

The background of the cover is a deep blue space filled with a vast field of stars. In the upper right, there is a large, intricate nebula with wispy, glowing blue and white structures. At the bottom of the image, the curved horizon of the Earth is visible, showing a thin blue atmosphere and a dense network of bright yellow and orange city lights.

ONENESS

**Awakening From the Illusion
of Separation**

Joseph P. Kauffman

Oneness

Awakening From The Illusion of Separation

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to Mother Earth, who is in desperate need of healing. I also dedicate this book to you and to all human beings; we are the only ones that can heal this planet, and we must start by first healing ourselves. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this book to my loving parents. Without them I would not be able to share this message with you. Thank you all for all that you do, and thank you for taking the time to read this book, and for doing what it takes to heal the state of our world. Together we can create a better world for many generations to come.

Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Introduction	vii
1 You	1
2 The Body	5
3 The Mind	9
4 The Ego	13
5 Consciousness.....	21
6 Illusion and Truth.....	25
7 Observing Your Own Mind	33
8 Life.....	41
9 Love.....	45
10 Mindfulness.....	51
11 Living in Harmony with Nature.....	59
12 Peace on Earth.....	63
About the Author.....	67

Introduction

As you read these words, billions of living beings are suffering. Billions of people are living in poverty, starving from a lack of food, with no clean water to drink, and no way of maintaining their health, or of living a truly happy and fulfilling life.

Billions of animals are being tortured and abused in slaughterhouses, living their short lives in constant pain and fear, all so that humans can continue to use them for pleasure and profit.

Billions of trees are cut down every year, destroying the ecosystems that depend on them, and depleting the oxygen that we breathe, just so we can harvest their wood and use the land where they once stood, when there are plenty of other more sustainable options available.

Billions of people are suffering emotionally, unable to cope with their treatment from an entire society of people lacking in love and genuine compassion for one another.

War, famine, pollution, destruction, violence, oppression, racial injustice, torture, murder, genocide, deception, slavery—how can humanity allow such terrible things to happen? How can we be aware of the suffering that is happening on this planet, and not do anything at all to try to change it?

Are we really so comfortable in our ignorance that we choose to look away from these horrors purely for the sake of comfort, as if an entire planet full of suffering will somehow not affect us? As if we are not just as responsible for humanity's actions as anyone else? Are we really so preoccupied with our own lives that we can't even acknowledge what we are doing to the Earth?

The fact that humanity has allowed so much disaster to happen shows clearly our level of insanity. We have a delusional perception of life that causes us to behave in destructive and irrational ways. We are ignorant to the laws of nature and of our own existence, reflecting our mental confusion in every action that we take.

It is not our fault for thinking the way that we do; we merely adopted our ignorance from the generations of ignorant people before us, conditioned to be ignorant from the moment we were born. We are not to blame for our ignorance, but we are still responsible for our actions, and our delusional perception of life has produced far too much suffering.

Ignorance can no longer continue. We cannot turn our heads away from what is happening in the world and expect it to solve our problems. We need to change our way of life and how we interact with our environment, and this can only be done by first changing our way of thinking.

Every action is preceded by a thought. The way that we think and perceive greatly determines the way that we act and behave. If we want to change the way we treat the world, we have to change the way that we view the world, and especially the way we view ourselves in the world.

This change is necessary, and every human being who has been conditioned by society needs to evolve their ignorant perception of life, and become aware of the ways in which they impact the world.

This change is necessary, but it cannot be forced upon you. No one can make you change or force you to see

things from a new perspective. You have to be willing to see things differently than how you have been taught to see them. You have to be willing to accept that what you once thought to be true is actually false. You have to be willing to admit to your ignorance, let go of your conditioned beliefs, and begin replacing your ignorance with knowledge.

Ignorance can only be cured with knowledge, and in this book lies the knowledge to cure you of your ignorance and undo the conditioning that has formed your behavior—but if you do not have the desire to change, or do not have an open mind toward new information, the words in this book will be meaningless to you.

As much as humanity needs you to make this change, you can only change if you are willing to. These words are only able to convey a fraction of what is happening on the planet right now, but there are literally billions, if not trillions of living beings suffering from the results of our actions.

It may not seem like it, but we contribute to this suffering simply by remaining ignorant and submitting to the standards of an ignorant society. We all need to change our way of life and evolve past thousands of years of human ignorance. This might not be an easy task, and it may not be a task you thought you would ever have to perform, but we are at a crossroads between peace on Earth and self-destruction, and unless we want to destroy ourselves and countless other living beings, we have to move beyond our ignorance and adapt to a more loving, peaceful, and sustainable way of life.

We can make this transition from destroying the environment to healing the environment and realizing that we are not separate from the environment, but we have to be willing to change our current level of understanding, along with the disharmonic lifestyle that follows.

Naturally, we tend to move towards comfort, but the life we are comfortable with now is not in harmony with

Nature's laws. To change our way of living, we need to change our way of thinking, and shift our perspective to one that is in harmony with the way the Universe functions, no matter how uncomfortable this transition may make us feel at the time.

No one can force us to change. The blame is not on the governments, banks, corporations, media, and people that govern societies' laws. The blame is on us, the citizens, the people, the human beings that make up society and follow these laws made by man, rather than the laws of Nature.

We have to be willing to leave behind a way of thinking that no longer serves us, so we can embrace a new reality. We have to be open to new information, even if this information contradicts everything we once believed to be the truth. We have to be willing to face the truth, rather than hiding comfortably in our ignorance.

This book is a tool to aid you in the process of transformation, to provide you with the knowledge and understanding that is necessary for undoing your conditioning and healing the planet. The destruction we inflict upon Mother Earth is a result of our ignorant perception of life, and in order to heal this ignorance, we need to replace it with knowledge.

Allow the knowledge provided in this book to become the knowledge of your own mind and your own way of thinking. Allow these words to enlighten the darkest corners of yourself so that you may use your enlightenment to assist in the enlightenment of humanity. We all need to do our part of personally transforming ourselves so that we may collectively transform society. You are an integral part in this process of evolution, and humanity cannot make this change without you.

1 You

What better way to start this book than by talking about **You**. After all, this is **your** experience, and this book is focused on how **you** can unlearn **your** past conditioning and evolve **your** way of thinking. So, who are **You**? Or better yet, who do you *think* You are? When you refer to yourself as “me,” or “I,” what are you referring to? Are you referring to your body? Your mind? Your name? Some image you have of yourself? Do you really know?

Most people do not really know who they are. They have been told who they are, and they identify themselves with what they have been told they are—a name, a race, a social class, some role to be played in society. People cling to these beliefs for a sense of identity, and they become extremely fearful and defensive whenever their identity is questioned.

This is, of course, because they have no true sense of identity. Their identity is built upon a foundation of beliefs and concepts that have no stability in reality. The moment that they are faced with the reality that they are not who they think they are, they ignore and block out whatever information is making them feel uncomfortable, in order to restore their sense of security.

Identifying ourselves with things that have no stability makes us live in a constant state of fear. We hold onto these concepts and fear for their protection, believing that what happens to them happens to us. This way of thinking is completely delusional, and it is the biggest cause of our suffering and confusion.

To become free of this suffering, you need to understand deeply the essence of who you are, for if you knew the totality of your being you would no longer get upset over the insignificant threats to the imagined identity that you think you are.

The best way to discover who you are is by determining all of the things that you are not. Then you can disidentify with these things in order to come to a greater understanding of your true identity. Just as you peel off the layers of an onion one by one in order to reach the center, you can peel off your layers of false identification one by one until you are left with only your true self.

Let's start with the most basic form of identification: your name. This hardly deserves our attention as it is obvious to see that the reality of who you are is not confined to your name. Nonetheless, many people identify with their name and believe it to be an essential part of who they are.

How can the totality of your being be defined by a single label? Not to mention that the name you were given could have been any name. In society, we are able to communicate to one another individually by using our given names, but that does not mean we are those names. Names are just labels used to identify us, but we are not our names, and we should not identify with our names in order to get a sense of who we are.

Nor should we identify with our roles in society. You may play the role of a doctor, a waiter, a banker, a mother, a father—but these roles are not who you are. Neither are you what has happened to you in your past experiences. Many people suffer because they went through something

traumatizing in their past, and they hold onto that event and make it a part of who they are.

You are not your past. You may have been conditioned by the past, but you already existed before any of those past events happened. How could they be you? The only place that the past lives is in your memory, and if you suffer from something that happened in the past, it is because you have yet to forgive the event and let go of its emotional hold over you.

We fail to realize it in our daily lives, but there are so many things that we use to identify with. People even identify themselves with their financial status or the material items they own. Then they live in a constant state of fear and stress as they try to preserve these things in order to preserve their sense of identity. If, however, we knew our true identity, we wouldn't get so upset over these things that we have falsely identified with.

We have discussed how we are not our name, our roles in society, or our personal history, and this is not difficult to realize. But what about the body that we inhabit? Surely many people believe that their body is who they are, but is this really the truth?

Joseph P. Kauffman

2 The Body

From a very young age we are led to believe that we are this body that we inhabit, and believing this to be true, many people suffer because of what happens to their body, thinking that what happens to their body is actually happening to them. Not to mention the suffering that comes from comparing the appearance of your body to the bodies of other human beings, or the suffering that comes from those experiencing old age and the slow deterioration of the body, or those who are mistreated due to the pigmentation of the skin on their body.

