



A GRAMMAR OF THE SACRED

Consciousness, Value and
the Structure of a Worthwhile Life

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Prelude

There's a feeling that most of us can't name, a yearning you can't silence but you also can't satisfy. It's like a homesickness, but it calls you back to a foreign land where you can't find home comfort and repose.

A love you feel but cannot trust. When you embrace the feeling, the intellect takes out its clipboard and tells you all the reasons the feeling can't be real. It's constantly scanning for all the ways you might be cheated. Its arguments are convincing, yet the yearning remains.

The Welsh have a word for it, *hiraeth*: a grief felt for an absence. This is the shape of the spiritual wound of our modern age. It's been called disenchantment, but that diagnosis is too clinical.

What if that feeling wasn't a psychological imbalance to be managed, but a form of perception? What if the nostalgia points toward something real?

Maybe the feeling isn't a consequence of culture at all. Maybe it's a perception that your worldview is incomplete. What it lacks you can feel the shape of, but you cannot name.

This book names it.

Where We Stand

We live in a thoroughly secular age. Some of us have religion added on top, but on the deepest level we've all absorbed the naturalist mindset. This book is for people who appreciate the merits of naturalism but also feel its deficiency as a worldview. They sense there is more to the world than the naturalist story can provide, but the modern sceptical malaise is so ingrained they struggle to trust their intuitions.

Our modern world takes it for granted that science provides us with truth about the world without any ideology attached. We rarely think of the scientific worldview as an ideology, but rather as what remains when ideology is removed: a neutral view of the world free of bias and dogma.

But this picture of neutrality often hides a slide from a method to a metaphysics. The scientific method is conflated with a naturalist metaphysics (the claim that nature is all that exists). No scientific evidence shows that science describes the whole of reality; that claim is a metaphysical interpretation of the data.

Because of this conflation, naturalism is often seen not as a worldview, but as the humble advancement of science, or even as the principles of rational enquiry itself. Consequently, anyone who wants to challenge it faces an unusual difficulty, they're seen as rejecting science or departing from rationality itself, rather than questioning a metaphysical commitment.

One example of this is the idea that we should have evidence before believing in anything beyond what science describes. This seems like good intellectual hygiene, we should be cautious about believing things without evidence. But notice the hidden metaphysical assumption: that the scientific description is already complete.

A method gives a description of what it can reach, it's silent on what lies beyond. If we were only following a method, we'd merely observe that we're no longer working within its defined scope. But the demand for evidence doesn't mention scope. It presents itself as caution: without evidence we can't commit.

It shows up most often in the idea that we need evidence to believe in anything supernatural or beyond nature, such as souls and God. This puts an extra burden on religious or spiritual worldviews, they must provide evidence for their metaphysical interpretation while naturalism is presumed as the humble starting point.

But the question isn't whether something extra exists beyond the physical as science describes it. The question at the heart of metaphysics is what the essential character of nature is.

This shows up most clearly when it comes to questions of consciousness.

The view from inside

Consider the scientific description of a human like you or me. It provides details about the structure and functions of the body, but nowhere in that description will it observe your consciousness. This is because science deals in third-person data, what we can publicly observe and measure. But consciousness doesn't show up that way.

Think about how you know about your own consciousness, it's just... there. Right now you're experiencing things like the touch of the chair you're sitting on and the noises in the background. You don't need to infer your own consciousness exists, it's presented directly. This first-person access means no one else can observe your consciousness. They can only infer it exists from the external signs. If someone is crying and taking pain medication, we infer they're in pain because that's how we act when we feel pain.

How we know about consciousness is different from how we know about everything else. There's no mystery about whether other people have kidneys, even though we can't see them directly. But even if you knew all the physical facts about someone's body, you still couldn't directly confirm whether they're conscious. A brain scan can show you neurons, but it can't show you consciousness, because it's not a physical object.

This isn't a limit of technology. Leaving out the inside view is a feature of the scientific method. It's not a gap in current knowledge that more detail could close, because it's the wrong kind of detail. The gap is a structural mismatch, the difference between knowing something from the inside and knowing it from the outside.

Most of the time we infer the inside from the external signs so smoothly we don't notice we're doing it. But with creatures that are unlike us, the inference relies on less familiar correlations and the strangeness becomes visible. Watch a spider spinning a web. It moves with a purpose, avoiding threats and carefully building its trap. But you can't know if anything is going on inside. Is the spider feeling smug pleasure at its sneaky plan or anticipating the satisfaction of eating its meal?

Take a moment to think about how strange this is. The single most important fact about another person is the one thing you can never know directly. You can't observe if they're experiencing the world at all, or if their experience is like yours or radically different.

Philosophers call this the problem of other minds. There's a boundary between you and other minds and it exists because of how you access consciousness. You know your own consciousness from the inside, by direct acquaintance, but everyone else's you have to infer.

To see why this is a problem for naturalism, think about how explanation usually works in science. In most cases, how you know about some-

thing is irrelevant to what that thing actually is. You can know about a distant planet by looking through a telescope, but the planet exists independently of the telescope. The telescope is a tool, it doesn't define what the planet is.

Some naturalist theories apply this same method to consciousness and retain that gap between how we know something and what it really is. They argue that although you know your consciousness by first-person access, consciousness is really just neurons firing.

But consciousness collapses the usual gap between how things appear to you and how reality actually is. If you're in pain, you experience it directly, there's no intermediate instrument. An unpleasant experience isn't an object that can show up on a brain scan. When it comes to conscious experience, the appearance is the reality.

If no gap separates appearance and reality, then we can't discard the mode in which consciousness appears as an accidental feature of access. It's not like the telescope. A theory that explains the neurons without accounting for the first-person givenness hasn't explained consciousness from a different angle; it's left out the very feature that made it consciousness in the first place.

Reducing consciousness to a question of brain mechanisms quietly changes the subject. It assumes the scientific picture of the world is the whole metaphysical story and then directs our attention toward mechanism as the only open question.

Two sides of the boundary

The same fact, that consciousness is given only from the inside, means we encounter a structurally under-determined reality, one the evidence can't settle. A boundary always has two sides, an inside and an outside.

From the outside, the boundary creates the problem of other minds: we can't observe consciousness directly because it's behind a screen. A brain scan tells you which networks are activated, but it can't tell you whether what's being activated is the self, or even whether there's experience there at all.

From the inside, the boundary creates the problem that metaphysics is under-determined: we have no direct access to the world, only our experience of it. The bare fact that something is experienced is certain, but what that experience means about reality is always an interpretation.

This isn't a problem confined to consciousness research, but a structural feature of reality itself. The question at the foundation of metaphysics, whether mind or matter is fundamental, is under-determined in principle, not just in practice. It's not a limitation of our current methods, so more data and better science won't fix it.

When empirical data alone can't settle a question, the best option is to prefer the simplest explanation with fewest assumptions. Naturalism looks like the simplest option because it appears to assume nothing beyond what science can observe.

This is another place where the slide between method and metaphysics is misleading. The question here isn't whether there's the scientific description of nature with something extra added to it. You aren't an immaterial ghost that floats inside a physical machine, you and your body form one seamless whole.

The question is what the essential character of that whole is, and whether the outside or the inside view is more fundamental. Saying the inside is produced by the outside, or is nothing more than it, isn't a neutral starting point. It's a metaphysical claim about what's fundamen-

tal. The data shows how mind and body correlate, but it doesn't show which way the dependency runs.

Naturalism often assumes the "real" world is something radically different from the world of our experience. This real world is the world science describes: a silent, colourless, and odourless world of particles and fields. It's fundamentally non-experiential, but also the ultimate cause of our experiences. For many naturalists, our experiences are inaccurate pictures of the world constructed by our brains, not what's really out there.

