

THE ESSEX HALL LECTURE 1988

# THE EXPERIENCE OF WHOLENESS

*The limits of Dualism*



CAROL PULLEY MacCORMACK

THE ESSEX HALL LECTURE 1988

*THE EXPERIENCE OF WHOLENESS*

*The limits of Dualism*



*CAROL PULLEY MacCORMACK*

UNITARIAN PUBLICATIONS

ISBN 0 85319 881



[www.unitarian.org.uk/docs](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/docs)

*This is the Essex Hall Lecture for 1988, and was delivered in Lancaster, on April 5th, 1988. Essex Hall is the headquarters of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, and stands on the site of the building where the first avowedly Unitarian congregation met over two hundred years ago. The lecture was founded in 1892, and many distinguished persons in various fields have contributed to the series. The delivery of the lecture is one of the leading events during the General Assembly's Annual Meetings.*

*A complete list of previous lectures, many of which are still available for purchase, may be obtained by application to the Information Department of the General Assembly, at the address printed below.*

## THE EXPERIENCE OF WHOLENESS

The limits of Dualism

**Carol Pulley MacCormack**

Medical students, doing grand rounds with a consultant, considered a woman suffering chronic and debilitating headache. The woman spoke haltingly of her alcoholic husband who occasionally beat her. She had been virtually housebound for the past five years looking after her senile and incontinent mother-in-law, and she worried constantly about her son who was failing his school exams. Some of the medical students grew restless with clinical questioning that elicited such information. Finally one interrupted the consultant to demand "But what is the real cause of the headaches?"

The student, and many of her classmates, interpreted the narrative as unrelated to real medical diagnosis. She wanted information on the neurochemical changes which she understood as constituting the true cause of headaches. Even when teams of a physician, psychiatrist and social worker jointly diagnose, they tend to express relief when the 'true' cause is discovered; usually a single organic cause. If diagnostic tests indicate an organic disorder all the patient's social circumstances tend to be forgotten. When psychopathology is diagnosed organic concomitants tend to be ignored. The teams were most comfortable with pain that was either physical or mental, not both. This either-or definition of pain reminds us of the limerick:

There was a faith healer of Deal  
Who said "Although pain isn't real  
If I sit on a pin  
And it punctures my skin  
I dislike what I fancy I feel."

This either-or way of looking at the body has been with us for centuries, at least since the 17th century when Descartes argued that the human organism was made up of palpable body and intangible mind. By splitting us in two, Descartes could remain within Christian orthodoxy by preserving the soul as the domain of theology and the body as the legitimate domain of science.

Published by the Unitarian Information Department  
of the  
General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

Essex Hall, 1 - 6 Essex Street,  
Strand, London, WC2R 3HY  
01-240 2384

Printed by F.S. Moore Ltd., London

He thus enabled biology to pursue the kind of radical materialist thinking expressed by the medical student (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987: 8-9).

Since Aristotle there has been a stream of ideas within our cultural tradition which defines all things in the universe from stars and planets to people, as being made up of material atoms, existing independently and interacting blindly through the forces they exert on each other. The universe is vast, the earth is a speck of dust and we men and women are insignificant. The universe is indifferent to our moral values and our ultimate fate. But we are curious about it, regarding it as observers, somehow outside what we observe. We classify material objects, measure them using our five senses, and search for relationships between measurements, gaining control over those material objects. As a measure of how far this cultural tradition has progressed, most scientists now do military-related work and we can destroy our world many times over (Wilber 1979: 3, 4, 35, 36).

When we view the world as composed of things inherently divided from other things we begin to think of ourselves in the same way. We defend our nation against another one, or capitalism against communism. We defend the needs of our 'ego' against the forces of other egos. As much as 80% of our interactions with other people appear to come from the need for self-reinforcement because we have so little sense of being grounded in anything (Russell 1982: 105, 183). As people we are fragmented into desires, fears, loyalties, duties and temperament to the extent that conflict and anxiety are inevitable. We perceive our physical and mental environment as unhealthy, crisis-ridden, and we feel helpless in averting crises. For centuries we have been deceiving ourselves by thinking we could stand outside nature, but we are inextricably bound up with all we observe. Carl Jung explained that when such fundamental contradictions are not consciously acknowledged, "the world must perforce act out the conflict and be torn into opposite halves" (Jung 1978, J. Hardy 1987, Zukav 1979: 56).

Over the past three or four centuries we have been losing the 'third eye' of deep knowledge and the inner eye of love. We use the eye of the flesh that classifies and measures matter, the eye of reason that values logic, but we have lost the eye of contemplation. With the third eye, our spiritual awareness of unity would be as public as are weights, measures and the multiplication tables. Without it we have lost our most profound source of knowledge (Wilber 1983: 34). Paradoxically, some physicists who have sought ever smaller particles of particles have looked with their third eye, and become philosophers. Niels Bohr, for example, knew that the complementarity of parts within the whole was so fundamental to all being that he incorporated the yin-yang symbol within his family coat of arms.