This body is constantly changing. Cells are dying and being reproduced on nearly every level of your body, being fueled by the food that you eat. The body you have now is not the same body you were born with, not even close. There is not a single cell on your body that was there at the time of your birth. If this body is constantly changing, never staying the same for even a moment, how can this body be you?

And where does the line between “your body” and that which is “not your body” begin? If your body is made up of the organic matter that you consume, wouldn’t this organic matter be a part of what you call, “your body?”

Wouldn't your body be connected to the organic matter and the earth from which it came, and consequently the Universe in which the Earth exists, as well as all of the other bodies that inhabit this Universe? If your body is composed solely of the elements of the Universe, wouldn't your true body be the Universe itself?

In reality, there is only one body, and that body is the entire cosmos. An inconceivable amount of relationships are occurring between various energies and particles, giving us the illusion that there are separate entities. But all of these entities are connected to one another, made of star dust, and when the temporary relationships that form these apparently separate entities cease, these entities will return to the very same star dust from which they emerged.

Everything in the Universe is existing together, as one entity. There is no separation, no isolation, no "me" vs. "them;" there is only life, existing, moving, and evolving together. The only reason we feel like we are isolated and separate from one another is because we have been conditioned to see reality from this illogical perspective.

But this feeling of separation is just a result of our delusional perception of life. No matter how hard we try to see ourselves as separate, the truth remains that we are all one, eternally connected to each other on every level. In order to heal this sense of disconnection within ourselves, we need to heal our ignorant perception of life by replacing our ignorance with knowledge and proper understanding.

You may feel that you exist within your body, and that your body is separate from the rest of the world, but is this really true? Could you exist without the food that you eat, the air that you breathe, the water you drink, the soil that you walk on, or the sun that energizes the Earth?

So why do you view yourself as a separate entity? Your body is made up of atoms that were formed in the core of exploding stars, billions of years ago. The same particles

that form your being are connected to the particles that form my being, and the particles that form all living beings in the Universe.

According to the most accepted scientific theory, the physical Universe burst into existence from an event referred to as “The Big Bang.” From that moment in time, the Universe has been continuously evolving and expanding.

Subatomic particles formed atoms and molecules, which gave rise to nebulas and galaxies, which in turn created planets capable of hosting living organisms. The entire Universe has evolved over the course of billions of years, leading up to the emergence of the human being—an organism capable of reflecting on its existence, and understanding the universal process which gave rise to its birth.

You are not separate from the Universe; you are the Universe, experiencing itself in the form of a human being—a being equipped with its own unique senses, and a nervous system to interpret these senses in order to form a unique experience of the world around it. Your experience in this form may be different than the experience of another form, for no two forms exist under the same conditions, but this does not mean that you are separate from any other forms; just your experience and perception of life are different. In truth, nothing is separate. All things are connected to the total energy of the universe, just as all waves are connected to the totality of the ocean.

Joseph P. Kauffman

3 The Mind

We may inhabit the form of a body, but this body is not who we are. If we are not our body, who are we then? Are we our minds? Are we our thoughts?

Every thought is thought in a language that you yourself did not create. The language that you think in was learned by your culture. You adopted the words that you use to define your experience, and prior to your adoption of these words, they were not a part of who you are. Your true self cannot be confined to words or defined by language.

The thoughts you think might be made of words that you did not make, but what about the thoughts themselves, the things that the words represent? What exactly is a thought?

Thoughts are a product of memory. When an experience happens, you can use thought to reflect on that experience. You can also use thought to imagine and fantasize an experience that hasn't actually happened, but your thoughts are still limited to what is known by your brain.

When you think of an event, you can only think of it in reference to what is already known to you—words, experiences, information stored in your memory. Without

any experience at all, you would have no reference, and would not be able to form a thought.

Wouldn't this display clearly that you are not your thoughts, that you had to have existed before you were able to think? Thoughts come and go, and prior to any thought at all, you still existed. We are not our thoughts, but unfortunately, many people let their thoughts control their life experience as if they really were the voice inside of their head. Their thinking is involuntary, automatically appearing in their awareness without their volition, causing their attention to be distracted by thought on a frequent basis. Some people are so identified with their involuntary thinking that the majority of their experience consists of thought, and not of awareness to what is actually happening around them.

When we think of something, we form a mental image of it, and this image is then filtered through our mental perception. How we perceive an event determines how we will experience it. If an event happens, and you perceive this event as something negative, you will create a negative mental image about that event in your mind. But this image is relative only to you. The event itself was neutral, but you perceived it as something negative, thus making it so that your experience of that event was also negative.

Our perception of reality determines our experience of reality. We hardly ever experience things as they are. Instead, we experience how we think they are; we experience our mental image of them. We do this more often than we think.

Words, for example, are nothing but symbols to represent thought forms. Think of a maple tree, standing tall in the sunlight, its vibrant green leaves spread out along its many branches, its large trunk rooted firmly into the earth. Can you see this tree? Where does the tree exist? Solely in your mind. Whatever image you see of a tree is a mental image that you yourself created. You read these words, and you used them to form an image. But is this

image life itself? Are the words that describe a maple tree anything close to an actual maple tree?

What about the words themselves: “maple tree?” Clearly this is a label for something, something we have all agreed to call by the name “maple tree,” but is there such a thing? Looking at what we call a “maple tree,” we see that it is made up of many other things that we have labels for—”leaves,” “branches,” “roots,” “soil,” etc. Are these each their own individual objects, or are they all a part of the same thing, being divided only by our mind-made labels?

If we label something as a “tree,” does that mean that everything else is not a tree? Does that mean the tree has an existence of its own? To us it may seem that way, but is this the truth? A tree is not separate from the Earth of which it grows, nor is the Earth separate from the sky or the Universe in which it exists. The entire cosmos is connected to this thing we have labeled a “tree,” showing that there really is no such thing as a “tree” in the sense that it is an object with an existence of its own. In reality, the tree is just as much a part of anything we think not to be a tree, including your own body.

The only reason we feel that a tree, a rock, a body, or anything for that matter, has an existence of its own, is because we have associated these things with our mental labels and images of them, rather than as they really are.

From the moment of birth, we have been conditioned to label objects, “table,” “couch,” “chair,” “tree,” “bird,” “mom,” “dad,” etc.—but the labels do not explain the totality of the objects themselves. Failing to realize this, we go through life labeling our experiences, trying to categorize them with our minds, unaware that our attempt to label an experience is ultimately useless, as no label is ever capable of describing that which it attempts to define.

We do this so often, that instead of just experiencing life, we separate ourselves from life with our thoughts, and instead experience our own mental images of life, rather than life itself. Nothing in nature is separate; all things exist

together, as one. Only thoughts are capable of separating nature, but this separation exists only in our minds, and not in reality.

Living our lives in such a way has caused us to form a unique mental image and perception for nearly everything that we experience. This has gotten so out of hand that we have even formed mental images of who we are, and we then use this image of ourselves as a sense of identity, constantly worrying about its survival and its approval from others. Though our image of ourselves is not who really are, it is just an illusion that our minds have created.

4 The Ego

The ego is an imagined entity. It is a self-image created by thought, and exists only out of an identification with form. When we think of ourselves as our name, our occupation, our education, our personal history, our body, or our thoughts, we create an image of who we are. But this image is not really who we are, it is something we have made up to form a sense of identity because we are ignorant of who we really are.

This imaginary entity is what most people refer to when they speak of “I” or “me.” When someone says “I am a doctor,” or “I am a lawyer” and they actually believe this to be who they are, rather than just using that expression as a means of communicating their occupation, they are referring to an image they have of themselves, and confusing this self-image with their actual identity.

The problem with this is that once an image is formed, and you actually identify with that image, you have to constantly maintain that same image and fear for its protection, or else the image will cease, and you will think that somehow this means you are going to cease as well. You have confused your identity with an idea you have of yourself, and unless others acknowledge and agree upon

that idea, you will feel like your identity is threatened. Can you see the insanity in this way of thinking?

The ego is an imaginary entity created by thought, it has no solidity in reality. Therefore, people who believe they are the ego will constantly try to enforce the solidity of their ego by talking about themselves to others. They believe that if others share the same image of them, that this would strengthen their self-image, thus making it more fixed in reality.

This is why people feel the need to always talk about themselves, or even lie to others about something they have or something they have done, just so that they can strengthen their self-image.

By identifying with a mental image, people are really only separating themselves from the reality of life. Just as words and the mental images they form only isolate things from nature, trying to label yourself or form an image of who you are only separates you from everything that you really are.

If you are a doctor, does that mean that you cannot also be a father, or a mother? If you are a father or mother does that not mean you can't be an artist or a business owner? What about a scientist or author? Would any of these labels actually represent the reality of who you are? Of course not, yet for some reason we cling to these labels for a sense of identity. We cling to them because they allow us to form an image of ourselves, and then we can mentally label and understand that image.

But we are not our image of ourselves, nor can we understand who we are with our limited language and thought. The reality of who you are is beyond comprehension. Therefore, in order to know who you are, you have to give up trying to comprehend who you are. This may seem paradoxical, but there is a difference between knowing, and comprehending.