But notice how this moves from what we can know about reality, to what reality is like in its essential features. Science can only describe the outside view, but that doesn't mean the outside view is the most fundamental feature of reality and the cause of the inside view. That's only one interpretation of the data. The most we can say is science shows us the slice of reality its method can access.

Reality has no opt-out

If science only shows us a slice of reality, how can we discover anything beyond it? It's tempting to respond to the under-determination of metaphysics by avoiding commitment. If we're structurally limited with what we can access, we can never reach conclusions with confidence.

For that reason, many people reject the usual methods of metaphysics and turn to science as the only reliable option for telling us the nature of the world. The assumption is that if science can't provide sufficient evidence for any question, we should remain neutral and not commit to any theory.

Staying neutral sounds good in theory, but metaphysics is an understanding of reality itself, not a purely theoretical discipline. We're habituated to think scientifically and avoid committing to a theory unless

it's been experimentally confirmed. In the laboratory, the theory comes first and then we perform the experiment to test it.

But in life we're already inside the experiment. There's no option to leave the laboratory of life and go home to some other existence. We live moment to moment, and hunger forces us to act. The world comes to meet us and our participation is unavoidable. The idea we should remain neutral until our theory is confirmed is an intellectual abstraction that can't be used in the real world.

No one is choosing between commitment and neutrality. Neutrality isn't available. You can't stand nowhere. The metaphysical commitment was there all along, but it's invisible because it's assumed to be the lack of one.

If metaphysics is the study of the nature of reality and inherently underdetermined, the only practical option is to choose an orientation and continuously adapt it as we participate in life. This is actually what we already do. We must, because that's the structure of the reality we live in.

Humans don't first adopt metaphysical beliefs and then interpret reality. They find themselves immersed in a field of intelligibility, where questions about meaning, value, purpose and reality need to be answered to live their lives. Any explicit metaphysical theory is an articulation of this prior orientation. We never encounter a world devoid of significance, value, or perspective.

Your experience is evidence, not noise to be filtered out. That includes your sense that life has meaning and value and the longing for something more. We have more than third-person data. We also have first-person data, and any worldview has to account for it.

Think of the naturalist picture we've inherited. Our modern culture largely assumes that human beings are the unintended by-product of

impersonal physical processes, yet we also experience ourselves as conscious agents oriented toward meaning and value. The two pull against each other creating a dissonance between our lived experience and the naturalist worldview. How should that dissonance be understood?

We can treat the dissonance as a psychological imbalance, or we can treat it as a perception that informs us about the true nature of reality. The experience of dissonance doesn't tell us which is right. They're both interpretations of what it means. The interpretation we choose matters, it affects our orientation to the world.

We're constantly weighing our inner world against the outer world and inferring facts about one from the other. The question of metaphysics is the same operation. When we ask which is the more fundamental, the inner or the outer, we encounter the mystery at the heart of our existence. This is where the strangeness of the gap turns into the personal consequence we all must confront.

In the sense that matters to each of us personally, an explanation of consciousness doesn't tell us what the brain does when we experience joy. It answers the deeper question of who you are. The conscious self is what we all call "me". When we ask what consciousness is, we're asking who we are, why we're here and how we should live in this world to create a meaningful and worthwhile life.

Metaphysics has always aimed at these questions by studying existence itself. It's an enquiry that we all must undertake in our own way.

Light as a model

The alternative interpretation this book presents starts with consciousness at the foundation and describes what follows from that starting point. It doesn't tell you which neurons fire when you feel joy or gaze into the vastness of the night sky. Instead it describes what type of world we must inhabit for there to be creatures who experience such

wonders. It's a modern presentation of the philosophy of the Indian devotional tradition of Gaudiya Vedanta.

Every metaphysics eventually reaches the limits of literal description. Our ordinary concepts aren't designed for describing the foundations of reality itself. They were built for tables and trees and navigating within the world. But the task of metaphysics is describing the foundations, and to do that we must leave the comfort of the familiar and use imaginative models. Every framework must do this. No one has ever seen a quantum field or the curvature of spacetime, yet we rely on them as models.

This book adopts light as its central model for consciousness for two reasons. First, it's a familiar image. We say "I see" when we understand, and things "dawn on us" like the sun rising to illuminate the world. Second, light is the source which illuminates, not the contents that are illuminated, which is how consciousness is related to what it's aware of. Using the image of light isn't poetic whim.

The models used here are drawn from physics. They aren't literal scientific claims, but they aren't purely metaphorical either. They serve a dual purpose: they make an unfamiliar idea easier to picture, and they give a familiar example of how one underlying reality can take different forms as its movement becomes more constrained or differently organised.

But even this metaphor has limits. Although light is what shows us the world, consciousness is what the world is shown to. Since consciousness isn't an object to be seen, even the best image can only point toward it but never completely capture it.

Section 1 – When Light Freezes

Chapter 1 – The Inversion

James Clerk Maxwell's work on electromagnetism is considered one of the most important scientific achievements of the 19th century. While we recognise its importance today, his contemporaries were slow to appreciate and understand it. One of the reasons was the difficulty understanding it within the prevailing scientific paradigm. It required a conceptual shift. Maxwell replaced the Newtonian model of action at a distance with a universe permeated by fields. In Maxwell's view, mechanical forces weren't the primary actors, they were the visible behaviour of the fields.

The idea of a field was hard to visualise because it was intangible. The scientists of the time tried to visualise fields as mechanical structures extending throughout space. Maxwell's theory becomes elegant and intelligible when you reverse your thinking. Instead of the mechanical universe being primary and fields secondary, fields are primary and mechanics are secondary.

The view of the world that emerges from Maxwell's theory proposes two descriptive layers as a model of reality. The first layer, the layer of the fundamental constituents, consists of fields obeying general mathematical laws. The second layer, the layer we can touch and see and interact with, consists of mechanical forces and energies. In Maxwell's field model, the most basic processes of nature aren't directly perceptible to our senses; they exist within a fundamental layer that lies beneath our conscious experience.

Just as Maxwell's contemporaries had to reverse their assumptions about matter, we may need a similar reversal to solve the hard problem of consciousness. Consciousness resists physical explanation. We can explain how the brain processes information, how neurons fire. But we can't explain why that should feel like anything at all and why it doesn't

just go on in the dark with no one experiencing it. That gap, between the physical process and felt experience, is the hard problem of consciousness.

Most modern answers to the problem assume that consciousness emerges from the activity of the brain. But that assumption does all the work. This strong sense of emergence merely offers a placeholder for an explanation, it tells us what must be true if consciousness is physical. That's not a solution but a restatement of the problem.

The intransigence of the hard problem has caused a growing number of philosophers to explore alternatives. When we ask how consciousness emerges from the brain, we've already assumed it does. The problem may seem impossible because that starting assumption is wrong.

What if consciousness doesn't emerge from matter at all and we have the order of explanation backwards? The view this book describes reverses that starting assumption and explores what it would mean if the opposite is true: consciousness is fundamental and matter is secondary. Reality, at its base, is a single field of consciousness.

Consciousness as light

We can best visualise the conscious field with the metaphor of light. The distinctive feature of consciousness is its self-luminous nature. Consciousness is like the light source, not an object revealed by another light source. Consciousness is the radiance that reveals the world to us.

But the image of light goes beyond metaphor. Physics shows us the structure of light is a dynamic field whose appearance changes as its motion is constrained. This framework uses the same structure to explain consciousness.