Albert Einstein wrote of the cosmos that can be directly apprehended in mystical union. He described his own 'cosmic religious feeling'. He felt akin

to people of all ages who have a capacity for this kind of direct religious experience which knows no dogma and no God conceived in man's image. Erwin Schrodinger knew the literature on mystics, and described how the unity of self and God characterized all. In oneness of mind, our feeling, perceiving and thinking selves are identical with "the whole world picture" and therefore we cannot be just an isolated part of the world. Werner Heisenberg strongly rejected dualistic positivism with its delusion that the analytical and empirical approach alone can give us an adequate world view. He wrote of "truth that dwells in the deep", and how the researcher first recognizes truth by its splendour. When the beauty of truth shines forth into science "the great connections become recognizable, even before it is understood in detail and before it can be rationally demonstrated." Prince Louis de Broglie wrote that all genuine science is motivated by an "aspiration toward spirit", and Max Planck advocated that we cultivate the religious part of our nature so that all powers act in perfect harmony. Sir James Jeans wrote of the "universal mind" and Sir Arthur Eddington wrote profoundly on the essential truth revealed in mystical experience. Our minds are not apart from the world, and our feelings of gladness, melancholy, and yet deeper feelings are not of ourselves alone but are glimpses of a reality transcending the narrow limits of our particular consciousness. For him "the harmony and beauty of the force of nature is, at root, one with the gladness that transfigures the face of man" (Wilber [ed.] 1984).

But the prevailing European popular world view has exhibited little interest in the splendour of mystical unity that transcends dualism. Mechanism is more central to it than is mind. The contemporary physicist David Bohm has suggested that our present world view is not even that of a clockwork universe, but of fragments. The parts of a clock are intrinsically related to a whole, but fragments from a clock that has been shattered by a hammer are separated in ways that cannot be harmoniously articulated into a functioning whole. Our dualistic way of thinking *often* produces irrelevant breaks and fragments. We are not bound up in the whole (Bohm 1980: xi, 2; 1985: 1, 2, 23).

But there is another stream that has been flowing for centuries or millenia within our European cultural tradition. It has just been driven underground during the past three or four centuries by dualistic thinking. In this alternative tradition, all being is permeated with an intelligence that is creative. The universe, or ground of its being, is permeated with love and compassion, in a relationship with suffering and destruction. We experience the evidence for that point of view in ourselves. Even now, after centuries of pervasive dualistic thinking, between about 60 and 80% of us admit to having experienced mystical insight in which we know integration with the unbroken whole (Maslow 1970, Hay 1987). We also experience unity rather than mind-body dualism in serious illness, in moments of deep meditation or trance, and in sexual transport. Mind and body, self and other, become one in the

wordless communication between parent and infant, lover and beloved, mortally ill patient and healer. Bodies are presented to the other with unreserved love. In collective healing rituals, especially if they include music and dance, waves of fellow feeling wash between people who are free of self-awareness as they 'feel' the sick person back to wellness and wholeness. In the process the social body, or congregation, becomes well and whole. A ring of circle dancers know the unity of the whole. Emotion-filled experience brings intensity and commitment to human action in a universe suffused with direct moral knowledge.

#### World Views and their Transformations

The philosopher D. T. Suzuki contrasted the Buddhist world view with our Cartesian world view through two poems. The Japanese poet Basho wrote the haiku:

When I look carefully  
I see the nazuma blooming  
By the hedge!

Tennyson wrote:

Flower in the crannied wall  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower – but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.

Basho discovered an inconspicuous plant, blooming by a hedge on a rural lane. It was unpretentious, not desiring to be noticed. Yet when he looked its very humbleness and unostentatious beauty evoked tender feelings. He felt how full of glory it was. The poet could read in every petal the deepest mystery of being. But Tennyson ripped the plant by its roots, destroying it in the very act of admiring it. He could analyse the flower, dissect it into its parts, write treatises on it, discover its medical properties, but he would be no closer to knowing what God and man is. To know that he must commune, opening the inner eye of love (Suzuki 1960). Suzuki himself, as a young man, before going to Chicago to extend his academic career, following a period of deep meditation, reached a state in which his inner eye was open. On that night he climbed a stone stairway between tall trees in the monastery grounds. All was transparent and full of love; he was the trees and the trees were him (Crewdson 1987).

The haiku writer's insight that there is a relationship between the microcosm of a flower and the macrocosm is re-emerging from the underground streams

of European culture in the form of alternative thinking. Think not of a flower, but of a cancer. It appears on the body. Similarly, when we look at the world our destructive manipulative technological society looks like a malignant growth blindly devouring its host in a selfish act of consumption. The way to slow both micro and macro-scopic cancers is through a change in world view so that we may experience personal, social and spiritual wholeness again. Lots of us know, with the tenderness of knowing the flower, that the earth and its atmosphere is Gaia, a single organism, and we are an integral part of it. We no longer 'act on nature' but our activity affects the homeostasis of Gaia who is us and our world. Just as our muscle, bone, heart and eyes are of one person, so the destiny of ourselves and our world is one (Russell 1982, J. Hardy 1987, Lovelock 1979).