You know how to breathe, but you don't comprehend the process of breathing—how your lungs inflate and

deflate, or how they deliver oxygen to your bloodstream. You know how to walk, but you don't comprehend the actual muscle contractions that are allowing the body to move, or the electrical signal being sent from the brain to the nerves of your legs.

In the same way, you can know who you are, without being able to define who you are or confine the totality of your being to some mind-made words and concepts. You know who you are because you are; because you exist. You do not need a reason to be. Just be.

In order to come to the truth of who you are, you have to let go of the mind's desire to comprehend, label, and organize everything. The mind does this because it wants to have control over its experience. If the mind doesn't comprehend something, it thinks that it has no way to influence or control it, and this makes it feel inferior, or perhaps even afraid. But do you ever really have control of anything? We like to think that we do, especially if we are identified with our mind and its thoughts, but in reality, we have very little control over anything that happens in nature.

If you wanted to, you could get up and walk to the nearest store. You might have control over that decision, but do you consciously control the movement of your legs with every step? Do you control the inhalation and exhalation of your breath? Do you control the flow of your blood, the digestion of your food, or any of the subconscious activities that your body performs? These things seem to just happen on their own without your control. You have very little involvement in these activities.

You may decide to walk to the store, but can you determine exactly what will happen on this walk? You may have an expectation of what will happen—some image you hold in your mind—but it is unlikely that your expectation will match exactly what happens. Anything could happen during that short walk to the store. You have no control over what happens.

Realizing this, it may bring you peace to simply let go of trying to control things, and instead allow things to happen naturally. The only things that you have control over are your own actions, and your own state of being. Anything else is completely out of your control, and stressing over it is useless, as things will happen how they happen regardless.

Rather than being so focused on controlling what happens, focus more on choosing how you react to what happens. Any situation in life is neutral, and only your thoughts about that situation can make you happy or sad. It is your way of thinking and perceiving that determines how you feel about an event.

We only try to control what happens because we think that we can influence life to work in our favor. This is another delusional thought produced by the ego. The ego stresses over events because the ego is worried about its survival. The ego wants to maintain its solidity in the world by constantly strengthening its self-image. If something does not go according to the ego's plan, the ego feels that it is threatened and begins to fear for its protection.

You can observe this in someone very easily when they are attached to a certain belief, and they defensively protect that belief whenever it is threatened, ignoring any information that opposes their belief, because they need that belief in order to have a sense of identity.

For example, the Christian who cannot have an open conversation about other religious beliefs, or the Republican who cannot consider a Democrat's point of view. These people cling to the concept of being a Christian, or Republican, and they use these beliefs to form a sense of identity. They cannot question their beliefs without questioning their identity, and when their identity is questioned, they feel threatened and defensively protect their identity. This, of course, is all a result of the ego.

Our identification with the ego is the cause of our suffering—both individually and as a society. Individually,

the ego makes us suffer by causing us to think that we are victims of our experience. When we are strongly identified with the ego, we don't see everything as one big happening that we are a part of. Instead, we think everything is happening directly to us, and perceive everything as some form of personal attack.

We feel that there is a “me” that is personally offended; our self-image has been threatened, and consequently we feel like we have been wronged. Nothing happens directly to you. Everything is just happening, and you are an integral part of this happening.

If someone tries to make fun of you, you can either perceive that as a direct attack on you personally (most people do), or you can see that situation for what it really is—someone attempting to strengthen their self-image by belittling yours. It is nothing to take personally; their actions have nothing to do with you. They are simply reflecting their own insecurities.

If someone judges other people, it is because they judge themselves. They haven't accepted who they are, and so they have to point out the flaws of others so that the others can appear unacceptable, too. This is just one of the many tricks that the ego plays in order to maintain its self-image and its sense of identity.

Living in a society dominated by ego, the many individual egos give rise to a collective ego. People then identify themselves with their nation, their religion, their politics, etc.—all of which are only concepts created by the minds of humans. Because of this collective ego, people will allow such atrocities as war or genocide to occur, because they believe that they have enemies that threaten their sense of collective identity.

In truth, not only are they connected to those they call their “enemies,” but they depend on having “enemies” in order to feel like they belong to a special group of people. How could someone identify with the “good side” unless there were a “bad side” to compare themselves to? This

happens on so many different scales of reality. People will discriminate against “blacks” in order to belong to their group of “whites;” the “rich” will discriminate from the “poor” in order to feel superior to those with less financial wealth.

You can also observe this in the person who is overly proud and defensive of their country. Perhaps even you have some sense of pride for your country and defensively protect your country’s image. This is deep down of course just a way of protecting your own image, because you have been raised to identify with that image.

A country is just a concept. A largely agreed upon concept, nonetheless it is still a concept, it is still mind-made, meaning it is ultimately not real. Believing that you belong to a country causes you to feel like you are somehow separate from those who don’t belong to your country, and it also causes you to feel like it is okay to harm those who belong to a different country because they are not connected to you or the group you feel like you belong to. Unfortunately, this also happens frequently with those who identify with a certain religion.

Again, this is just another delusional thought process formed by the ego that causes us to perceive separation in an interconnected Universe. It is this delusional perception that produces so many disasters, all in the name of benefiting oneself at the expense of others, failing to see that the “others” are not different from what one refers to as one’s “self.”

So much suffering is caused by this delusional belief that we are separate from one another. So much death, so much violence, so much destruction, all because people are identified with their mental images, and are unaware of the reality of who they are.

Can you observe the ego in yourself? Can you become aware of the things that you cling to for a sense of identity? Can you see the concepts or beliefs that you hold onto, the things that make you feel like you belong, or the things that make you feel like you are somehow separate from others?

Can you acknowledge the image you have created of yourself? Can you see how this image exists only in your mind? Are you aware of all of the things that you do or have done in the name of maintaining this social image? Can you recall the times that you have lied, or bragged about your experience, just to improve your self-image in the eyes of others?

What would happen if you stopped trying to maintain this image? What would happen if you no longer felt the tendency to protect your image, enforce your opinions, or defend your beliefs, and instead just let go of this tendency and allowed life to happen? Would you cease to exist? Would you vanish along with your self-image?

No, of course not. Yet, this is how people behave. They believe that their image is who they are, and if their image were to stop existing, that somehow would mean they would stop existing.

The ego is produced by any identification with form. When you identify with a form of any kind, whether it is a physical form like the body, or a mental form like thoughts, beliefs, and other concepts, you are really just strengthening the ego in you. You are strengthening the idea of who you are, and are consequently separating yourself from the reality of your being.

If, however, you realize that you are not any of the things that you identify with, and instead let go of your attachment to these things, all that will be left is you—the real you—the awareness that is your true nature.

Joseph P. Kauffman

5 Consciousness

We live in a universe of forms. We inhabit the physical forms of our bodies, we dwell on the physical form of the Earth, and we think in the mental forms of thoughts, feelings, and words.

Everything that we experience is only possible due to the world of form. Although every form that exists is undergoing continuous change. There is nothing in the world of form that remains permanent.

Billions of cells in our body die every minute, being replaced by the new cells we obtain through the food we eat. Atoms and molecules are colliding and exchanging patterns of energy on every scale of reality. Everything is in a constant state of vibration, endlessly moving, dancing, and changing.

Time is the only reason that forms appear to have any solidity at all, but the true nature of all forms is impermanence; formlessness. When we fail to realize the formless and ever-changing nature of the Universe, we cling to forms for a sense of security and identity, and this attachment to form is the root cause of our suffering.

We cling to the forms of our bodies, believing that these bodies are who we are. But how can you be your

body when the body you have now is not at all the same body you had at birth, during childhood, a year ago, or even a day ago?

We cling to the mental forms of our beliefs, thoughts, and opinions, believing that our mind is what makes us who we are. But everything that makes up your mind is the result of your past conditioning, your experiences, your circumstances, the information you have obtained, the events that your mind has witnessed and documented in the form of memory. Who were you before your mind had been conditioned to view life as it now sees it?

Everything in the Universe is constantly changing, nothing remains the same for even a moment. There is no solidity, there are no permanent forms, no enduring entities; there is only one vast universal process continually changing, moving, and evolving together.

All forms are composed of other forms. A body is made up of atoms, cells, microbes, bones, tissues, muscles, nerves, etc. These forms that make up your body can only exist because of the other forms that fuel them—the plants, air, and water of the Earth, the heat, light and energy of the sun. There is no thing that exists in itself; all things are connected, a part of the same ever changing event that we call life.

If everything that has an apparent form is in truth formless, wouldn't the true nature of the Universe itself then be formless? If everything with form is constantly undergoing change, then where does that leave you? Who are you if you are not any of the forms that you have been conditioned to identify with?

You are the formless awareness in which all forms exist. Forms come and go, but the awareness that witnesses and experiences form is always present. Throughout every one of life's experiences, there is always an awareness present, there is always YOU here to perceive these forms and turn them into your reality. If there were no awareness how could anything exist at all?

Oneness

Who would be there to experience existence?

You are not any of the things that happen in your experience, you are the witness of experience. You are the awareness in which experience happens, the consciousness that allows any experience to exist at all. Without you, there could be no experience.

