

The view of human consciousness held by most scientists today is that it is composed of digital information-data, that is, of essentially the same kind used by computers. Though some bits of this data-seeing a spectacular sunset, hearing a beautiful symphony for the first time, even falling in love-may feel more profound or special to us than the countless other bits of information created and stored in our brains, this is really just an illusion. All bits are, in fact, qualitatively the same. Our brains model outside reality by taking the information that comes in through our senses and transforming it into a rich digital tapestry. But our perceptions are just a model-not reality itself. An illusion.

This was, of course, the view I held as well. I can remember being in medical school and occasionally hearing arguments that consciousness is nothing more than a very complex computer program. These arguments suggested that the ten billion or so neurons firing constantly within our brains are capable of producing a lifetime of consciousness and memory.

To understand how the brain might actually block our access to knowledge of the higher worlds, we need to accept at least [Page 81] hypothetically and for the moment-that the brain itself doesn't produce consciousness. That it is, instead, a kind of reducing valve or filter, shifting the larger, nonphysical consciousness that we possess in the nonphysical worlds down into a more limited capacity for the duration of our mortal lives. There is, from the earthly perspective, a very definite advantage to this. Just as our brains work hard every moment of our waking lives to filter out the barrage of sensory information coming at us from our physical surroundings, selecting the material we actually need in order to survive, so it is that forgetting our trans-earthly identities also allows us to be "here and now" far more effectively. Just as most of ordinary life holds too much information for us to take in at once and still get anything done, being excessively conscious of the worlds beyond the here and now would slow down our progress even more. If we knew too much of the spiritual realm now, then navigating our lives on earth would be an even greater challenge than it already is. (That's not to say we shouldn't be conscious of the worlds beyond now-only that if we are extra-conscious of their grandeur and immensity, they can prevent action while still here on earth.) From a more purpose-focused perspective (and I now believe the universe is nothing if not purposeful), making the right decisions through our free will in the face of the evil and injustice on earth would mean far less if we remembered, while here, the full beauty and brilliance of what awaits us.

Why am I so sure of all this? For two reasons. The first is that I was shown it (by the beings who taught me when I was in the Gateway and the Core), and the second is because I actually experienced it. While beyond my body, I received knowledge about the nature and structure of the universe that was vastly beyond

my comprehension. But I received it anyhow, in large part because, with my worldly preoccupations out of the way, I [Page 82] had room to do so. Now that I'm back on earth and remember my bodily identity, the seed of that trans-earthly knowledge has once again been covered over. And yet it's still there. I can feel it, at every moment. It will take years, in this earthly environment, to come to fruition. That is, it will take me years to understand, using my mortal, material brain, what I understood so instantly and easily in the brain-free realms of the world beyond. Yet I'm confident that with hard work on my part, much of that knowledge will continue to unfold.

To say that there is still a chasm between our current scientific understanding of the universe and the truth as I saw it is a considerable understatement. I still love physics and cosmology, still love studying our vast and wonderful universe. Only I now have a greatly enlarged conception of what "vast" and "wonderful" really mean. The physical side of the universe is as a speck of dust compared to the invisible and spiritual part. In my past view, spiritual wasn't a word that I would have employed during a scientific conversation. Now I believe it is a word that we can- not afford to leave out.

From the Core, my understanding of what we call "dark energy" and "dark matter" seemed to have clear explanations, as did far more advanced components of the makeup of our universe that humans won't address for ages.

This doesn't mean, however, that I can explain them to you. That's because- paradoxically-I am still in the process of understanding them myself. Perhaps the best way of conveying that part of the experience is to say that I had a foretaste of another, larger kind of knowledge: one I believe human beings will be able to access in ever larger numbers in the future. But conveying that knowledge now is rather like being a chimpanzee, becoming a human for a single day to experience all of [Page 83] the wonders of human knowledge, and then returning to one's chimp friends and trying to tell them what it was like knowing several different Romance languages, the calculus, and the immense scale of the universe.

Up there a question would arise in my mind, and the answer would arise at the same time, like a flower coming up right next to it. It was almost as if, just as no physical particle in the universe is really separate from another, so in the same way there was no such thing as a question without an accompanying answer. These answers were not simple "yes" or "no" fare, either. They were vast conceptual edifices, staggering structures of living thought, as intricate as cities. Ideas so vast they would have taken me lifetimes to find my way around if I had been confined to earthly thought. But I wasn't. I had sloughed off that earthly style of thought like a butterfly breaking from a chrysalis.

I saw the earth as a pale blue dot in the immense blackness of physical space. I could see that earth was a place where good and evil mixed, and that this

constituted one of its unique features. Even on earth there is much more good than evil, but earth is a place where evil is allowed to gain influence in a way that would be entirely impossible at higher levels of existence. That evil could occasionally have the upper hand was known and allowed by the Creator as a necessary consequence of giving the gift of free will to beings like us.