As the ecology movement carries forward the practical visioning of a world in harmony rather than conflict, so also the women's movement is contributing to the same world view. It is a mass movement, away from individualistic, competitive, materialistic and manipulative values; a movement in which many feminist writers are rediscovering the spiritual basis of knowledge. God herself is being re-visioned. As Aldous Huxley explained in the *Perennial Philosophy*, the eternal feminine in us seeks divine Reality while the masculine might be thought of as the original sin of regarding the personal ego as self-sufficient (Huxley 1945: 212, J. Hardy 1988. See also Lao Tzu, Book 1, No. 6: 62 and No. 25: 82). However, these characterizations of male and female are not facts of biology but cultural definitions. They can therefore transform as we become conscious of how our prevailing definitions of maleness have contributed to conflict rather than wholeness and harmony. Ralph Waldo Emerson, (1868: 317) flowing with the cultural stream of wholistic thinking in the 19th century, knew:

The round world is fair to see,  
Nine times folded in mystery:  
Though baffled seers cannot impart  
The secret of its labouring heart,  
Throb thine with Nature's throbbing breast,  
And all is clear from east to west,  
Spirit that lurks each form within  
Beckons to spirit of its kin;  
Self-kindled every atom glows,  
And hints the future which it owes.

A world view is a dominant framework of thought within a culture. But it is simply a way of seeing; a point of view. If any paradigm is taken to be the final exact representation of reality we will inevitably meet situations where it is irrelevant. At the present time if we continue to hold fast to a dualistic framework in spite of its irrelevance we must either ignore the essence of situations (as mass media news does), or apply some kind of force to make

things fit. In either case, further fragmentation is the result. Paradoxically, scientists themselves are increasingly working within a new non-fragmentary world view. The old way of analysis by breaking the world into independently existing parts which act upon each other is still giving us control over things in immunology, for example, but some biologists have already turned the corner and are formulating broad-ranging theories that are compatible with the forefront of theoretical physics. In both relativity theory and quantum theory a world view of undivided wholeness of the universe is a better explanation of reality. The solid material objects of classical physics have become patterns of probabilities. The patterns are not probabilities of *things*, but probabilities of *interconnections*. The universe and everything in it is an infinitely rich web of relations between parts of a unified whole (Capra 1975: 150). The mandala is a symbol for our times.

As the new world view takes shape it is important that people 'feel' themselves to be the nazuma flower, and the dusty lane, as in deep ecology visioning. We come to feel in touch with our masculine and feminine qualities, and thereby in touch with all men and women. Francis Boston reminds us, in 'Sexplanations':

Men and women both spin spells  
We're wizards all and witches;  
We're all of us Yinyanimals,  
All earthy bogs and ditches.

Bogs and ditches are we all  
Or maybe vice versa,  
But variations of Mankind  
For better or for worse.

There's male and female in us all  
Don't focus on polarity!  
You've but to laugh and know thyself  
To understand wholality!

So now, with pleasure, let us contemplate the excitement of revisioning our here-to-fore taken-for-granted world.

#### Wholeness Enfolding and Unfolding

Just as direct religious experience is too important to be left to theologians, neither must scientific theory be left to mathematicians. If we ordinary people do not understand scientific theory intuitively, then scientists are priests or wizards who work out formulae and produce magical results which must be taken on faith. We have taken the dualistic mechanistic philosophy too much on faith and it has affected the way we regard ourselves and approach the

world. David Bohm has observed that what we have taken on faith has profoundly affected the way science is applied, the way society is organised, and the way people relate to things and to each other (1985: 31). Therefore he and other contemporary scientists have made splendid images and analogies available to us, interspersed with their daunting mathematics.

Take a moment and look at light coming in the window. Then try to imagine the smallest, most fundamental unit of light. We might call it a photon. If I ask you what it is like, I will be setting you a conundrum. It can be a particle, or a wave, or it can exist in an ambiguous state until someone measures it. If the observer measures a particle-like property the photon behaves like a particle, but if the observer measures a wave-like property it behaves like a wave. Whether it is particle-like or wave-like is indefinite until the observer sets the experimental arrangements. While our eye is on the photon to see what it will do next, a magician has waved his silk handkerchief and the observer disappeared, transformed into a participator. The objective world 'out there' has gone as well, and we find ourselves in a participatory universe. Measurements are interactions which create sensations in our consciousness. As Heisenberg explained, what we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our way of questioning. A truth long known to the social sciences is now recognized as fundamental to the physical sciences (MacCormack and Strathern 1980, Shimony 1988). But more than 2000 years ago Buddhist thinkers had already grasped the truth that there is a universal interwovenness which always included the human observer and his or her consciousness (Capra 1975).

Let us think again of our photons, but this time think of a pair of photons flying off in opposite directions from an electrically excited atom. A measurement on one seems instantaneously to affect the result of a measurement done on the other. They communicate immediately, non-locally, faster than the speed of light. If the state of one is changed, the partner changes instantaneously. There is no electromagnetic signal or any other mechanism in classical physics to explain this instantaneous knowing (Shimony 1988, Bohm 1980). The implication of this and similar experiments, and Bell's theorem about them, is that there are no separate parts in the world. The idea that anything happens autonomously is an illusion. What happens in this room is intimately and immediately connected with what happens elsewhere in the universe. What is prayer, then, but our consciousness within the seamless web of the universe?