Maxwell's reversal showed that the tangible layer of the world we can measure and touch is the superficial layer. It's the visible behaviour of a

more fundamental layer of reality beneath it. In this consciousness-first view, the luminous field is the deeper layer. What we see as matter is the superficial view, because it's the appearance of the conscious field when its inner nature isn't visible. The physics view isn't wrong, it's simply the external view.

We shouldn't think of the field as a substance, but instead as energy or dynamic activity. Light is a strange phenomenon, it's not stuff we can grasp. Its inherent nature is dynamic, always moving. Consciousness is similar, we're always aware of something. Even in deep meditation, when your awareness of the outside world has disappeared, consciousness illuminates itself.

Using this metaphor as our model, we start with a luminous field as the foundation of reality. The field is consciousness in constant motion, it's unified, unbounded and self-aware. So how do we get from a unified and infinite field to our own individual consciousness and the world of matter we're all familiar with?

The unbounded luminous field has two other modes of existence: individual subjects like you and me, and the material world. They're distinct phases of energy in the same way water and ice are both phases of H₂O and not distinct substances. Steam, water and ice are all different states of the same thing, but they have different properties and behave in different ways. Steam dissipates, water flows and ice is solid, but they're all equally real and they're all still H₂O. The different properties we observe depend on the way the underlying substance is organised and constrained.

The phase analogy tells us the three modes are one thing with different appearances, but it doesn't tell us how the field takes one appearance rather than another. To understand that we need to look at what happens when light slows down.

When light slows, it doesn't lose energy, its rhythm changes. As the light's oscillating electric field passes through a region it sets electrons in motion. The moving electrons generate their own secondary waves. When the original and secondary waves overlap out of sync, their interference pattern produces a new wave that moves more slowly.

This is refraction: a change in the wave's speed caused by the patterns of its own internal interference. Refraction is the bending and slowing of light, but it's the same light, the same energy. Its behaviour changes and its outward appearance is different because the constraints on its movement have changed.

This consciousness-first view sees individual subjects and material objects as refracted light. The luminous field refracts into different degrees of constraint which are variations in the intensity and speed of the waves within it. We could call these density variations within the field, but it's a density of movement, not of stuff.

This slowing of the waves generates stable and confined structures within the field. One of those structures is you.

Chapter 2 – The Individual Self

In an experiential sense, we each inhabit our own private world. That's not denying a shared external world or that we can't have deep relationships with others. But think of something we all know without doubt: I can't experience your pain. You could be in agony and I'll feel distress because you're suffering, but I'm feeling my distress, not your pain. Our experiences are private, separated from the world by a screen that limits our interactions.

This creates a puzzle. If reality is a single field of consciousness, we'd expect to have access to each other's experiences. Instead we find private individuals locked behind their own sealed points of view. But if we're both part of one field, why can't we cross it? Philosophy calls this the decombination problem: explaining how a unified conscious field divides into distinct individuals.

The problem has three aspects:

- **Subjectivity:** if the field is one subject, how does it become many?
- **The boundary:** What is the screen between us and what makes an experience mine or yours rather than just something occurring in a field?
- **Privacy:** If we share an underlying field, why are our experiences isolated?

Let's start with subjectivity. A subject is a singular point of view: all of our experiences come in one unified perspective. Philosophers call this the unity of consciousness. If the field itself is a unity of consciousness and also a subject, how does one subject become many subjects when a point of view seems indivisible?

Imagine it was possible to divide your brain and transplant each half into a different body. Each one is now a single individual looking out through a different set of eyes. We can't say which body would be the real you, because a point of view isn't a physical substance we can cut into parts and divide down to atoms. Half a perspective doesn't look like anything.

So the puzzle isn't just that we're sealed off from each other, but also what's sealed in. What is this unique perspective on the world that persists through every change in your life?

Subjectivity: why a point of view can't be cut in half

The first part of the puzzle is how one field can become many points of view. Think about what it's like to be an individual with a singular point of view on the world. This is what we all experience as "me". The contents of your experiences change constantly. As a child you played with soft toys and cried when things didn't go your way. Sensations that were once new and exciting are now mundane. Your thoughts, moods and even your personality are always shifting.

But the point of view, the unique perspective to which those experiences appear, remains constant. The world moves around it while you hold still. If everything changes, what is it that stays the same? And if you're made entirely of a conscious field, how can there be a stable, persisting you at all?

We can picture this with a swing. Once you're swinging, the scenery keeps changing: the ground and the sky rise and fall in front of you. But your point of view stays constant because you're looking out from the same place. A confined wave does the same thing. It settles into a stable pattern while the field around it keeps moving. That's called a standing wave.

On this view, an individual subject is like a standing wave in the conscious field. You're made entirely of the field's activity, but you're a stable, persisting pattern within it. The contents of your experiences are the changing scenery and your point of view is the person looking out, the stable pattern that holds while the scenery changes. And a stable pattern within a conscious field is a finite point of view with its own unique set of experiences.

Don't patterns dissolve?

It's tempting to picture a subject as a ripple on a pond, but a confined wave isn't a passing ripple. The patterns it can take depend on the structure of the medium. White light contains every colour. A prism doesn't create the spectrum, it reveals the colours latent in the unity of the white light. The distinct frequencies are modes, patterns the light always contained.

The same principle applies to individual subjects. Each individual consciousness is a mode of the field: a pattern the field's structure makes available and expresses under the right conditions, rather than something thrown up by chance. That's why a subject doesn't dissolve the way a ripple does. Individuality was always latent in the field, like a colour in white light.

And no two patterns are alike. Each colour has its own unique frequency. Purple isn't blue. In the same way, each individual subject isn't interchangeable with any other; we're each a unique pattern of movement in the spectrum of consciousness.

Does a pattern divide the field?

A dynamic field is pure activity, not a static object made of pieces. Movement can differentiate into patterns without the underlying medium being divided. White light moving through a prism becomes a full spectrum of colours without anything being divided. Each colour

is still light, and the light loses nothing by making the distinct colours visible.

A confined wave doesn't mean located at a position in space, it means held within the field's dynamics. A hue is distinguished by its frequency, not its location. The individual subjects differ the same way. We're distinguished by our pattern within the structure, not by being distinct objects at different locations.

This is what the divided brain puzzle was really asking. It only seems unanswerable if the subject is an object in your brain we could cut and divide. But a subject was never an object, it's a pattern the field expresses. This retains unity: there is one field. But purple isn't blue and so difference is present within unity. Unity in difference can sound like a contradiction, but it's what patterns in a field are like.

This answers the first part of our problem. A subject is one indivisible point of view because it's a stable pattern, not a divisible thing. The next question is the boundary: what separates one pattern from another, and what makes an experience mine or yours rather than just something occurring in a field?

The boundary: what separates one pattern from another

What makes you unique is your particular pattern within the field. The field is dynamic, so each individual pattern is distinguished from the others by how constrained its movement is. That degree of constraint is density.

When we talk about density in a field we picture material density: more stuff in less space. Rocks are dense and air as diffuse. But a dynamic field has no stuff to be thicker or thinner, so density can't mean a quantity of stuff. It must describe the activity of the field, how it's moving.

Constrained movement sounds abstract, but we're all familiar with what that feels like. Constraining movement slows it. Your consciousness slows down when you fall asleep. You go from alert to drowsy, and eventually your consciousness is inactive, sometimes dreaming but sometimes in deep sleep. When you wake up, sometimes you're still groggy and dull and it takes a while to achieve full acuity. Ordinary language describes the same idea: we call someone quick if they're intelligent and dense if they're slow to understand.

Sleep shows this slowing from the inside, what it feels like when our own luminosity dims. So density, in this sense, is tempo: the rhythm of the field's movement within a pattern.

Can movement slow down without anything being lost?