Joseph P. Kauffman

6 Illusion and Truth

The concept of Form and Formless is relatively the same as the spiritual concept of Illusion and Truth. The Truth is simply that which is definite, enduring, lasting, and permanent. Illusions are things that are fleeting, temporary, changing, and impermanent. If something is undergoing constant change and transformation how can it be the Truth which is permanent and undying?

Illusions are still very real, but they are short-lived, transient, and changing, therefore they are not the Truth, which is long-lasting, infinite, and eternal. Being able to distinguish between Illusion and Truth enables us to understand the ways in which our minds tend to cling to illusions for a sense of security and identity, an act which is inevitably futile.

Everything in the world of form is impermanent, and thus, belongs also to the world of illusion. A tree may exist as a tree now, but has it always been a tree? Before it was a tree it was a seed, it was the soil, the rain, the clouds, the earth, and the sky, and these many elements still live through the tree, and as the tree. The idea that a tree has an existence of its own is an illusion, as is seeing anything as a separate and fixed entity.

There can be no tree without the many elements that make what we call a “tree,” just as there can be none of these elements without the many other elements that make up them. Everything is a part of the same ever-changing process. There is nothing permanent in the world of form and illusion.

This concept is simple enough to grasp when studying things you believe to be outside of yourself, like a tree, but can you allow yourself to study the same phenomena within yourself?

Can you look into your body, and see that its existence is maintained solely by things you believe to be not your body—food, air, water, sunlight, space? Can you look into the many things that you use to identify with and see their illusory nature?

Can you see your name as just a label given to you by society? Can you see your occupation, your beliefs, your opinions, your race, your genetic history, or your relationships as just information and experiences that you have adopted during your development? Who were you before all of this?

We play many roles in life, and we seem to have many different characters that we identify with for a sense of security, but who are you in these roles? Who is the one that is acting out the parts of these many different characters? It's easy to observe the illusion of permanence in nature, but it takes a great degree of honesty and courage to look within oneself and see the illusions that lie within.

What is it that you identify with? Your social class, your religion, your family, your race, your body? Do you really feel like any of these ultimately define the totality of who you are?

Part of the reason most people do not look into this is because they have been conditioned to identify with these many different roles in life; their attention is so extraverted that they are hardly aware of the subtle nature of their own mind. Although an even deeper reason that people do not

look into the roles they identify with is because they are afraid to discover that these roles are not who they are.

People live their entire lives on the foundation that they are a Christian, a Muslim, a Banker, a Doctor, a Man, a Woman, etc. They cling so tightly to these conceptual roles for a sense of identity, that any time their identity is questioned they defensively protect their beliefs and avoid the situation in order to feel secure and comfortable again.

The roles that we identify with in life are impermanent, and as mentioned before, even this body is impermanent. If these roles are temporary, relative, and constantly changing, how can they be the Truth of who you are? Can you see that identifying with these roles is just identification with an illusion?

Perhaps you can see the transitory nature of these roles, but going one step further, can you understand the same transitory nature of your thoughts and feelings as well? This is usually where the most resistance is felt by those inquiring into their nature. They can peel back the layers of illusion with little struggle, until they are faced with the task of inquiring into the illusory nature of their own thoughts.

Most people are strongly identified with their thoughts, and believe that the voice in their head is who they are. But if you are the voice inside of your head, who is the one that is aware of this voice?

It is so subtle that it requires a great deal of attention and awareness to truly understand it, but you are not your thoughts, you are the witness of your thoughts. You are consciousness.

When identified with thought and emotion, people view themselves as separate from the world, they feel like they are victims of their circumstances and the actions of others, constantly focused on “me” and “my” problems. But there is no “I” in this sense.

There are no separate entities, as we are all connected to each other and the greater whole of the universe. One of the greatest ways of maintaining this illusion of separation is by finding faults in others, blaming others, and seeing others as enemies.

By putting the blame on others, or trying to gain victory over others, one strengthens the identity of a separate self, and makes oneself feel as if he or she is superior. Though even in this scenario one needs the “other” in order to feel good about oneself. You depend just as much on the others as you do yourself, for without them you would have no sense of self.

But in truth, there are no others. There are only various organisms with brains that have been conditioned to see separation amongst themselves, and it is this view of separation that causes us to act violently toward each other, and toward the planet with which we are deeply intertwined.

How did the existence of this form (body) come to be? It came from the Earth, from the raw materials of matter, the energy of life, and the intimate process of evolution that allowed it to advance to such a stage. Within you still exists these fundamental building blocks of creation, the physical matter of nature, the energy that flows throughout the Universe, and the essence of life in your being, my being, and every being.

The entire Universe is composed of the same materials, and on a quantum level we can easily observe just how connected we are. There is no boundary separating one particle from the next, no wall that divides “you” from “me,” or “us” from “them.” These are just illusions that our minds have created, illusions that we have mistakenly identified with due to our ignorant perception of life.

Thoughts are nothing but labels—words that we have adopted from our society. We can rearrange these labels in different ways to form some sense of personalization to them, but your thoughts are not personal to you, they are bound to the culture that created the language in which you think.

You are not “I,” or “me;” those are just words that attempt to define a greater reality. But words are limited, they are forms, and they can never accurately define the true nature of the Universe or of your own being, which is formless and unlimited.

Thoughts and words can be a very effective form of communicating and expressing things to one another, but they are still just thoughts and words. They are not and cannot ever amount to the reality of that which they attempt to define.

So then how do we understand the reality of nature, and of our own being? We have to learn to step out of the realm of thought and mental imagery, and move beyond into the realm of this moment. We have to stop thinking, and practice being.

Don’t misunderstand what I am saying here: thoughts and words are a necessary part of life, especially since we have created a society that is dependent upon them, but should they take up the majority of our time and experience? Should we allow them to completely control our lives and make us suffer?

It may be hard to realize the error in our way of thinking when we have been unconscious of the nature of thought for nearly our entire lives, but our addiction to labeling, defining, and conceptualizing every event has separated us from the reality of life. We now live in the realm of our individual thoughts, rather than in the collective realm of being and living.

Hardly anyone is present to life as it is happening now. Each person seems to be living in their own mental world, creating their own mental problems, completely ignorant to the reality of this moment.

Can you see the error in this way of living? Thoughts are subjective to each person’s mind. They are indeed thought in a language that is shared, but they are unique to each person’s perception, circumstances, and experience.

The present moment, life as it is happening now, is something that is shared by everybody. When living in the realm of our thoughts, we feel separate and isolated because we are creating this division within ourselves. When one steps out of the realm of thought, however, they step into the realm of this moment, a moment that is free from thought and personal opinions, one that affects everyone and everything, a moment that we are all involved in, even if we choose to be ignorant of what is happening in this moment.

This moment is the true reality of life. Our thoughts just create a personalized filter of illusion over life, and we then experience our mind's illusions rather than the reality of what is happening now.

When one understands deeply how we are all living as one, bound eternally to the present moment, they can see clearly how there is no separation, how all things are shared, and how all of us are interconnected to one another and to the Earth on which we live. They can also see how humanity is living under a type of mental psychosis, an identification with thought and illusion, blinding them from the reality of life.

Those who wake up from this illusion and step outside of their conditioned mind experience a profound realization of truth, and it is this realization that redirects most people onto a path of spiritual understanding and meaning, rather than one of ignorance and self-induced suffering.

Perhaps you have had glimpses of this truth as well. Our entire lives we have been subconsciously conditioned to identify ourselves with thought, and the moment we step out of this realm of compulsive thinking, however brief it may be, we enter into the vast realm of life, where such mind-made illusions as hatred, violence, blame, depression, anxiety, fear, etc., seem to have no value, and all that we experience is total freedom, peace, and love for existence.

Those who undergo such a profound awakening never forget the experience, although unfortunately, they have

such a powerful momentum of conditioned thought in their minds that most are easily pulled back into the illusory reality of their own opinions, beliefs, judgments and perceptions.

Some are able to feel this freedom from thought in experiences that involve intense sensory stimulation, such as skydiving, snowboarding, or other extreme sports. When we step out of the realm of thought we feel alive, we feel free from the pressure of living confined to our mental prisons, and we experience a great sense of peace and joy.

There are other and more effective ways to be free of your mental prison, but they require your honesty, attention, and willingness to let go of old beliefs. It requires that you observe within yourself the many illusions that you identify with, including your own thoughts, so that you may become aware of your true nature as the witness of these illusions. It requires that you look deeply within yourself to discover the truth of who you are.

Joseph P. Kauffman

7 Observing Your Own Mind

It's easy to point out the faults in others, or to blame others for their behavior, but can you observe the faults in your own way of thinking? In your own behavior? We often judge others because of our own insecurities. This is an unconscious act of course, or else it is unlikely that we would continue to do it. We see someone with a weird haircut or strange clothes and in our minds we judge them for that. Why? Because we are insecure about our own appearance, and pointing out the flaws in others takes the attention away from our own shortcomings.

We are only making them seem like less so that we can feel like more, so that we can feel validated and superior. It is the same as labeling one group of people as "bad" so that we can belong to the group of people who are "good." Though neither group can exist without the other.