The Cartesian world has turned upside down. Instead of starting with parts and showing how they work together, we must start with the unbroken and unbound whole. David Bohm, Professor of Theoretical Physics at Birkbeck College, Einstein's pupil, has developed a theory of wholeness and implicate order. Some of the basic concepts of relativity theory and quantum theory contradict each other, but what they share is the realization of undivided

wholeness. He encourages us to consider the universe not as empty space but the plenum, a vast sea of energy which is the ground of the existence of everything, including ourselves. The explicate things that appear to our senses unfold from this multidimensional implicate order. Their true meaning can be seen only when we consider the plenum. Bohm takes his particular meaning of implicate from the verb 'to implicate' meaning 'to fold inward'. Each region of time and space has, in some sense, the total universe of unbroken wholeness enfolded within it. In our universe of unbroken wholeness space and time are no longer the dominant factors determining relationships. Rather, time, space and material particles are abstracted from the whole. They are explicate or unfolded forms, derived from the enfolded order. The whole is in every explicate part as the whole picture is in every part of a hologram when we shine light on a small part of it (1980: XV, 149 ff.).

But Bohm writes not of the hologram. Rather, he gives us the image of a holomovement, for the universe is dynamic. He gives us the analogy of the sea and its waves. Each wave arises, projected in explicate form from the whole of the sea. Then the wave dips back into the sea, into the implicate order. Then the next wave arises. Each wave is affected by past waves because they all rise and fall in the whole sea. There is a type of 'causality' but it is not that wave A linearly causes wave B, but that wave A influences wave B by virtue of being adsorbed back into the totality of the sea, which then gives rise to wave B. Each wave would be similar to previous waves, but also different in exact size, shape, etc. This is a type of causality, but one that is mediated by the totality of the implicate sea and not by separated, isolated, explicate waves acting on each other. This action is like the photon pair, responding instantaneously, non-locally because what happens in part of the unbroken sea affects all other parts. Each moment exhibits a projection affected by the re-injection of previous moments, which is a kind of memory, and results in a general replication of past forms (Bohm in Sheldrake 1985: 236-237). The sea as we are beginning to understand it has transformed from the three dimensions of up, down and across to the plenum with eleven or more dimensions.

One of the encouraging signs of an incipient shift to a more holistic world view is that physicists of Bohm's formidable ability cooperatively search out meanings with other kinds of scientists. In conversations with the biologist Rupert Sheldrake, Bohm has come close to Sheldrake's idea of morphogenetic resonance. Sheldrake goes well beyond the mechanistic action of DNA in explaining why, for example, if the eye of a newt is removed another grows back from an entirely different kind of tissue than that from which the eye grew in embryo. Why, when generations of experimental rats become adept at maze-running, do the control populations of rats who have never seen a maze begin to show a similar adeptness? Why do people who have never seen written Persian pick out real words from nonsense assemblages of letters out of all proportion to chance? Sheldrake suggests

that all growing and learning in the universe are not isolated events that occur and vanish forever, but build up in 'fields' to affect the form and activity of future events (Sheldrake 1985). This also gives us a new way to conceptualize prayer; both what we think with our minds and do with our bodies. In a holistic world view, prayer is an integral aspect of the unitary 'mindful body'. Prayer is not just what we say and think but what we live out in the quality of our lives. It forms in fields, resonating and shaping the form of all that follows.

You may be thinking that these concepts of explicate events arising from the ever-creating, enfolded implicate order are all very well, but how do I get on with making breakfast; with doing things in the work-a-day world? Rest assured: all Newtonian mechanics of time, space and material bodies are still here, and we continue to work with them, but we now see them merely as aspects of the implicate order which have become explicate in three dimensions. They are projections of the unbroken enfolded whole become unfolded. We no longer view space, time, and the force of one body on another as the ultimate realities that determine relationships. The reality of the new world view is unbroken wholeness and we are as inextricably the whole as is the light-suffused part of the hologram.

Through the most fundamental research in physics and biology our European world view has begun to stream along with about three thousand years of Asian culture, which has developed alternative ways of knowing that all is one, and one is all. Mahayana Buddhism poetically describes the universe as being like a vast net of jewels wherein reflections from one jewel are contained in all jewels, and the reflections of all are contained in each (Wilber 1979: 39; Capra 1975; see, for example, *The Upanishads* p 132).

Our universe is no longer quartered into inanimate, living, human and holy orders. The implicate whole simply becomes explicate when inanimate subatomic particles appear, transform and reappear, often in a billionth of a second, leaving their trace in a bubble chamber. When a plant sprouts from an inanimate seed, matures, and dissolves by the exchange of matter and energy with its environment, at what point can we say there is a break between what is alive and what is not? A molecule of carbon dioxide that crosses a cell boundary into a leaf does not suddenly become alive nor does a molecule of oxygen die when it is released into the atmosphere. Oxygen that vitalizes our breath does not die but transforms and we breathe out carbon dioxide. All belong to an unbroken whole. By perceiving the implicate order out of which oxygen, carbon dioxide, plants and ourselves unfold, we begin to know that we are profoundly one with our physical and natural environment. Our perceptions, attention, thought, feeling, desire, will and other manifestations of consciousness similarly unfold out of the same implicate order, the ground of all, transcending mind-matter dualism. Descartes defined matter as having extension and separation in space where consciousness was something different. He related the two by saying God,

who was outside of, and beyond, matter and consciousness, was able to give our minds clear notions that we might apply to nature. David Bohm is quite correct in saying that the belief that God directs this link has generally been abandoned, not only by physicists in their laboratories, but by ordinary men and women in the street (Bohm 1980: 192-212). Medical diagnosticians flounder between pain that is in the mind or in the body, and Descartes' God who once related mind to matter lies dead.