If density is really just constrained movement and not a quantity of stuff, then light, slowed far enough, should be able to stop without being destroyed and its pattern stays intact. There's a physics experiment that fits this picture.

We've all seen light slow down. A stick placed in water appears to bend at the surface because light slows as it enters a denser medium. The slowing isn't caused by a loss of energy but by the interference patterns of the light waves. The density is a slowing or change of rhythm of the waves. Pushed to its limit, that same slowing can bring light to a complete stop. In 1999, Harvard physicist Lene Hau and her team slowed a light beam to around the pace of a bicycle. Two years later they stopped a light beam completely.

They did this by sending a light beam into a super-cold cloud of atoms and holding it there. The light wasn't destroyed or dissipated into the cloud; its pattern was imprinted into the medium like a fingerprint suspended in ice, with the information it carried intact. Then the same

light beam was revived and sent on its way. Light was frozen, held in suspended animation, and then reanimated.

This gives us a picture of what happens when light's movement is constrained. The light beam no longer shines, but its pattern is fully preserved, ready to be released. Hau's experiment shows that luminosity can be extinguished entirely without the pattern being lost.

You know this from experience too. You forget yourself in deep sleep but the pattern doesn't dissolve. You're the same person when you wake up. The luminosity dims but the structure remains. It's that same structure, the particular degree and pattern of constraint that makes you unique and also screens you from everything else in the field.

Where does one pattern end and another begin?

The reason we intuitively think we should share experiences if we're in a unified field is because we're thinking in terms of substance, not dynamics. When we picture a substance, we think of a boundary as a solid wall that surrounds our pattern. But in a dynamic field the boundary is a line where the tempo changes. The pattern is a region of different density, with a distinct tempo and a slower rhythm than the surrounding field. That density variation just is the boundary, the margin where the rhythm of the pattern meets the rhythm of the field. This is the screen between us.

What does a boundary like that do?

Nature already shows us. When light meets a boundary of increased density, some of the light can be reflected back. When the light from the denser region hits the boundary at a shallow angle, it's reflected back completely. This is total internal reflection and it's how an optical fibre works. Light travels inside the fibre and the outer cladding is a lower density than the core of the fibre, so the light is reflected inward. This density boundary traps the light inside the cable.

If we apply this idea to our conscious field: the consciousness of an individual subject circulates within its boundary and is reflected inward by the boundary its own pattern creates. The pattern has an increased density, a slower movement. That difference in tempo between the individual's pattern and the tempo of the field creates the density boundary that makes the subject a private individual, distinct from the field.

Privacy: why your experiences stay yours

The last part of the puzzle is if we share one field why can't we feel each other's experiences?

An optical fibre looks dark from the outside even though light is running through it. In the same way, an individual subject is luminous and conscious inside, but dark from the outside. Your consciousness can't be directly seen by others. This also shows what makes an experience yours: the same boundary that seals a perspective off also means it belongs to a subject, not to the field.

Why are individuality and privacy the same fact?

The boundary that makes an individual perspective is the same boundary that creates privacy. The question of why there are individuals and the question of why individual experiences are private are the same question. A perspective with access to every other point of view wouldn't be a point of view, it would just be the field. Being screened from everyone else is what it means to be an individual. Seen from the inside, the boundary is a subjective point of view. Seen from the outside, the same boundary is privacy. Individuality and privacy are one fact.

So now the puzzle is answered in three parts:

- **Subjectivity:** a subject is a stable pattern in the field, not a divisible thing, so one field can hold many points of view.

- **The boundary:** the edge of a pattern is where its tempo changes, and that edge is what makes an experience yours.
- **Privacy:** the same edge screens your experience from everyone else, because being screened is what it means to be an individual.

Does this mean we're completely isolated?

Talking about screens and boundaries makes it sound like we're totally isolated, but this isn't a static field with solid walls. The boundary doesn't cut you off from the field, it defines you within it. We can't read minds or experience another person's pain or joy directly, but the effects we produce do travel. We're patterns within a field, so our activity changes the field. Waves propagate from our movements, our words and our behaviour. These effects cross the boundary, but the inner luminosity doesn't. I receive the impact of your waves, but not your experience.

While experiences are private, we can still connect with others through the shared medium we both inhabit. If we strike a tuning fork an identical fork also makes a sound. The forks are separated but the vibration travels through the shared medium and the attuned fork responds. We know others by interpreting their exterior. Their words and body language are waves they send across the field. Empathy and sympathy are resonance, not access. We feel with others, never as them. Ordinary language echoes this, we say we resonate with someone, or we're on their wavelength. The separation is real, but so is the resonance. They're both features of the same structure.

Chapter 3 – Matter as the Frozen Geometry of Light

When we gaze into the night sky or watch a sunrise, we experience a resonance with the sublime beauty of nature. But that resonance is hard to find when you're waiting in line at the supermarket or interacting with ordinary objects.

Matter itself seems to be inert. If the field itself is conscious, that inertness seems like a problem. Rocks don't think and tables don't feel. Your stove has no inner world. Most material objects don't appear to have an inner luminosity, they're dark inside.

If the field is conscious, how do we get the solid, persistent objects of our shared external world from a luminous field? And how can we explain the things that appear to have no consciousness at all?

What solid means

If you sit on a rock it feels solid because it stops your body from moving further. But science tells us that nothing is actually in contact. What looks like solid matter consists of what most of us would call empty space.

What stops your body from moving is the force, not the solid matter of your body meeting the solid matter of the rock. The electrons in the rock push back against the electrons in your body. Just as a confined wave can only take certain distinct patterns, no two electrons can be pushed together into an identical pattern. Solid doesn't mean packed full of stuff, it means pushes back.

That's resistance, and resistance is what mass is: the harder something is to push, the more mass it has. Einstein's $E=mc^2$ tells us that energy and mass are one thing in two forms. You think your mass is the stuff of the

particles of your body, but really it's energy locked up inside every proton and neutron, holding each of them together. You are already mostly frozen energy that weighs something.

But light is ethereal, so could it ever be locked up like that? Think about what happens when light forms an optical vortex. A beam of light twists as it moves forward, forming a spiral, much like a whirlpool. The light beam is still there and still moving, but its motion is wound tightly around a central core.

But a vortex is fragile. A whirlpool can break apart, while matter is solid. A rock persists even if you kick it, it just sits there. Picture a vortex that's wound tighter and tighter around its central core until it forms a knot. That frozen energy is what a knot of light is too.

It's not static stuff, but energy locked into a shape so tightly it can't come undone. A whirlpool can come apart, but a knot can't. Wound into a knot is a picture of a pattern locked into holding its shape. Its pattern is so constrained, it's frozen in place.

What does all this give us? A tightly knotted vortex holds its shape. It has persistence. It's localised and stays in one place. And it resists being pushed. Persistent, localised and resistant. That's what solid means.

From the outside, a stable, spatially fixed, resisting knot of activity is indistinguishable from a tiny pillar of matter. Which is roughly what a particle of matter is on this view. The field differentiates into regions of increasing density and constraint and these are real features of how the field is structured at that location.

We've already seen what frozen light looks like in physics. Hau's light beam went dark inside her super-cold cloud. Its pattern was imprinted into the medium like a fingerprint in ice. Then it was revived intact. Matter, on this view, is what that same process would look like without

the revival. It's wound so tightly into its own structure that it can't unfold back into the field.

Matter isn't a pattern held within some other medium, it's holding itself independently. A standing knot of luminosity, dark in its core, solid from the outside and resisting being moved. This is the frozen geometry of light.