Small particles of evil were scattered throughout the universe, but the sum total of all that evil was as a grain of sand on a vast beach compared to the goodness, abundance, hope, and unconditional love in which the universe was literally awash. The very fabric of the alternate dimension is love and acceptance, and anything that does not have these qualities appears immediately and obviously out of place there. [Page 84] But free will comes at the cost of a loss or falling-away from this love and acceptance. We are free; but we are free beings hemmed all around by an environment conspiring to make us feel that we are not free. Free will is of central importance for our function in the earthly realm: a function that, we will all one day discover, serves the much higher role of allowing our ascendance in the timeless alternate dimension. Our life down here may seem insignificant, for it is minute in relation to the other lives and other worlds that also crowd the invisible and visible universes. But it is also hugely important, for our role here is to grow toward the Divine, and that growth is closely watched by the beings in the worlds above-the souls and lucent orbs (those beings I saw originally far above me in the Gateway, and which I believe are the origin of our culture's concept of angels). We-the spiritual beings currently inhabiting our evolutionarily developed mortal brains and bodies, the product of the earth and the exigencies of the earth-make the real choices. True thought is not the brain's affair. But we have-in part by the brain itself-been so trained to associate our brains with what we think and who we are that we have lost the ability to realize that we are at all times much more than the physical brains and bodies that do-or should do-our bidding.

True thought is pre-physical. This is the thinking-behind- the-thinking responsible for all the genuinely consequential choices we make in the world. A thinking that is not dependent on linear deduction, but that moves fast as lightning, making connections on different levels, bringing them together. In the face of this free, inner intelligence, our ordinary thought is hopelessly slow and fumbling. It's this thinking that catches the football in the end zone, that comes up with the inspired scientific insight or writes the inspired song. The subliminal thinking [Page 85] that is always there, when we really need it, but that we have all too often lost the ability both to access and to believe in. Needless to say, it's the thinking that sprang into action the evening of that skydive when Chuck's chute opened up suddenly beneath me.

To experience thinking outside the brain is to enter a world of instantaneous connections that make ordinary thinking (i.e., those aspects limited by the physical

brain and the speed of light) seem like some hopelessly sleepy and plodding event. Our truest, deepest self is completely free. It is not crippled or compromised by past actions or concerned with identity or status. It comprehends that it has no need to fear the earthly world, and therefore, it has no need to build itself up through fame or wealth or conquest.

This is the true spiritual self that all of us are destined someday to recover. But until that day comes, I feel, we should do everything in our power to get in touch with this miraculous aspect of ourselves-to cultivate it and bring it to light. This is the being living within all of us right now and that is, in fact, the being that God truly intends us to be.

How do we get closer to this genuine spiritual self? By manifesting love and compassion. Why? Because love and compassion are far more than the abstractions many of us believe them to be. They are real. They are concrete. And they make up the very fabric of the spiritual realm.

In order to return to that realm, we must once again become like that realm, even while we are stuck in, and plodding through, this one.

One of the biggest mistakes people make when they think about God is to imagine God as impersonal. Yes, God is behind the numbers, the perfection of the universe [Page 86] that we have momentarily forgotten, but who, if we open ourselves to their presence, are waiting to help us navigate our time here on earth. None of us are ever unloved. Each and every one of us is deeply known and cared for by a Creator who cherishes us beyond any ability we have to comprehend. That knowledge must no longer remain a secret.

[Page 95 To Forget and Remember]

My awareness was larger now. So large, it seemed to take in entire universe. Have you ever listened to a song on a static-filled radio station? You get used to it. Then someone ad-justs the dial and you hear the same song in its full clarity. How could you have failed to notice how dim, how far away, how entirely untrue to the original it was before?

Of course, that's how the mind works. Humans are built to adapt. I'd explained to my patients many times that this or that discomfort would lessen, or at least seem to lessen, as their bod-ies and brains adapted to the new situation. Something goes on long enough, and your brain learns to ignore it, or work around it, or just to treat it as normal.

But our limited earthly consciousness is far from simply normal, and I was getting my first illustration of this as I traveled ever deeper, to the very heart of the Core. I still remembered nothing of my earthly past, and yet I was not the less for this. Even though I'd forgotten my life down here, I had remembered who I really and truly was out there. I was a citizen of a universe staggering in its vastness and complexity, and ruled entirely by love.

In an almost eerie way, my discoveries beyond the body echoed the lessons I had learned just a year earlier through reconnecting with my birth family. Ultimately, none of us are orphans. We are all in the position I was, in that we have other family: beings who are watching and looking out for us-beings [Page 96] we have momentarily forgotten, but who, if we open ourselves to their presence, are waiting to help us navigate our time here on earth. None of us are ever unloved. Each and every one of us is deeply known and cared for by a Creator who cherishes us beyond any ability we have to comprehend. That knowledge must no longer remain a secret.