Our mind unfolds from implicit thoughts to explicit consciousness as a seed becomes a flower. The implicate order we share makes a relationship between our thoughts and the flower possible. Our physical states can affect our consciousness in many ways and the content of consciousness can affect our physical state. Grief can cause physical pain or an impaired immune system, but medical students are not guided in understanding the mind as enfolding matter, and the body as enfolding mind, and in some sense enfolding the holomovement of the entire universe.

### Experiencing Wholeness

Instead of viewing the universe in terms of basic building blocks we might think of it in terms of basic principles of organisation. Organised systems exist in levels. Think for example of molecules, organisms (from single-cell creatures to animals), social systems, ecosystems, the entire cosmos. A system is defined by interactions within it, and by interactions between it and its larger environment. Far from being at rest, the stability and duration of systems seems to depend on their capacity for self-organising activity. They are constantly adjusting to internal and external stimuli, achieving ever-changing homeostasis through feedback and adjustment. However, extreme challenges within a system, or from its larger environment, may push it beyond a threshold of adjustment, causing it to transform into something else. Thus genes mutate, plants and animals evolve, and our earth may be pushed by us beyond the threshold where homeostasis is possible.

A quality we might call mind is an aspect of all self-organising systems. Although it is manifest in organizational adjustments within systems, it also has qualities that are not bound by ordinary space and time. In social and ecological systems, for example, it is located not only in individual bodies but also in the messages, and pathways of messages, outside of bodies. There are larger manifestations of mind of which our individual minds are only subsystems. For example, our minds are interacting in this room in a social system. Our minds are also integrated into layers of ecosystems, and also participate with some kind of universal or cosmic mind. Erich Jantsch has suggested that God is not the creator but the mind of the universe, participating in its dynamic systems at all levels (Jantsch 1980: 18, 24, 54, 212, 307-311, Capra 1982: 285-332, Bateson 1972). Looking from the perspective of a cosmic mind, the 'sea' of energy that fills the plenum, our

consciousness, including moments of mystical insight, is equivalent to the projecting waves in David Bohm's sea analogy. Consciousness is the explicate experience of the implicate totality.

We have ordinary waking consciousness, and in mystical experience it may expand beyond the confines of self to an identity with the All. The psychologist, Ken Wilber, calls it unity consciousness. It is a direct, immediate and non-verbal awareness (Wilber 1979: 46). This experience is so widespread through history and across cultures that it has been called the perennial philosophy. One of the people in David Hay's recent random sample of people in Nottingham described such direct experience as being "like losing your particular sense of identity and it's like, say, looking at a tree . . . There's nothing between us, the tree and me." Another described "a feeling of being part of a whole. It's a very physical awareness of myself as an organism which relates to a greater organism" (Hay 1987: 143-144).

These experiences break in on ordinary people, and are no less rich and significant than those of people trained in a religious discipline. Indeed they may be more instructive to us because they are not subject to much intellectual shaping when they are described. But if we ordinary people are to transform our world view by seeking an ever more sensitive unity consciousness we will need to become familiar with techniques that help to quieten and centre the mind through meditation. The Sanskrit term for meditation means 'mental equilibrium'. It refers to the balanced and tranquil state of the mind in which we might experience the basic unity of all things, or even have periods of penetrating insight when we are conscious of the absolute oneness of the universe (Capra 1975: 142, Humphreys 1977, LeShan 1974).

The Jesuit, William Johnston, has described the experience of unity in Jungian terms. When we go beyond ego, beyond the personal unconsciousness, beyond the collective unconsciousness, beyond the archetypes, what do we find? All religions point to a single reality, known directly in mystical experience. We might think of it as the microcosm or an inner universe. Descriptions suggest that these deep forces are profoundly stirred by love. Even on the level of the psychological unconscious we know that love of parent for child, or child for parent, or love of adults for each other stirs forces within us. In mystical experience people know unrestricted love, infinite love and its force may re-structure the unconscious. The hidden layers of consciousness are awakened by these peaceful stirrings and the inner eye comes to see (Johnston 1978: 32-33, Marsden n.d.: 27-29). Bede Griffiths described the experience of pure oneness as "being in pure consciousness which gives lasting peace to the soul. It is an experience of the Ground or Depth of being in the Centre of the soul, an awareness of the mystery of being beyond sense and thought, which gives a sense of fulfillment, of finality, of absolute truth" (Griffiths 1976: 137). Many are reluctant to write or talk about these profound experiences for fear of debasing



them; reducing them from experience to an intellectual idea. Writing, or logos, imitates but can never replace experience and may even become a substitute for experience. Mythos is the opposite of intellectualism. It only points toward experience, as when words, music and movement of a circle dance combine to endow the quest for unity consciousness with meaning and vitality (Zukav 1979: 276-277). Or, we might focus on a single symbol of wholeness and ego-less eternal truth, such as the mandala. Rather than fragmenting experience through intellectual analysis, it concentrates the experience and helps to carry the experience over into everyday life. John Hemming suggests, for example, that we might consciously set aside ego and place Gaia at the centre of a mandala. She teaches us we are the earth. The kingdom of heaven cannot be known outside us if it is not first within us, as it is the sunlight, open air and green trees. Through the symbol of the mandala our consciousness interacts with the energetic whole (Hemming 1986).

