonal being.

Once you realize that there is nothing in this world which you can call your own you look at it from the outside as you look at a play on the stage or a picture on the screen.

To know the picture as the play of light on the screen gives freedom from the idea that the picture is real.

In reality I only look.

Whatever is done is done on the stage.

Joy and sorrow, life and death, they are real to the man in bondage; to me they are all in the show, as unreal as the show itself.

Suffering is due entirely to clinging or resisting; it is a sign of our unwillingness to move on, to flow with life.

It is your desire to hold onto it that creates the problem. Let go.

*There is trouble only when you cling to something.
When you hold onto nothing, no trouble arises.
Give up all and you gain all.
Then life becomes what it was meant to be:
pure radiation from an inexhaustible source.
In that light the world appears dimly like a dream.*

*In the dream you love some and not others.
On waking up you find you are love itself, embracing all.
Personal love-invariably binds; love in freedom is love of all.*

The reward of Self-knowledge is freedom from the personal self.

I see only consciousness, and know everything to be but consciousness, as you know the pictures on the cinema screen to be but light.

*It is enough to shift attention from the screen onto oneself to break the spell.
It is enough to shift attention to the Self and keep it there.*

*Go beyond, go back to the source, go to the Self that is the same whatever happens.
See everything as emanating from the light which is the source of your own being.*

*Self-surrender is the surrender of all self-concern.
It cannot be done-it happens when you realize your true nature.*

When there is total surrender, complete relinquishment of all concern with one's past, present and future, with one's physical and spiritual security, when the shell of self-defense is broken, a new life dawns, full of love and beauty.

Complete self-surrender by itself is liberation.

*Freedom means letting go.
Spiritual maturity lies in the readiness to let go of everything.*

Discrimination will lead to detachment. You gain nothing. You leave behind what is not your own and find what you have never lost-your own being.

References

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