Why there's no one home

The knot helps us picture how a luminous field can seem solid from the outside. But what matter looks like from the outside is only half the puzzle, matter has no inside at all. A rock isn't just solid, it has no inner perspective. There's nothing it's like to be a rock.

Think back to the individual subject. In that case the light was partially constrained. It was bound within the field, but the light wasn't totally occluded. The boundary reflected its luminosity back inward, the light faces in. That inward light was its perspective, its bounded consciousness. The light still lights up its own interior. A subject is where a region of the field is partially constrained just enough to turn back in on itself and illuminate inside the boundary.

The vortex does the reverse. Instead of the light being constrained inwards, the tightening of the vortex constrains it to the outside. There's no inward circulation of light, no inward reflection circling the inside of the boundary. There's still a boundary, a difference in density between the vortex and the field, but the inside of the boundary is dark.

As the waves twist around the centre, they arrive out of sync and cancel each other out. This leaves the centre of the vortex occluded and dark, much like the hollow core of a whirlpool. The light beam is still there and still moving, but its motion is now wound so tightly around the core that none of the light reaches the centre. The core isn't dark because the light has gone, but because the light has all been drawn out-

wards into the spiral. What is left is pure pattern, only the structure seen from the outside.

It's important to be clear about what the knot metaphor shows and where it gives a misleading picture. When we imagine a knot we think of a rope, something solid being squeezed into a tight shape. But the dynamic field isn't stuff, and its density was never more stuff packed in-to less space.

No matter how tightly you wind a rope, it still has an inside. But the inside here isn't a location in space, the field itself is conscious so inside means the direction it's facing. Notice your own consciousness right now, it's facing toward these words. What isn't included is dark to you, not because it's ceased to exist, but because you're not facing toward it.

Your consciousness is like a spotlight that illuminates some things and not others. The light and the direction it faces aren't two different things. Consciousness is a point of view, which just means a direction you face. Your inner world is a beam of awareness that lights some things while the rest stays dark, not a room that's illuminated on the inside.

This is what matter lacks. It's not a space in the middle of the knot that's dark, there's no facing there at all. While you could turn and bring what's now dark into your awareness, matter has no inside to turn.

Matter then, is pure exterior. It isn't consciousness dimmed, less of it, or a simple form of it. It's consciousness whose inward loop never closes, so nothing remains inside, which is why there's nothing it is like to be a rock. It isn't that the rock has some kind of proto-consciousness, the structure that allows an inner life has been completely closed. Wound shut. Matter isn't the absence of consciousness, but what consciousness looks like when it's become self-occluded.

We now have a picture of three modes within one dynamic and luminous field. The modes aren't three distinct parts of a divided whole. They're three positions on a single continuous dial. At one end of the dial the unconstrained field is fully self-luminous. The partially constrained field is luminous enough to light the interior and create a private individual point of view. At the matter end of the dial, movement is frozen. This is the maximum degree of constraint. Light folds entirely into its outer structure and nothing is lit within. One dynamic field under three degrees of constraint.

Chapter 4 – Space and Time Restored

This consciousness-first view doesn't ask us to abandon what science has found. It asks us to notice the frame it arrived in. Once we do that, two things fall into place. We regain our ordinary experience of space and time and we see why physics describes matter so completely.

We've seen that matter is the frozen geometry of light, knots wound so tightly the pattern persists. But there's another difference between the individual subjects and matter. The individuals are bound within the field, their consciousness held within a density boundary created by a difference in tempo. The knots of matter are frozen and completely locked into their own structure.

Which means a frozen knot has a fixed position in the field relative to the other knots. That fixed position is what space is. The boundary created an individual when there was only partial constraint, but with the maximum constraint, knots form in the field, and bounded now means localised. Space has entered our consciousness-first picture.

It's commonly said that Einstein's relativity turned our intuitive picture of space and time inside out. There's something right about that, but the word intuitive hides a swap. Start with how we actually experience space. If you hold up two fingers, there's a gap between them. But if you take your fingers away the gap doesn't stay there hanging in the air. The gap is only the empty space between the fingers. If we ask what space is on this commonsense view we'd say it's nothing. It's not a thing made of stuff, it's only the gap between the things made of stuff.

But then relativity merged space and time and gave us a picture of spacetime that was the reverse of this commonsense view. Space was no longer nothing, it was part of a four-dimensional substance. Material objects became dents in the fabric of spacetime, not things sitting on

top of it. We no longer pictured space as the absence of things, but instead, as the stuff from which the universe was made.

These days we accept that spacetime is the stuff the universe is made of, and that everything is taking place within that four-dimensional manifold. Spacetime is like the container of reality. This picture of spacetime as a substance that deforms has become the one that feels intuitive to us. Notice the inversion. The textbook version feels intuitive, but it's not your lived experience. You don't experience yourself deforming a four dimensional substance as you walk to the store.

This view doesn't reverse Einstein's insight; it encompasses it and situates it within a wider frame. In the process, it restores our picture of space and time to the way we experience them to be. In this view there's no container. There's the field, and the stable knots wound into the field stand in relation to each other. Those relations are what space is.

If there are no knots, there's nothing that can be apart, and so there can be no space. Space doesn't hold the knots within it; the knots create the space. Spacetime only appears once the field is knotted. It's not something extra to the knots or another kind of stuff or pattern in the field.

This helps us see the reversal of spacetime as container. It assumes that space was already there, waiting to be filled, so it must come first, before the stuff of the world can appear within it.

Our intuitive picture of time is restored in the same way. Think of throwing a ball into the air. The ball is a knot, a stable pattern within the luminous field. It rises and falls. Time isn't a river the ball floats down. Take away the changes of the things and there's nothing leftover. There's no other stuff called time that's still ticking. Time is the order in the ball's positions: first in our hands then higher, up to the apex, then coming down and back into our hands.

Space is the order among the knots; time is the order among their changes.

The idea that space and time are demoted to just relations within a field can seem hard to grasp. But it's the textbook version that's non-intuitive, because it isn't like our experience of the world. We start with the experience that space is nothing, and only after reading the textbook about Einstein's discoveries do we come away with the picture of spacetime as a something.

Notice that the view of spacetime as a something has assumed a frame. It's not a finding of relativity but a picture laid over it: that spacetime is all there is. That frame is never made visible. It comes along with the idea that science is the only reliable source of knowledge of the world. It simultaneously lessens our own confidence in our ability to gain reliable knowledge of the world through our experience of it.

Matter is real

The idea that spacetime is all that exists not only inverts our ordinary experience of space and time, it carries another hidden assumption – that matter is the only thing that's real. We associate what's real with physicality. Consciousness has no tangible properties, so when we picture consciousness as fundamental, we keep that assumption but invert the order. We assume that if reality is a single field of consciousness, matter must now occupy the intangible layer and not be fully real. It must exist in our mind, or God's mind, or its existence must depend on a mind to observe it.

That assumption creates a logical tension, because our experience of the world tells us that material objects are fully real, not illusions. They exist independently of our minds and they're still there and moving according to the laws of nature even when no one is looking at them. But

that tension is only there if we keep the assumption that matter is first and the only thing that's real.

Drop that assumption and we get exactly what we expect from both common sense and the validity of science. There's a mind independent external reality. It has no interior so nothing internal creates its behaviour. It only moves in response to forces acting on it externally. Matter looks and behaves exactly like what it is, a structure pushed around by outside forces. That means its movement can be described with mathematical laws, and its future movement can be accurately predicted using those same laws. This picture of matter is just what physics tells us matter is like. The movement of matter is what physicists call causally closed. There's no remainder beyond those forces for an inner force to explain.