Unity consciousness means that our external world and our inner world are two sides of the same fabric. In it the threads of all forces and all events, of all forms of consciousness and their objects, are woven into an inseparable net of endless, mutually conditioned relations (Capra 1975: 155; Marsden 1987). Thus our medical student might come to know that sparkling clean water reduces disease, but also that it purifies our hearts for it touches our soul. Economists might come to know that land produces cash crops but it also gladdens our mind through contact with its living presence. When we do not experience this wider kinship with the world we are in a prison house of materialism. Knowledge about how to act on material objects may lead us to power, but a sense of unity with kindred things gives us joy. Laws of gravity or the principles of natural selection give satisfaction to our intellect but they do not appeal to our whole being. If we are deceived into thinking they are the essence of the universe we will be deadened to the sense of the infinite.

#### Wholeness that Transcends Opposites

Let us return to the medical student who wanted to know the *real* cause of pain. She is learning the medical sciences and gaining mastery over scientific theory. A scientific theory is 'true' if it is self-consistent and predicts events. When a scientist says a theory is true he or she says it predicts and therefore it is useful. Zukav suggests that if we substitute the word 'useful' whenever we encounter the word 'true' the sciences appear in their proper perspective (Zukav 1979: 287). But the truly great scientists have had mystical experience of the infinite all, of the 'truth that dwells in the deep' as Heisenberg expressed it. For him truth was beauty in that all parts conform to one another and the whole, simply and completely. Truth is also suffused with ethical values that arise from "beauty's ground structure". When asked if his experience of beauty which is truth might be an illusion, he responded that he could not

doubt its "perfect, immediate recognition, this shuddering before the beautiful" (Heisenberg in Wilber 1984: 63-64).

If the medical student had not been the cultural daughter of Descartes, but born into a different cultural tradition, she might have begun her diagnosis in the macrocosm rather than the microcosm of nerve chemistry. For at least two or three thousand years most Asians have located the body in a cosmos which is poised in dynamic equilibrium, moving between extremes of such forces as light and dark, hot and cold, male and female. Because a human body is part of the whole, it too moves between these paired forces. The health of individuals is not different from balance in the natural world. People and nature are interdependent just as the health of each cell and organ in the body depends on its relation to all others in the body. Nothing can change without being linked to change in the whole. This view of body and cosmos is quite different from contemporary European concepts of the body based on absolute dichotomies and unresolved oppositions. The Asian world view emphasises balance and resonance where our European world view is based on tension and contradiction (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987: 12-13). But as our world view transforms, the medical student's curriculum might contain meditative techniques, to help her mind merge with the experiences of her patients and even with the universal mind. Then she might begin to understand the meaning of pain, not through fragmenting analytical methods, but through an intuitive synthesis. She may begin to experience moments of transcendence that are perceived as a unity of mind and body, self and other, woman and nature, being and plenum that has no boundary, out of which an explicate episode of pain unfolds. Only parts suffer. When we realise our self is All, there is nothing outside ourself that could inflict suffering.

In an alternative world view we will come to recognise the bond of harmony between dualities. Harmony allows our two eyes to act in unison. The right and left hand act from opposite directions, yet harmonize in creative activity. The continuity of relationship between light and dark, hot and cold, treble and base notes accounts for creative harmony in the universe rather than confusion. If the nature of opposites was to get the better of each other there would be chaos rather than creation. Each force returns to homeostasis. The Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore has given us the image of waves rising, each to its individual height in a seeming attitude of competition, but only up to a certain point. That is how we know the great repose of the sea to which they are all related, and to which they must all return in a beautiful rhythm. Waves, and all vibrations, are not erratic contortions of separate bodies but a rhythmic dance. Rhythms can never be born of the haphazard struggle of combat. The underlying principles must be unity, not opposition (Tagore 1957: 96-97).

Let us attempt to re-vision the meaning of pain in relationship with pleasure. We have been taught that the pursuit of happiness is an inalienable right.

We have had ever more insistent advertisers' promises that material acquisition will give pleasure. But how can we be happy when we also know sickness, famine and war? We might seek to eradicate pain, but we would have to deny the truth that pain and pleasure can only exist in terms of each other. Experience has taught us that we can only discriminate light in relation to dark. There is no inside without outside, no up without down, no win without loss, no pleasure without pain. To destroy pain we would also have to destroy pleasure. Thus the more we progress in the chemistry of tranquillisers the more we fail, and the more acute becomes our sense of frustration. It is only when we transcend the pleasure-pain opposition and experience that life is One will we know the 'higher third' of joy.