How can you have good without bad? How can there be hot without cold? Light without dark? Or self without other? We can only know one with reference to the other, showing that there isn't really an "other," neither are separate, they are one. Duality is an illusion.

There are many people on a spiritual path that still let themselves be guided by the ego. They pursue the spiritual

path because they had a glimpse of what exists beyond the ego, but end up strengthening their ego by clinging to spirituality for a sense of identity. They feel as if they belong to some kind of “spiritual” group, and would have no sense of belonging without reference to those who do not share their same understanding of life.

They are still one with those whom they view as separate from them, only their minds are conditioned to perceive reality differently. Often people in this class will cling to things that strengthen their sense of spirituality—crystals, spiritual music, stimulating scents and herbs, psychedelics, etc.—but this is still just extroverting their attention and keeping them distracted from observing the ego within themselves.

These things are all beneficial and wonderful things that can aid one on a spiritual path, but the real spiritual work happens within. It comes from being aware of the patterns that your mind has formed due to its conditioning, and retraining the mind to perceive life in a more natural and wholesome way.

It is a process of unlearning, of unconditioning, detangling the web of thought patterns that form your perception of life, and replacing them with new patterns based on truth. It involves letting go of the illusions that you have identified with in the past in order to come to a greater realization of who you really are.

You are not your thoughts or emotions. You are not the one that thinks, “I am suffering, I have been wronged, I am this or I am that,” you are the one that is aware of your thoughts and emotions. You are the “I Am.” You are the consciousness in which these sensations arise. You are the witness that lies in the background of thought, the very essence of life itself.

The more that you understand your identity as awareness, the less you identify with the impermanent forms that arise in your awareness, and the less you suffer. You suffer less because you realize that these forms are

not who you are, and thus you have no reason to stress over them or try to control them. You can leave them as they are. You let them come, let them go, and let them be.

Suddenly, all the pressure you felt to achieve, to become, to gain, and accomplish, ceases, and you are left with the simple joy of being alive. You cease clinging to life and begin allowing life to happen through you. You realize that everything you had been seeking was within you all along. You already are that which you were striving to become, only your mind was attempting to find who you were in other things, rather than in the natural essence of your being.

An essential part of coming to this realization is letting go of the need to define it or understand it. Words are limited, and they are not fully capable of defining the totality of who you are. When you let yourself simply “be” without trying to understand it, you are left with who you are in your natural state, and who you are then becomes easily understood.

Consciousness—your true self—is subjective. It is an awareness, a presence, it is the essence of life itself. You cannot define this subjective experience by turning it into an object—a word, a label, a thought, or a mental image. Consciousness is not something outside of yourself that you can study, it is who you are. You cannot be conscious of your consciousness any more than you can lick your own tongue, see your own eyes, or cut a knife with its own blade.

Once you see that comprehending your formless nature is ultimately impossible, then you can let go of trying to understand consciousness, and can simply be consciousness. Then, suddenly, your existence as consciousness becomes completely understood. You are the awareness that is always present, preceding every thought, event, and experience that happens. You are not the mind that seeks for understanding; you are the witness of this mind—the awareness that lies in the background, always observing, yet never observed.

The mind clings to concepts and labels for a sense of understanding; a sense of control. But this tendency to cling to life will only cut you off from life. It is like holding your breath while refusing to exhale. Eventually you will suffocate, unless you are willing to let go.

Let go of the need to know, the need to define life and categorize it in your mind. Simply let life be, and let yourself be. Realize the limitations of the mind, and understand that you are not the mind, and that your existence can never be understood by the mind. It has to be felt to be known. You have to detach from your mind so that it no longer controls your experience.

The primary thing to understand here is that you are the witness, you are awareness; you are not your thoughts. So if you can practice observing your thoughts, especially while in the midst of thoughts that seem to take away your peace, you have already taken the most important step. You have made the unconscious conscious; you have replaced thought with awareness.

You will never come to know yourself by thinking about your existence—by clinging to conceptual or material forms—for awareness is formless, and no amount of form will ever be able to describe your formless nature. At best, forms can only point you in the direction to discover the truth within yourself.

You cannot understand this by thinking, but by being—by feeling, existing, and living. Thoughts only separate us from the present moment, and consequently from life, since the dimension of life and the present moment are one and the same. Once you understand the futility of thought, then you can move beyond it. Then you can enter the realm of no-thought, of being without thinking. This is where the essence of life is understood.

Can you simply be? That is, can you simply sit and exist, without trying to label or define your experience? Try it. You may be able to get a glimpse of what it is like to simply be, but the experience is unlikely to last for more than a

brief moment. Before you know it, the thinking mind makes its way back into your awareness, and you begin labeling, defining, conceptualizing, and fantasizing once again.

Although, if you were able to get a glimpse of what it is like to simply be, that is all that is needed to prove that you are not your thoughts. Thoughts of “I am this,” or “I am that,”—the illusions you identify with—are shown to be exactly that—illusions—created solely by your mind and its thinking.

Once you see a glimpse of what it is like to move beyond thought and into being, you are capable of creating a gap between you and your thoughts, and the more you practice, the larger the gap becomes.

You begin to see the illusory nature of thought as your thoughts fade away one by one. Thoughts lose their seriousness and stability, and you realize that they are only thoughts, and that they are not life itself. No matter how much you think about a situation it will never define the situation as it really is, but only how you perceive it.

Can you observe this insistent need to constantly think? Can you see it in yourself? Can you acknowledge your attachment to thought, and can you become aware of how your thoughts are separating you from this moment? From life? Can you become conscious of the unconsciousness in you? That is to say, can you replace your unconscious thinking with your conscious awareness?

The more you practice being aware of thought, the more you understand that you are not your thoughts, and no matter how much you choose to think about yourself, your thoughts will never be able to define the essence of who you are.

Practice being the witness. Watch your thoughts, create the gap between them and your awareness. Simply sit and observe, focusing only on your breath and your awareness. The thoughts will still come, but do not let them distract you. Take the thoughts lightly, they are only thoughts, and there is no need to follow each thought to its end.

The moment a thought arises, simply acknowledge it, smile to it, and let it go. Return to your natural state of being: awareness.

The longer you sit in this state of mental calmness and alertness, the stronger this state will become. Eventually the habit to remain grounded in this state will form, causing this to be your natural state.

Your thoughts are not going to disappear; they have an entire lifetime of momentum which causes them to arise out of habit, but the more you replace thought with awareness, the more capacity you have for being present without thought interfering, and naturally you will think less and less. And when thoughts do arise, they do not consume you. You realize they are just thoughts and you do not have to take them seriously.

Thought is a product of the past. It is made up of information and memory, functioning solely by relating the moment to what has already been recorded by the brain. But life is new, it is fluid, moving, always changing. It cannot be understood with reference to the old. It can only be experienced as it exists now.

Look at the rivers and streams of the earth, they flow with whatever crosses their path. They do not resist their natural flow. Why is it that we insist on making life difficult? Why can we not flow with life and live naturally in each moment? Why must we resist life, and cause our own suffering in the process?

If you are suffering emotionally, it is because you are resisting the flow of life. You are clinging to your thoughts about a person, object, or situation. You are allowing your own mind to make you suffer.

Your failure to let go of a situation is simply your failure to let go of your thoughts. You are still holding on because you want to know more, you want closure, an explanation, an apology, or whatever the case might be. But is this way of thinking making you happy? No. it is the reason you are unhappy.

You are not miserable because of the event that happened. You are miserable because of your thoughts about the event that happened. Stop resisting. Accept the past. Forgive the past. Let go of the past so that you can be at peace now. The past has already let go of you; it lives only in your thoughts, it is no longer the reality of this moment.

What will it take for you to accept the past and move on? Do you really need an explanation, reconciliation, or justification? What will happen if you simply stopped thinking about it? What would happen if you chose to stop thinking in general? Would you die? Would you cease to exist? No, of course not. Then why must you cling to thought as if your life depended on it? Can you let go of thought altogether and simply be?

If you can, you will discover that peace is available to you. It has always been available to you. Only your unconscious attachment to thought has caused you to suffer.

If you want to suffer, continue to let thought guide and control your life unconsciously. But if you want to be at peace, break free from the prison of your obsessive thinking by entering into the realm of this moment, into the realm of awareness, into the realm of life. Replace thinking with being, become aware of your thoughts, and do not let thoughts take away your peace.

If you can reconnect with this state of pure awareness within you, and can truly feel and know this to be your true being, an amazing thing will happen. You will realize that the ultimate truth of life is your existence, and that everything else is merely a projection of your own awareness.

It is such a strange thing to realize, that you might just burst out in laughter the moment that you have the realization. Everything that exists is merely a projection of awareness. Your life, your experience, your story—it is all being created and maintained by you. Whatever happens in your experience is your own making.

For example, it seems to you that you are reading these words on a computer screen or a piece of paper, but is this true? In reality, signals of light are being picked up by your eyes, and sent along the optic nerve to the back of your brain where vision takes place. Really, what you are seeing “out here” is a projection of what is “in here”—a projection of what the nerves inside of your head are doing.

The same is true for any of your senses—sight, sound, touch, taste, smell—your body is just picking up vibrations from the Universe and using these vibrations to form a sense of experience. At the root of all this experience is you, the awareness that turns these vibrations into an experience. However you choose to perceive reality is how you will experience it. Your experience is your creation.