Throw a dead bird and a living bird into the air. The dead bird's trajectory can be predicted with accuracy: we know it will fall toward the earth and how fast it will fall. The live bird, the one with an inner luminosity that determines its movement, will probably fly away.

With this consciousness-first view, causal closure is what we should expect, not a problem we need to explain. Matter is the mode of the field that's been closed on the inside, and so from the outside it behaves exactly as you'd expect something with no inside to behave. This is why physics describes matter so completely. Physics describes the external structure of the field and that's all matter is on this view. There's nothing else to it.

Which means nothing science says is changed. The laws it describes, the mechanisms of action and causal closure, all remain true. What changes is the wider context. Physics accurately describes the outer surface of the field, the place where the field's luminosity is fully occluded. Nothing about this view requires corrections of physics, it shows where

physics fits within the broader picture. Physics isn't the whole picture but one limited description of it.

Chapter 5 – The Body Illuminated

If matter is the field when it's fully occluded with no inside luminosity, it raises another question. Your body is made of the same matter as the rock, the same dark occluded stuff, but you're illuminated on the inside. We may not be sure if other organisms are conscious, but we know our own body is. What is it that makes living matter different from non-living?

An influential way to understand the difference is called autopoiesis, which means self-creation (auto: self and poiesis: creation). Autopoietic systems are self-contained. This doesn't mean they don't need anything from outside themselves, but that the system itself produces the ingredients it needs to sustain its existence.

A cell is the most basic autopoietic unit. It's a circular loop, a process of self-generation. It has a metabolic network that creates the ingredients it needs. This network not only replaces all the ingredients that are constantly being used or destroyed, it also maintains a permeable boundary between itself and the world.

A cell continuously re-creates the boundary that differentiates it from everything else. Autopoiesis is the self's boundary when it's seen from the outside. Inside the boundary is the individual and outside is the field. The boundary itself is the interface.

Seen from the outside, the difference between a rock and a living body is movement: movement that's self-directed rather than pushed by an external force. Think of how you decide if something is alive or not, if it moves independently you know it's alive.

This self-directed movement is when matter comes alive. We saw that the individual self was a pattern in the luminous field and the boundary was a density boundary. A density boundary in a dynamic field means

the tempo or movement varies. That is the same boundary we find in living systems.

What the biologist sees as matter moving in a particular pattern is, from the inside, the individual maintaining itself. Autopoiesis describes the organisation of the system, not its elements. The difference between a living system and the matter it's composed of isn't a difference of substance, but of how the matter is organised and moves. The particular organisation is the pattern that defines what kind of system it is.

A living body is matter moving to sustain itself in existence. In terms of our field metaphor, we'd say it's moving to maintain its own pattern, the same way a standing wave holds its shape through constant motion.

The functions of a living body are like the movements you make on a swing. You make a slight push of your arms and legs to sustain your pattern and in that way you maintain your standing wave. The movements of living systems are more complex, but they're the same adjustments of movement that sustain your standing wave in the field.

A boundary that continually creates itself must be permeable. It needs ingredients from outside to rebuild itself, so elements must be able to pass through the boundary, from self to world and world to self. The boundary creates the self, and in living systems the self continually creates its own boundary. You are constantly replenishing your own skin. Without the boundary there is no self, but without the world there is no boundary. The self and the world are interdependent.

But this self-creating boundary has a feature the swing doesn't. Without maintenance, the swing slows and stops, but its motion can be restarted. A living boundary that stops maintaining itself doesn't just stop, it dies. Life's self-creation isn't an optional motion.

The organism has various biological pressures – hunger, fatigue, threats – and it needs to coordinate its functions to avoid system failure. Each

pressure puts a strain on the system. The strain is a measure of how far that particular need is from being met and how urgently it requires correction. The longer since you've eaten or slept increases the strain.

A living organism can't rely on an external manager, because an outside force can't repair it if it stops functioning. Death is irreversible. A boundary that must continually correct itself to avoid its own failure needs internal feedback and regulatory mechanisms. The strain has to register somewhere and there is nowhere outside the system for it to register. But registering inside a boundary isn't the same as being felt. A thermostat registers, but its internal mechanism isn't felt.

Why feeling is necessary

Not all regulatory signals are felt. Many systems maintain homeostasis automatically. Your heart rate and respiratory rate adjust without your control. The pH in your blood is kept in a tight range and your temperature is kept in check with automatic responses. If it's too hot you sweat, if it's too cold you shiver. When the relationship between the correct response and the situation is fixed, the process runs without any input from us.

These automatic biological processes sit at the matter end of the luminosity dial, only now it's in a single organism. Heartbeat, blood pH, thermo-regulation, these are all fixed, hard-wired processes that happen at the occluded end.

The hard-wired processes that don't require any choice or behavioural input from us are unconscious. But where the correct action isn't settled and some kind of choice is needed, that's where the light shines through.

If you need food but the food is in front of a lion, taking it can get you killed. Weighing of options is needed. The fear registers but so does the hunger. There are competing imperatives and no fixed solution, so it

can't be hard-wired. There's no common metabolic scale which can be wired to say, this much hunger vs this much fear = this output.

When there's only one right response, it can be hard-wired: a reflex, or a thermostat that engages the correct output to deal with the problem. Machinery can run it if there's nothing to be weighed. But if a mechanism weighs hunger against fear, what sets the weighting the mechanism uses? If weighting is done by another mechanism, what sets the weighting that second mechanism uses, and the one after that?

Mechanism alone isn't enough. It sets off a regress, because if all we have is mechanism, each one requires a further weighting mechanism. In a purely mechanical system it can only bottom out in a hard-wired rule, which stops the regress but can't weigh anything. Real weighing has to bottom out somewhere the stakes are presented directly, and self-presentation is the distinctive feature of consciousness. In a living body, that self-presenting medium is feeling. The stakes are felt, not passed to another rule.

Feeling is needed when the correct behaviour isn't fixed, because it provides a scale that allows comparison. The feeling comes with a pressure to act: it motivates with a particular intensity and urgency. That intensity is the strain. If you desperately need food to survive, the hunger might be weighed higher than the fear: the existential stakes mean it's worth the risk to steal the predator's food. If the hunger is mild and there's an option to pick berries, the fear is weighed as the greater danger. When the answer to the biological problem requires weighing stakes and there's no common physical unit compare them, the stakes must be presented in a common currency. Feeling is the common currency.

The direction of the strain

The biological stakes being weighed not only have an intensity or urgency, they have a direction. They either point toward collapse or away from it toward health. This direction is called valence. The valence of some feelings is inviting, you seek them out. Others cause avoidance behaviour. Pain is the most obvious example. Pain is a signal of danger to the body system, and you move away from whatever causes it. Valence isn't something extra to the regulatory signals; it's the direction the signal points.

If we describe valence as pure direction all we can say is the organism moved away from the stimulus causing the pain. As a function, valence can only mean direction: this state is heading toward collapse or away from it. This is survival bookkeeping and none of it needs feeling.

But if we say the organism found the stimulus bad, the felt quality of pain as bad isn't given in the data. We know pain is bad because that data is given by our own experience. In a naturalist metaphysics, this is where a conflation happens and it's subtle and often passes by unnoticed: valence is labelled good and bad as though the felt quality is available for free.

Because it's so obvious to us that pain is bad, this is silently carried over to the mechanism and the behaviour, which is why the conflation often passes unnoticed. That relabelling of direction as good is exactly where the hard problem of consciousness is found. The feeling isn't found in either the biological mechanism or the direction the organism moves and those are the only properties available to a naturalist metaphysics.