As dualistic thinking loses its power we may cease to worry about how we might grasp possessions, drugs or even facts. As the *Panchadasi* teaches: "How shall I grasp it? Do not grasp it. That which remains when there is no more grasping is the Self" (Humphreys 1977: 56). At this level of insight desire and sorrow merge into universal compassion; into loving kindness. We have been trying to steer our lives between grasping and giving, pleasure and pain, good and evil, without realising that life might be lived above countless pairs of opposites. We must learn to cultivate a type of consciousness in which life is lived without strong personal likes and dislikes, or the objective labelling of things and other people's acts as good or bad. So long as we view all things as either this or that, from a personal point of view, we shall go on perpetuating the destructiveness that arises from viewing as twofold that which is only one.

Has not our experience taught us that we become conscious of our moral nature when we begin to realise that we are more than we seem to be? We begin to have an adult vision of our true selves when we are aware of what is beyond and yet to be. The experience of being part of larger wholes changes our perspective of life. Our wish to have things that please our senses or assuage our fears gives way to a sense of purpose that is in our hearts. Good and evil, pleasure and pain, give way to a higher concern for all things, which arises from the connected view of the wholeness of life. We grow from smallness to greatness. We feel our greater self which is outside the limits of our changing personality.

In Jung's *Commentary on The Secret of the Golden Flower* he observed that at one level the most important problems in life are insoluble. They arise from explicate polarities in every self-regulating system. But he observed people who simply outgrew problems which had destroyed others. The 'outgrowing' occurred when some higher or wider interest arose on the person's horizon. Their level of consciousness was lifted and the insoluble problem lost its urgency. It was not solved logically but faded out before a new and stronger life tendency. It was not repressed and made unconscious but merely appeared in a different light, and so became different itself (in Humphreys

1977: 75, 76; Wilber 1979: 21-31, 53; Tagore 1957: 57-64). Tagore poetically reminds us that when we take a bucket of water from the sea we feel its weight. But when we dive into the sea a thousand bucketsfull of water flow over us and we do not feel their weight. We have to carry the bucket of 'self' with our strength. When we live on the plane of selfishness, pleasure and pain have their full weight. On a more unitary moral plane life paradoxically becomes lighter. People on this plane sometimes appear to move through life with great patience and forbearance under crushing trials (Tagore 1957: 57).

As our consciousness grows in power we gain a vision of that which unites opposites. We may begin to live on a plane of non-duality above opposites, as if our perspective was from the apex of a triangle. Then truth and untruth become the higher third of Truth; Beauty is above the ugly and the beautiful. The Good is above both good and evil and Joy transcends pleasure and pain. The most important lesson to learn is not that there is pain in the world but that it is possible to transmute it into Joy. This 'higher third' existed before opposites which it enfolds. Hindus call it That, Buddhists call it Suchness, and David Bohm has called it the implicate order. Once we realise that life is One, our path of duty becomes one of increasing service to other people, to all manifestations of life, and to the Ultimate which enfolds all being.

#### The Unitarian Future

Adrien Desmond's forthcoming book suggests that 19th century British Unitarians were in the vanguard of evolutionary thought that preceded Charles Darwin's systematic theory. They were in the avant-garde of a scientific revolution; a fundamental shift in world view. It swept through Western thought and came to be applied far beyond the biological disciplines in which Unitarians had been working. On the other side of the Atlantic David Hay has described how early 19th century Unitarianism had become a "dryly rationalistic" religion. Emerson referred to the Unitarian Church, with its excessive emphasis on the intellect, as an "ice house" (Hay 1987: 81).

Emerson of course had mystical experience in which he transcended self in a realization of unity with the All. He intentionally explored monistic rather than dualistic ways of thinking. He wrote of polarities in every part of nature, and the emotion of experiencing the larger whole that encompasses duality. He knew the macrocosm is in the microcosm, that the whole is in every part, giving us a glimpse more than a century ago of David Bohm's holographic paradigm and Jantsch's self-organizing universe. He explained that "the entire system of things gets represented in every particle. There is something that resembles the ebb and flow of the sea, day and night, man and woman, in a single needle of the pine, in a kernel of corn, in each individual of every animal tribe" (1868: 57). The ideas and emotional tone of his essays and

poetry had enormous popular appeal, and helped to restore an emotional quality to Unitarian religious life (Hay 1987: 81).

Although Alister Hardy's 1951 Essex Hall Lecture was perhaps a bit coldly positivistic, assuming that the investigator of religious experience could stand outside such experience in order to measure it, by 1966 he seems to have opened himself more fully to the emotional reality of unity with the All. He wrote of prayer as the "feeling of being in contact with a transcendental element beyond the self" (p. 234).

Have Unitarians been going through a 20th century period of 'dryness' and 'coldness'? But the flame is burning. William Johnston writes of people who have spent years in dryness, inner suffering and darkness. "But the tiny flame of love is burning quietly in the depth of their being; the loving knowledge is there in secret" (p. 37). He is only writing of love as we experience it in every-day life. It often grows secretly when no one notices, like a seed in the ground. Then one day we are conscious of it and filled with joy; at one with others and with all being.