But if you are awareness, and the entire universe is just a projection of awareness, what does that mean for other people? What does that mean for my friends, and family? For my dog, or for my plants? Don't they have an awareness of their own? Would they be a part of this projection called reality? Or would they be a part of the projector: consciousness?

8 Life

The same awareness that exists in you exists in me, your parents, your relatives, your friends, your pets, and every living thing in existence. Our apparently many forms are really just a manifestation of the one formless consciousness.

Look into the eyes of another being: can you not see the same source of life staring back at you? Consciousness is not dull and lifeless; it is living, it is aware, it is intelligent and blissful. Consciousness is the spirit of life that is expressing itself in the world of form—through my form, your form, and through all forms.

Consciousness is the substance of creation. There is the personal experience of consciousness that each being has—this is what people often refer to as the soul—and there is the omnipresent consciousness which is the total field of consciousness itself—the spirit. The soul is just a temporary manifestation of the spirit. It is consciousness inhabiting form. It still has its roots in the total field of consciousness, just as every tree has its roots in the total field of the earth.

On the surface, it may appear that we exist independently of the other souls around us, but this is just

an illusion. Beneath the surface we are all connected, a part of the one eternal spirit of consciousness itself.

This omnipresent consciousness—the spirit of life itself inhabiting every being, is what religion has often referred to as “God.” According to Christianity, God made man in his image—another way of saying that humans are just a reflection of the total spirit of life.

Religion is a human attempt to interpret the reality of life, but life cannot be confined to words or scriptures. Life is something that has to be lived to be understood. No definition of “life,” or “spirit,” or “God,” can ever amount to the reality of what these words are attempting to define. But if you let go of trying to define life, and simply feel the essence of life within you, and see this essence of life in everyone else, then you understand the truth of existence. Then you can see that we are all one consciousness experiencing itself. There is no separation—separation is an illusion—there is only oneness, only the one spirit manifesting itself in every temporary form, all of which will inevitably return to the same spirit from which they emerged.

You cannot see this when you are separated from life, living in the realm of your conditioned thoughts and mental imagery, because your current level of understanding was produced by a society that is ignorant to this ultimate truth of life. You can only see this truth when you are totally present to life—aware of this moment, flowing with the current of this moment, and allowing this moment to unfold naturally, rather than resisting the moment by desiring it to be different.

When you are present to this moment, you see the spirit manifested in all its forms. You see life in everything that exists. You see the very same essence of life in you living through all beings, and you also see that everything you perceive and experience is occurring within the field of your consciousness.

We have been taught to view life as something exclusive to some, and unavailable to others, but is this true? Is life confined to a few forms and not to all forms? Is there anything that exists separately from life? What is it that defines the living from the apparently nonliving?

Is it movement that determines the living from the nonliving? Your body can move, but would you call a plant that is not moving “dead”? Is it growth then? Plants grow, but so do mountains, rivers, fires, and even galaxies. If your body stops growing, does that mean that it is dead?

A rock might not seem like it is alive because our senses are too limited to observe any kind of movement or change. But if we were to use a scientific instrument to enhance our senses, we could easily see that at the molecular, atomic, and subatomic levels, that rock is vibrating, pulsating, and moving.

Is our distinction between that which is living and that which is not living a matter of more or less movement? What is it that causes this movement, that creates the illusion that certain things are living and others are nonliving? We might call it energy, chi, prana, or whatever label we wish to give to it, but it is essentially the life-force of the universe, a force that is eternally present, a force that, if nonexistent, would be unable to create any forms whatsoever.

Life is not something that is confined to beings with sensory organs, it is the energy that creates, organizes, and destroys these beings, along with all other things. The energy of life expresses itself through you, through me, and through all forms. There is no distinction between that which is living and that which is nonliving. It is all just life. The Universe is one living and interconnected event, an event that is so vast, and so inclusive, that no single brain can comprehend it in its totality. We can only know it by discovering its essence within ourselves.

Joseph P. Kauffman

9 Love

If the entire Universe is composed of the same life energy, and at the source of this energy lies the one omnipresent consciousness, what exactly does this mean for us? What does it mean that the same energy that makes up my being, makes up your being, that my awareness is your awareness, that we are all connected?

It means that the ideas we have of being separate from one another, the beliefs we use as a justification for harming the planet, or for acting selfishly, are nothing more than illusions produced by our ignorant perception of life. It means that in reality, we are all connected to life, and that harming any life harms all life, including “your” life. It means that when anyone acts violently towards another, they are really acting violently towards themselves. It means that no matter how we choose to perceive the world, the truth remains that we are bound to one another, and to all of creation, for all of existence is a manifestation of the same primordial spirit of consciousness.

We have no choice but to love one another, look after one another, and take care of one another. When you see someone suffering, it is really you suffering in the form

of that person. And when you compassionately send your love and care to that person, you are contributing that loving energy to all that exists.

Love is the profound connection we feel when we realize our oneness with others, when you look into the eyes of another person and realize that person is you. Every being comes from the same life essence as you; they are the same consciousness, just inhabiting a different form.

Whether you are looking into the eyes of another human, a dog, a fish, or an insect, or whether you are feeling the presence of life in a plant, in the soil, or in a mineral, it is all the same consciousness inhabiting a different form. Everything is you.

You don't exist in the Universe; you are so intertwined with the Universe that you can be nothing but the Universe itself. Your true nature is consciousness, and this consciousness is connected to the consciousness of the Universe. Doing harm to any one of consciousness's manifestations—whether it be another person, animal, or plant—is essentially only causing harm to yourself.

All humans, animals, and plants are made up of cells that are alive and conscious. Their consciousness is arguably far more simple than our own, but it must exist at some level because they perform tasks and respond to their environment. They know that they must be doing whatever it is they are driven to do, but they do not see that billions of them come together to create a human, a plant, or an animal.

In the same way, we are so focused on living our own individual lives that we are unaware we make up an entire organism called "Earth," and that we are its many cells, living together as one. Although currently, we behave as if we are a virus to the earth, slowly destroying the organism that we are a part of, rather than ensuring its health and survival. This is of course a result of our ignorance and our failure to see how we and the Earth are one.

The Universe, The Earth, our bodies, animals, plants, minerals, cells—we are layer upon layer of the universe experiencing itself as separate entities that are really all one and the same.

To use an analogy: The Universe is a tree, and we are all its leaves. Each leaf is kept alive by the total energy of the tree, but from its own perspective, the leaf seems as if it were separate from the rest of the leaves, and even the tree itself. And what spiritual teachers refer to as “Enlightenment” is simply the realization that the leaf is connected to the tree as a whole, as are all of the leaves, and that the true nature of the leaf is the entire tree. The leaf cannot be without the tree. In reality, there is no separation.

Love is the feeling that we have when we can see that we are not separate from the other leaves, that we are all creations of the tree from which we emerged. When you can see another as a reflection of yourself, then you have compassion for them, and this kind of compassion for others is what is truly needed to heal the world.

We never really know the circumstances that others are experiencing. But knowing that we have suffered, enables us to see that others suffer just like we do. People often hide their suffering and look as if they are not suffering on the surface, but deep down they may be in great pain. Knowing that everyone experiences suffering in their own way, should inspire us to do our best to free people from their suffering, to be kind to others at all times, because even the smallest act of kindness can feel like a breath of fresh air to someone who is suffocating from their suffering.

We cannot continue to exist with so much violence, so much disrespect, so much fear and judgment toward others; we are only hurting ourselves by doing this. Our actions ripple out into the Universe, creating a chain of events that affects every single particle in existence. Actions driven by love benefit more than just us or those in direct contact with our actions, they benefit the entire Universe.

Any actions that are driven by fear, violence, anger, hatred, jealousy, or greed, are produced by a mind that is dominated by ego. If we realized our connection to one another and to the source of life, we would act only in love, always having the health of life as a whole in mind.

In order to feel the love that comes from understanding our oneness, we have to let go of the idea that we are separate, we have to see clearly that we are not the ego, the ego is just a thought that the brain, and by extension the Universe, is having. To say it from a Christian's perspective: We must surrender ourselves (our ideas of being a separate self) in order to receive the love of God.

The notion that we are separate from the rest of existence causes us to cling to life out of fear. We cling to the world because we fail to realize that we are the world, and it is this ignorant perception of life that has produced our misconception of what love really is.

Many people confuse love with attachment, which is a quality of fear—the fear of loss—and it results in insecurity and dependency, which has been the cause of many broken hearts and failed relationships.

The qualities of fear are attachment, dependency, and resistance. The qualities of love are appreciation, understanding, and acceptance. We can observe very easily in our personal relationships whether we are acting out of fear or love.

Looking at an intimate relationship with a partner for example, if we are selfish, clingy, jealous, spiteful, mistrusting, dependent, etc., our relationship is composed primarily of fear or ego. If, however we are selfless, understanding, accepting, appreciative, caring, supporting and trusting, our relationship is composed primarily of love or spirit.

All emotions are essentially produced by feelings of either fear or love; either seeing ourselves as the ego—separate; or understanding our existence as spirit—connected.