On a consciousness-first view, the feeling is already there, since the field itself is conscious. The direction and the feeling are the same event seen from two sides of the boundary. From the outside or biological side we have: this direction is heading toward system collapse. From inside the boundary the same direction is experienced as: this feels bad. Together,

strain and valence tell you how much danger you're in and which way you're heading.

How the world lights up

We've been looking at how the self holds its boundary together, correcting against its own collapse. But the self also needs a permeable boundary. A cell sealed off from the world is a dead cell, so the self can't stop at the edge. It extends beyond, taking in what it needs and expelling what it doesn't.

A living boundary isn't a wall; it's an interface. When we have a self with existential stakes that's interacting with the world, the world itself takes on significance. The simplest example is a bacterium. The bacterium swims toward higher concentrations of sugar. The chemistry itself contains no food and no feeling. Chemistry is only molecules and their concentrations. But from the perspective of the bacterium, as a self with biological needs, sugar is food.

The difference between sugar as food and sugar as chemicals isn't in the bacterium or the chemistry. It's in the relation between them. That relation is between a being that must maintain itself and a world that either feeds that maintenance or doesn't. The world is now divided into better and worse and it divides that way "for" a self.

This is the light of the subject illuminating the world through the boundary. The light on the inside of the boundary is felt as strain and valence, the intensity and direction of a biological need. But the same light permeates beyond the boundary through the senses, and when it does, it illuminates the things in the world that meet that need. The light outside the boundary illuminates the value of things in the world. Sugar becomes food. A predator becomes a threat.

The value doesn't depend on the urgency of the need, only on whether the organism has the need. Sugar is food whether you've just eaten or

you're starving. But strain and valence position the need on a scale. Strain tells us how urgent the need is, and valence tells us where it sits on the scale from good to bad. The hungrier you are, the more valuable sugar becomes. The more exposed you are, the more dangerous the predator is.

Sugar isn't valuable in itself, and the bacterium doesn't invent its value. The self doesn't cast meaning onto a meaningless world; the self's senses are an aperture shaped to the need, tuned to highlight the feature in the world that answers it. The value is in the relation itself, not in the organism or the world.

The loop runs both ways

This is a dynamic sensorimotor loop. The world doesn't arrive pre-arranged into significance: what the bacterium senses depends on how it moves, and how it moves depends on what it senses. The bacterium swims in a straight line, then tumbles and heads off in a new direction. If it senses an increase in the concentration of sugar it continues in the same direction, if the concentration is declining it tumbles and reorients itself.

The same thing happens when you feel your way through a dark room. What you feel determines the direction you move next and the direction you move determines what you feel. If you feel the wall in front of you, you reorient yourself and reach out in another direction.

Every sensorimotor interaction is the self's perspective in motion. Its movement is toward maintenance or away from collapse, and its senses light up the features of the environment that carry that existential significance. But the loop doesn't make the perspective, it's where an already luminous interior gets aimed at the world.

That means perception isn't passive reception. Perception maps the contours of the world into shades of significance for the self. The result is a world "for" me.

Each sensory apparatus is an aperture with a particular shape. Different apertures highlight different regions of the world, so different senses light up a different world. The shape of the aperture doesn't just point at part of the world, it determines what comes through. Nothing outside that shape is illuminated. It's structurally excluded, not merely in shadow. The bacterium has one aperture, shaped to illuminate sugar.

As organisms become more complex, the apertures do as well. Beyond chemical receptors, eyes, ears and increasingly complex cognitive structures develop. A richer set of apertures means a richer world is illuminated. Dogs can hear sounds well above the range of human hearing. That isn't the dog hearing the same world as us; it's the dog's aperture letting through parts of the world that our hearing can't access.

This is why what it's like to be a bat is different from what it's like to be a human. The bat isn't passively receiving our world in a different hue. It has a different aperture and so a different region of reality lights up for the bat. Sonar doesn't show our world in a different modality. It shows a world organised around echo and interval, facts our eyes were never equipped to register as significant. A sense that isn't built to highlight a feature simply leaves it dark, it can't enter into our awareness.

The senses of each organism illuminate a world of its own. We each look out on the same field, but the world that lights up is ours alone.

Chapter 6 – Feeling Is Primeval

When you jump back from a shadow or gasp at a sudden loud noise, your body is triggering a biological defence mechanism designed to keep you alive. These biological survival circuits are ancient. The capacity for fear isn't learned. It arrives already old and communicates our long evolutionary history.

The feeling itself is our inheritance from ancestors who avoided the predator and survived. What we learn is the association, which rustle in the grass and which shape or scent is the one to fear. The feeling is inherited, what to fear can be learned. Since the circuitry is inherited, so is the felt quality of those circuits.

Notice what this means for each metaphysics. Naturalism can have the circuitry, but it has no account of why that circuitry should be accompanied by feeling. For naturalism, the ancientness is only ever in the machinery, not in anything felt.

On the consciousness-first view, the circuitry and the feeling are one thing. The ancient circuitry has the same ancient felt quality, lighting up in you just as it did in your evolutionary ancestors.

Gauge and motivation

The feeling is the inside view of the regulatory event. It's one event seen from two sides of the boundary. Only the subject has access to the inside view and for anyone else the outside view is the only view available.

Survival needs and dangers are all regulated through the particular qualities of the experience. The felt qualities aren't arbitrary and they aren't interchangeable. The way each state feels tells the organism how it's doing against its own biological needs. The distinctive quality of the feel motivates the organism toward a behaviour that meets those needs.

The feeling is both a gauge and a motivation that pushes in a particular direction. This is why the felt quality of the experience has to be specific. Hunger reports the lack of food and pushes you toward eating. Fear reports the existence of the threat and pushes you toward a response, run or fight. Pain reports the damage and pushes you to avoid it. It communicates both what you need and which direction to move to get it, all in a single, directly felt signal that no detached gauge could supply.

This is why pain feels different to fear, which feels different to pleasure. The event is motivating toward a particular biological outcome. Fear is the inside view of an avoidance mechanism, it communicates: get away from this because it threatens the viability of the system. From the outside, fear is the fight or flight response, and it looks like the amygdala lighting up. From inside the boundary, that same mechanism feels like an overpowering urge to run or attack.

The man who couldn't choose

In this view, the felt qualities of our experiences are causally necessary, not epiphenomenal. We often think of feeling as an optional extra, like surface paint on machinery that could run without it. If that was true, then if you took away the feeling the decisions would still function. That would be the experimental test. And in neuroscientist Antonio Damasio's book, *Descartes' Error*, he gives us the case.

Damasio describes a patient he calls Elliot who had a brain tumour removed. The usual tests not only came back normal, they showed Elliot had a superior intellect. His memory, learning, language, mathematics, attention showed no sign of dysfunction. He discussed politics and economics and knew what was happening in the world around him. But he had trouble functioning in other ways.

His ability to make decisions was impaired, he could list the pros and cons in detail but never land on the end result. He lost his job, made a series of ruinous business decisions and went through marriages and divorces. Damasio noticed Elliot inhabited a flat emotional landscape. He narrated his tragic life events as if he was a spectator. Damasio felt more emotionally affected by Elliot's suffering than Elliot himself.

What Elliot lacked was whatever lets reasoning solidify into one option. The weighing of options can't go on forever. It has to bottom out in something that presents the stakes directly, not give them to another rule. Elliot is the regress in the flesh: he can list all the pros and cons, but he lacks the felt scale that resolves the list. He can't choose. He can only compare endlessly, because no option weighs more than any other. If you can't feel the stakes, you can't weigh them.

Feeling isn't something that comes along for the ride while the real machinery operates underneath. Damage the structure and you don't just change a feeling; you remove the element that was steering the machinery.

Does the brain produce consciousness?