Perhaps Unitarians are on the threshold of a new Emersonian era, ready to embark upon a mystical journey which is a love-filled journey toward union with the All. We may become one with ourselves, with others, with nature, and with the All that is God.

Bateson, Gregory

1972 *Steps To an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution and Epistemology* New York: Ballantine.

Bohm, David

1980 *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. London: Ark.  
1985 *Unfolding Meaning*. London: Ark.

Capra, Fritjof

1975 *The Tao of Physics*. London: Flamingo.  
1982 *The Turning Point*. London: Flamingo.

Crewdson, Michael

1987 D. T. Suzuki. London: Westminster Friends Meeting, Mimeo.

Desmond, Adrian J.

1988 *Politics of Evolution*, Chapter 4 (in preparation).

Emerson, Ralph Waldo

n.d. [1868?] *Emerson's Essays and Representative Men*. London: Collins.

Griffiths, Bede

1976 *Return to the Centre*. London: Collins.

Hardy, Alister

1951 *Science and the Quest for God*. Essex Hall Lecture. London: Unitarian Publications.

1966 *The Divine Flame*. (Gifford Lectures, Univ. of Aberdeen, 1965). Reprinted Oxford: Religious Research Unit, 1978.

Hardy, Jean

1987 *Psychology with a Soul*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
1988 *There is Another World, But it is This One* Q.U.G. Pamphlet. London: Friends House.

Hay, David

1987 *Exploring Inner Space: Scientists and Religious Experience*. Revised edition. London: Mowbray.

Hemming, John

1986 'On the Road to Mandalas,' *The Seeker*. Autumn 1986, pp. 13-17.

Hemming, John (Francis Boston)

1987 *Ways to the Centre*. Falmouth: Hemming.

Humphreys, Christmas

1977 *The Search Within*. London: Sheldon Press.

Huxley, Aldous

1985 [1945] *The Perennial Philosophy*. London: Triad.

Jantsch, Erich

1980 *The Self-Organizing Universe*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Johnston, William

1978 *The Inner Eye of Love: Mysticism and Religion*. London: Collins.

Jung, Carl G.

1978 *Collected Works*, Vol. 9. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Lao, Tzu

1963 *Tao Te Ching*, translated by D. C. Lau. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

LeShan, Lawrence

1974 *How to Meditate*. Wellingborough, U.K.: Turnstone Press.

Lovelock, James

1979 *Gaia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MacCormack, Carol, and Marilyn Strathern (eds.)

1980 *Nature, Culture and Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Marsden, Lorna M.  
 n.d. *A Discipline of Waiting*. London: Friends House.  
 1986 'Signals Toward the Future,' *The Seeker*. Autumn 1986: 1-8.
- Maslow, Abraham H.  
 1970 *Religions, Values and Peak Experiences*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Russell, Peter  
 1982 *The Awakening Earth: Our Next Evolutionary Leap*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy and Margaret M. Lock  
 1987 'The Mindful Body,' *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1: 6-41.
- Sheldrake, Rupert  
 1985 *A New Science of Life: The Hypothesis of Formative Causation*, 2nd edition. London: Anthony Blond.
- Shimony, Abner  
 1988 'The Reality of the Quantum World,' *Scientific American* 258: 46-53.
- Suzuki, D. T.  
 1960 'Lectures on Zen Buddhism,' In *Zen Buddhism*, ed. by D. T. Suzuki. E. Fromm and R. De Martino. New York: Grove Press.
- Tagore, Rabindranath  
 1957 *Sadhana*. London: Macmillan.
- Upanishads  
 1965 Translated by Juan Mascaro. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Wilber, Ken  
 1979 *No Boundary*. Boston and London: New Science Library.  
 1983 *Eye to Eye*. New York: Anchor.  
 1984 *Quantum Questions: Mystical Writings of the World's Greatest Physicists*. Boston and London: New Science Library.
- Zukav, Gary  
 1979 *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*. London: Fontana.



Carol MacCormack is a Quaker who has attended Unitarian Churches. In 1982 she gave the Theophilus Lindsey Lecture to mark the centenary of Charles Darwin's death, speaking to some of the philosophical issues that remain important today. The lecture was published in *Faith and Freedom* vol. 36, 1983. Her education in anthropology has included scientific as well as philosophical aspects of evolutionary theory, archaeology, and social anthropology. Most field research has been concerned with the analysis of comparative social and conceptual systems, principally in contemporary West Africa, but also in East Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America. This comparative perspective has led, for example, to a re-examination of our cultural definitions of nature and gender. Some of that work has been published in *Nature, Culture and Gender*, Cambridge University Press, 1980. Two periods of work in Burma, with exposure to Buddhist concepts, and meditative ways of knowing, particularly stimulated a re-examination of our European scientific world view, especially as it is being challenged by new explanatory concepts in physics, biology and other sciences. Carol MacCormack has a Ph.D from Bryn Mawr College, taught Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge where she was University Lecturer and Fellow of New Hall. Currently she is Senior Lecturer in the University of London, in the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, working at the interface between anthropology and medical sciences. She is also Honorary Lecturer at the School of Oriental and African Studies.