Fear and our idea of separation produce feelings of attachment, resistance, anxiety, anger, violence, hatred, jealousy, envy, and depression. Love and our understanding of oneness produce feelings of freedom, acceptance, security, calmness, peace, understanding, gratitude, trust, compassion, and happiness.

Observe within yourself whether your relationships are driven by fear or love. Do you really love the other person in the relationship? Meaning, do you really want what is best for them, regardless of whether that involves you in their life? Or do you just wish to control this person for your own benefit? If your love is only a will to possess, it is not love.

Observe how you interact with other human beings, animals, and plants. Do you care for these living beings or do you just wish to use them for your benefit, and otherwise have no interest or care at all? Do you judge others based on their appearance or the form they inhabit? They cannot help the way they look, and the way they look has nothing to do with who they really are. What sense does it make to judge someone because they look, think, or behave differently than you? What benefit do you get from that? None. Only the ego benefits from judgment by enforcing its idea of separation and strengthening its self-image. But you are not the ego, and the views of separation that stem from a mind dominated by ego are not composed of love.

Love is not controlling. Love is not restricting, limiting, or exclusive. Love is free. Love is relaxing, sincere, and inclusive. Love is the energy that we need to embody in order to heal the planet, society, and ourselves.

We need to align our state of being with love in order to find peace. We must let go of the conditioning that has caused us to act from a view of ego and separation, and begin acting from an understanding of love, connection, and oneness. Love is the only thing that is truly capable of healing the state of the world.

Joseph P. Kauffman

10 Mindfulness

Society is lacking in love; lacking in care for one another, lacking in respect for one another, and lacking in real social depth and connection between one another. We do not treat each other with love, and respect each other as human beings. Most people only interact on the surface, speaking of superficial topics that neither person has any real interest in.

Humans are social creatures, and we long for more depth, more connection, more expression. Unfortunately, everyone is so dominated by their minds and their egos that they don't interact with their hearts. Our interactions are dull, usually consisting of pointless dialogue and whatever topics are popular in today's media.

Because of this, we feel alienated from one another. We are unable to express ourselves because we fear what others will think of us, because we are worried about protecting our self-images and our sense of identity.

We do not share our deepest thoughts and emotions with one another; we don't acknowledge the feelings of others, or listen to what they really have to say. Most people just wait for the other person to finish talking so that they can state their response. There isn't conversation,

but rather two egos desperate to state their opinion so they can feel validated.

Our society does not operate from the level of consciousness that is needed to sustain seven billion people. We operate on the momentum of an ignorant past, conditioned by generation after generation of unconscious behavior.

It is this conditioning that has caused us to live from the state of consciousness of the ego. It is this conditioning that has caused us to adopt the incorrect view of separation. It is our conditioning that makes us okay with violence, judgment, injustice, and cruelty. It is our conditioning that causes us to act out in unwholesome ways, and seek to benefit ourselves at the expense of others.

From the moment you were born your mind was conditioned by society, molded by the environments that you were put in, shaped by the minds of others who were also conditioned by an ignorant society. You think and act the way you do because it is how you were raised to think and act.

We cannot have peace on Earth if our actions stem from our conditioned minds. We have been conditioned to live according to the standards of a hostile society. In order to have peace, we need to undo our conditioning and retrain our brains to perceive and act in a more harmonious way.

We must unlearn all of the negative habits that we have adopted, and replace them with positive habits, and this can only be done by letting go of everything you have been raised to think, in order to embrace a new reality.

It is difficult to accept that what you thought to be true is actually false, especially if you cling to your beliefs for a sense of identity. But your beliefs are just information stored in your mind, and you are not your mind, and you do not need any thoughts or beliefs about life in order to know your true identity.

To heal the past in you, you have to replace it with presence. We cannot heal our past by thinking about the present with a mind conditioned by the past. As long as we think with our conditioned mind, we will just be recreating the past again and again.

We must replace our conditioned thoughts with our present awareness. We must practice being aware of the thoughts and actions that we think out of habit, and retrain our minds to process life in a more peaceful way.

This practice is known as the practice of “Mindfulness.” Mindfulness is the energy of being awake and alert to the present moment. To be mindful means that you are deliberately paying full attention to what is happening around you and within you—in your body, heart, and mind. Mindfulness is awareness without criticism or judgment.

To be mindful of your thoughts means that you can observe your thoughts without labeling or judging them. You let your thoughts come and go as they please, and realize you are not your thoughts. By reducing your attachment to thought, you become less driven by thought, and slowly your conditioned mind begins to fade away as it is replaced with a mind that is present and attentive to life as it is happening now.

Letting go of the past requires that you embrace the present. When you are fully attentive and interested in what is happening in this moment, you have no time to dwell on thoughts of the past or fantasies of the future.

The past and future exist only in your mind. The past is no longer the present, and the future has yet to come. All experiences are experienced in the present moment. The present moment is where life happens. The present moment is life.

Living in the imagined realm of the past or future—the realm of thought that our mind creates and eagerly clings to—only separates us from living in the reality of this moment. The mind tries to grasp the present moment, rather

than letting it be. The mind has no control over the moment and so it fears for its security, since the mind always clings towards comfort; towards what is safe and known.

We can never know the present moment because it is too alive, too vast, too fluid and changing to comprehend. Every moment in time that passes adds an inconceivable amount of new causes and effects to the flow of energy and matter that simply aren't and can't be understood by our brains and their limited sensory perception.

The Universe is a flow that is constantly vibrating, dancing, and changing. We have to go along with the flow of life in order to be at peace. We cannot resist the flow of life and expect to be happy. Resistance to life only makes us suffer.

Allow life to unfold in whatever way that it pleases. You do not need to control anything; everything happens on its own. Remain centered in your awareness where peace is always available. Give up your sense of control and allow the Universe to take its natural course.

In order to heal the past and the conditioned behavior that it has produced, we need to practice being aware of life in this moment. When we are present to life, we have a deep understanding for what needs to be done at each moment in time. We are aware of ourselves and our surroundings, and we are not distracted or separated from life by our overthinking minds.

There is plenty of information about mindfulness and mindfulness practices that you can do, but remember that the words are not the real thing, and reading about mindfulness is not the same as practicing mindfulness for yourself.

To practice mindfulness, you have to be mindful. Meaning you have to be aware of life as it is happening now. Observe this moment without judging it or trying to define it with your mind.

Try sitting silently for a few minutes. Start by breathing slowly and deeply to relax your mind and connect with your body. Then, after a few moments of deep breathing,

see if you can hear or feel your heartbeat. Pay close attention to what is going on inside your body. See if you can feel the billions of cells dancing on your skin, creating a very subtle vibration around your being.

Listen to the sounds in your environment. What noises are appearing in your awareness? What is happening around you? Be aware of this moment and all of the things that are happening in this moment. Can you see how life is happening here and now, and that your thoughts are only separating you from being attentive to life?

See if you can sit silently for a few minutes each day. Just sit and practice being aware of your mind and body. Sit at the back of your mind and observe, be the witness of your thoughts and sensations. Watch the thoughts as they come and go. Where are they coming from? Are you thinking or is thinking happening to you? Can you see how your thoughts appear automatically, without your control? Can you see how they are just a product of the past, a conditioned thought pattern being replayed, as if it were a tape playing an audio recording?

Do you feel any tension in your body that is unnecessary? Are you tensing your eyebrows, lips, or other facial muscles? Are you holding tension in your neck or shoulders? Can you allow your body and mind to simply relax, while you sit there peacefully in your silent awareness?

Can you allow your mind to be just like space? Space allows all things to exist within it, but it is not bound to any of these things. Space lets forms come and go, forever remaining detached from those forms. Can your mind do the same?

Can you allow thought forms to arise without distracting your attention or taking them seriously? Can you allow an angry or sad thought to arise and smile to it, realizing that it is not you who is thinking these thoughts, but that a habitual thought pattern, an energy with great momentum, is simply acting itself out mechanically?

Practice being grounded in your silent awareness. See if you can remain there, and remain aware of whatever is happening in this moment, without trying to cling to what is happening.

Practice it in your daily life. See if you can become aware of the thoughts that arise when you are around others, or when you are in certain situations. What thoughts arise in your mind? What does your mind initially think when someone enters the room? Does your mind judge that person or state some opinion about them? Do you really believe that opinion to be true or even necessary?

Do you worry about the opinion that person might have of you? One of the biggest fears of the ego is the opinion of what others think. This is because the ego needs to uphold the image it has of itself, and if others do not strengthen that image, the ego feels threatened. If you are identified with your self-image, you will always fear what others think of you. But if you realize who you really are, you will not care what people think of you, because you will know who you are, and you will not depend on their opinions for your sense of self-worth.

Someone's perception of you is a reflection of who they are. It has nothing to do with you, so there is no need to take their opinions personally. Respect that they have their own perspective and send them love. People who judge others judge themselves, and that is because they do not know who they really are, and so they depend on judging others in order to strengthen their image of who they are.

You are not your self-image, your ego, or your thoughts. You are the awareness in which these mental forms arise. You are consciousness itself. Only the conditioned mind and the thoughts that it produces can distract you from feeling and living this truth.

Our conditioned mind causes thoughts to arise automatically out of habit. Often these are thoughts that are not peaceful or loving, but are thoughts that were

formed by the ego and its views of separation. The more we can acknowledge these thoughts when they arise, the more capable we are of replacing them with more positive thoughts, or replacing them with our awareness.

The ego and the conditioned mind are acted out unconsciously. If we can make the unconscious conscious, we have already taken the most important step in reconditioning ourselves to live life with more awareness.

Practice being aware of your mind. Try not to be consumed by your mind, and focus more on being present to life as it is happening in this moment. If you are attentive, you will notice that the only time you ever suffer is when you take seriously the thoughts that arise in your mind—when you cling to thought and resist the moment of life happening now, rather than flowing with life and letting nature take its course.

As long as you are living fully attentive to the present moment, and flowing with the current of change, you will be at peace, and will be able to fully engage yourself in whatever presents itself to you.

Practice mindfulness so that you may undo the conditioning that has been done to you, and so that you may be able to live life free of the mind, and free of the conditioning that takes away your peace. Discover the joy that comes from simply being alive, from being present to life, and realizing that you are life, and you are not separate from the environment around you. Mindfulness is the tool that we need to use in order to let go of our limited past, and embrace the infinite realm of possibilities that exist in this moment.

11 Living in Harmony with Nature

When we detach ourselves from our thoughts and our ego, we reconnect to the essence of life that is our true being, and we understand our connection to the Universe and all of its inhabitants. From this understanding of oneness, we can act in a way that benefits all life, because all of our actions will be built on the foundation of respect and appreciation for other living beings.

Our conditioned thoughts produced conditioned actions that were harmful to each other and the planet. Just as we have retrained our minds to process life in a more harmonious way, we need to practice acting and behaving in a more harmonious way. We need to live harmoniously with nature, and take care of nature, so that nature may continue to take care of us.

Nature is not a resource to be mined and used for our benefit. Nature is the producer of life, it is the reason that we are alive, and it deserves to be treated with just as much respect and appreciation as any other thing.

Living in a society that is so disconnected from nature, we fail to realize just how much we depend on nature for survival. We need clean air to breathe and send oxygen to our cells; we cannot continue to use the

inventions that pollute our air and destroy our forests. We need fertile soil to grow our food; we cannot continue to destroy our soil fertility by spraying it with toxic chemicals and pesticides. We need clean water to drink and fuel our bodies; we cannot continue to pollute the water with garbage and fossil fuels.

We need to invent new methods of sustaining ourselves, methods that utilize the abundance of natural energy that the Universe provides. We cannot continue to use these primitive methods of harvesting resources, methods that will inevitably lead to our own destruction if continued.

We need to change our way of life, and transition from a lifestyle based on ignorance and self-benefit, to a lifestyle based on knowledge and love for all beings. You are an essential part of this process. You are existing in the form of a human, meaning that you are not separate from humanity's actions. You have just as much influence over society as anyone else, even if you do not realize it yet.

Society needs to transition from being dependent consumers, to becoming responsible producers. We need to stop draining the earth of its beauty, and instead contribute to it. We need to practice being stewards of the Earth, and taking care of nature and its precious resources.

This means that we need to practice growing our own food, rather than depending on others to produce our food for us. At the very least, we need to at least support companies that practice sustainable production methods, rather than companies that harm the environment.

For every dollar that you spend, you are casting a vote for the kind of world that you want to live in. If you spend money on a product that was produced unsustainably, you are investing in that company and supporting their harmful practices. It may not seem like it, but you have a huge influence over society.

The money that we spend determines the popular markets. If everyone were to buy organic food for example, companies would be forced to match the demand

for organic food, or risk going out of business. It is the same for any market.

The consumers determine the markets, not the producers. If we all demanded that companies practice sustainable methods of production, and stood firm in our demands by only buying products from sustainable producers, all other producers would have to evolve their production methods or risk the collapse of their company.

Voting with your dollar is a very powerful way to determine how things are produced in our society, but it is even more powerful to reduce your need for consumption, and instead produce your own food by respectfully working with the earth.

Humanity needs to return to nature. We live in artificial environments, separated from the earth with concrete, skyscrapers, and roads. Our physical disconnection from nature has produced a spiritual disconnection from nature as well. We no longer see and feel our oneness with the Earth and all of the life that it supports.

In order to restore our connection with nature, we need to live closer to nature, and experience firsthand how nature is our provider; how the Earth is our mother. We cannot proceed to live such unnatural lifestyles and expect this not to have an effect on the Earth.

Reconnecting with nature is a step that humanity must take, but it has to be taken individually, by each one of us. We cannot preach about the need for sustainability yet continue to lead unsustainable lives. No matter how many good thoughts we think, no matter how many good words we say, no matter how good our intentions may be, ultimately our actions determine what is to come of our society.

Joseph P. Kauffman

12 Peace on Earth

Peace on Earth is not a destination, it is a choice that we must make. If humanity as a whole can wake up from our ignorance, realize our oneness, and begin living in harmony with nature and with each other, then peace on Earth can be our reality.

In order for this to happen, we have to cure our ignorant perception of life. We have to see the truth of our existence, and see beyond the views of separation and duality. We have to realize that we are all one, and that our individual actions affect the whole of existence. We have to see clearly our connection to one another, and begin treating one another with kindness, respect, and love.

The current state of society is a result of our current state of being. As a society, we are dominated by our egos and the many fears that stem from a mind identified with ego. Our concern is not for the planet, or for our fellow Earthlings, but for ourselves, for our own lives, and our own experience.

This attitude of self-centered egotism will lead to our destruction if we do not cure it fast. We have already allowed this ignorant perception to produce as much suffering as it has, and it is obvious that if we don't evolve our way of thinking, we will produce our own extinction.

Evolution or extinction. This is the choice that we must make. This is the reality of our situation. Everyone must rise to the occasion and co-create a better society, a

better way of harvesting, managing, and distributing natural resources, a better way of communicating with one another and treating our fellow human beings, a better way of living as humans on this beautiful planet that is our home.

The Earth is suffering, and this suffering needs to stop. But we cannot heal the world without first healing ourselves. We are not separate from the Earth, and the way that we interact with the Earth determines whether the Earth will thrive or deteriorate.

This change is urgent, and the longer we take to evolve our perception, the more destruction our current perception will produce. There is no more room for war, oppression, injustice, slavery, pollution, or destruction. Humanity needs to evolve our way of life, and begin living a life led by love, community, kindness, and stewardship for the Earth. We are responsible for the state of the world, and we are the only ones that can heal the world.

We cannot heal the planet without healing our damaged society, and we cannot heal our damaged society without first healing ourselves. Each of us needs to undo the conditioning that has shaped our behavior, and recondition ourselves to live life in a more peaceful way.

Change will never come from thinking, wishing, or dreaming. Change will come from acting, doing, and living. Change will come when we realize that we have no choice but to evolve our way of life, or produce our own destruction. Change is not a process of staying the same while altering the world around us. Change is a process of personal effort and transformation. Change is something that we need to accomplish within ourselves—within our own minds, our own thoughts, and our own way of behaving with the world. Change is a process of letting go of the past and embracing the present. Real change will only happen when we realize how connected we are to one another, when we realize that “I” and the “other” are not separate, and that we are all in this together. Real change will only come when we awaken from the illusion of separation, and realize our oneness.

“What we now want is closer contact and better understanding between individuals and communities all over the earth, and the elimination of egoism and pride which is always prone to plunge the world into primeval barbarism and strife...

Peace can only come as a natural consequence of universal enlightenment.”

– Nikola Tesla

About the Author

Joseph P. Kauffman is the founder of Conscious Collective, LLC—a societally oriented firm that is dedicated to awakening humanity from ignorance and participating in the evolution of human consciousness. Driven by the philosophy of the Bodhisattva, he is passionate about helping others find peace and healing the suffering that exists on this planet.

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The planet is suffering. Ecosystems are being destroyed, forests are being cut down, oceans are being contaminated, the air is being polluted, animals are being tortured, people are being oppressed, mistreated, poisoned, and killed. So much suffering is happening on the planet right now, and it is all the result of humanity's actions. Clearly our current way of life is destructive, illogical, and unsustainable, and unless we evolve our way of life and adapt to a new way of living, we will only create more suffering on this planet, destroying more life, and eventually destroying ourselves in the process.

All of the suffering that we experience today arises from humanity's actions, and our actions stem from our thoughts and our delusional perception of life. Humanity is operating on the momentum of an ignorant past, and this outdated worldview needs to evolve. We live with the notion that we are separate from one another, that we exist independently of the world around us, and that our individual actions do not impact the planet as a whole. This illusion of separation is the root cause of our suffering, and if we want to heal the planet, we have to heal our ignorant perception of life so that our actions will no longer reflect our ignorance, but will instead reflect an understanding and respect for one another and for the Earth as a whole.

This book discusses the causes of our ignorance and our destructive actions, and provides the knowledge needed to undo the conditioning that has been done to us, in order to recondition ourselves to live a lifestyle that is in harmony with the natural world. If we want to heal the state of the world, we have to evolve our way of thinking and interacting with the world. As long as we view the world as something that exists separately from us, we will continue to create our suffering. If we want to experience peace on Earth, we have to realize our oneness and awaken from the illusion of separation.