We've seen that feeling is engaged when the answer isn't fixed, that it has both a direction and an intensity, and that it's as ancient as the circuitry it belongs to. All of this is central to the mind-body problem.

The mind-body problem is the puzzle of why brains and consciousness are so tightly correlated. Brain damage alters consciousness, and through plasticity consciousness alters brains. The naturalist story says these mind-brain correlations are evidence that consciousness somehow emerges from the activity of the brain. But the data itself doesn't say that; it's only one possible interpretation of the data.

Elliot's damaged brain region is where the felt weighting gets constrained so it can steer our actions. Damaging it doesn't remove the

feeling as such; Elliot still feels things. What's gone is the structure that lets the felt weight of things resolve into a choice.

Brain damage or stimulation alters consciousness for the same reason altering a resonant structure alters a standing wave. A damaged guitar string produces a distorted sound, not because it's creating less vibration, but because it can no longer sustain the necessary resonance pattern. The note changes because the structure that shapes the vibration changed.

Brains are structures that impose constraints. They don't generate consciousness. Because experience can only appear through constraints, the structure that governs those constraints will be tightly correlated with the character and continuity of our experience.

So the correlation is as tight on either interpretation of the data. The difference is what each story leaves unexplained. The production story, that the brain generates consciousness, owes an explanation of why the brain circuitry should be accompanied by an experience, and it doesn't have one. The constraint story doesn't have that problem, because the feeling was already there.

The brain is the structure necessary to sustain a stable individual consciousness. Your particular brain sustains your resonance pattern within the field. The particular biological structures evolved through natural selection, which favours constraint patterns that solve survival problems. The evolutionary story is the story of those structures becoming more elaborate over time.

Where the light came on

Let's travel all the way back to the evolutionary beginnings. The naturalist tells this story well. It starts with something like a worm in mud, sorting its world into approach and avoid. It moves through millions of years of accumulation: valence, arousal, senses, memory, modelling the

world and the modelling of a self moving through that world. Each one making more of the world available for the organism to reach into.

But nowhere does that story tell us where the light came on. The stakes that make a world matter for the organism are already there in the first autopoietic cell, in the bacterium that discovers sugar is food. Evolution builds better and better instruments for reaching. But the world they reach into was already illuminated through the first boundary that had skin in the game. It had something to lose. Skin in the game came first; the rest is elaboration of the reach. The naturalist can tell the whole story but they can't say why any of it is accompanied by experience.

On this view, what becomes more elaborate is the organism's apertures, so more of the world becomes available to significance for it. It can make finer distinctions and reach further horizons.

Evolution doesn't create consciousness; it refines the structures consciousness can use to stabilise itself in its environment. Feeling is used when the answer isn't fixed, where the world presents competing stakes and wiring can't settle it. That's the arena of choice. The illuminated inner world of feeling is where weighing happens, where choice is made. And choice under competing stakes is will. The felt zone is the zone of freedom.

Where does this leave us?

This section started with a problem the naturalist account of reality can't solve: the hard problem of consciousness, or why physical processes should be accompanied by experience. The naturalist's starting assumption creates the problem. You can't arrive at experience if you start with its absence.

This framework starts with consciousness as the most fundamental nature of reality, a unified and luminous conscious field. Matter is the ex-

ternal view of the field when its inner luminosity is fully occluded. It is pure structure, the frozen geometry of light.

Between those two extremes are the individual subjects like you and me. We're conscious within our boundaries and screened from each other by the same density boundary that makes each of us an individual.

Both the individual subjects and matter are fully real. They're different modes of the field's architecture. Physics is intact: it describes the outer surface of the field because matter is purely outer surface.

So far we have a picture of the field's structure, but we've yet to explain its dynamics. What determines the movement of the field?

Section 2 – The Resonant Universe: why reality is not indifferent

Chapter 1 – The Field Has a Will

In a physical universe, movement is mechanical and particles are pushed by external forces. In a conscious field, motion can't be an unconscious process because the field itself is self-luminous and aware. So if movement isn't by external force, how does a conscious field move?

Notice your own consciousness. It's always about something: the words on this page, the sounds in the background, the touch of the chair. You can't find awareness that's about nothing. Even if you try to look for awareness without content, that becomes the object your consciousness is about. This aboutness is called intentionality: your awareness always points toward an object.

But the objects of your consciousness aren't passively registered like objects reflected in a mirror. In its bare act of awareness of something, consciousness is already pointing and reaching toward its chosen object. When you look at aboutness closely, you see it isn't a static relation but inherently dynamic.

Your attention doesn't merely scan the world randomly. It selects some objects rather than others. Your attention has preferences.

This inherent and natural movement of consciousness is will. You direct your awareness toward what you want. Rather than a mechanical oscillation in a field aimlessly following external forces, will is an internal movement choosing what it reaches toward.

Your will is always oriented in a particular direction. This orientation is so natural you rarely notice it. Your will is like a vector, it moves but it also has an inherent direction to that movement. You have many different desires but they all have one thing in common, they aim toward what you perceive as valuable and good.

What we perceive as good may not actually be good, sometimes we're mistaken and think something is good but it turns out not to have the value we expect. But that isn't because we aimed toward something we think is bad. We simply made a mistake about what's good and discovered later we're wrong.

We also desire things we know are bad for us, we eat that slice of chocolate cake instead of the apple. But that's a case of weakness of will. We haven't chosen something we think is bad, we think the chocolate cake is good. We recognise the cake is of lesser value when judged against our long-term goals of health, but in the moment, the instant pleasure of the chocolate cake appears higher value.

Your will always aims at what appears to be valuable to you at the time. Just as a compass always points north, your will always points toward the good. The movement of will can't be value-neutral.

Waves of will

You reach toward what you find valuable and generate movement in the field in the form of waves extending outward. These waves are your will in action: your desires, intentions and choices made real in the field. These movements aren't powerless wishes; they create real effects in the world. This is the causal power of consciousness.

As these waves of causal power propagate, they produce oscillations in the field like ripples spreading across water. But the field also contains innumerable other agents generating their own waves. As these waves interact, they form complex interference patterns.

The everyday version of this is familiar. In trying to fulfil your desires, you inevitably interfere with someone else's. If your neighbour wants to blast heavy metal while you're trying to sleep, the divergent wills collide and interfere with each other. Whenever agents have different goals that create incompatible effects in the world, there's conflict.

If many agents with conflicting goals share the same field of action, some kind of coordination is needed. Without coordination, the interference patterns would create chaotic structure rather than stability. Most of our goals require sustained and coordinated action and that requires a stable background with predictable results.

But coordination isn't the same as just letting things move without colliding. The collisions in the field are between wills, and the direction of will is never value neutral: it always aims toward the good. When the loud stereo overpowers your sleep, that isn't coordinating the wills. It ignores the conflicting values and the loudest sound wins.

Coordination of wills means sorting outcomes into better and worse for the wills involved not by which will happens to be stronger.

This sorting isn't something the laws of physics can achieve. Physics tells us that whatever will is causally strongest overpowers the weaker. The laws of physics make no judgement about what should happen; they only predict what will happen given the physical strength of the forces involved.

But we don't sort outcomes this way. We don't think the strongest is the best. If we did, no action could ever be wrong. A cruel act wouldn't be wrong, it would simply be something that happened: the strong overpowering the weak with no value judgement attached.

That isn't how we interact with the world. We all think certain outcomes are wrong and shouldn't happen. This is an ethical judgement we all make, not a matter of opinion or personal preference. Whatever we may say in theory, none of us live as if it's false.

This view can ground our judgements that some things are right or wrong in reality itself. Under naturalism it can only be justified in human nature: our rational or empathetic natures are the source of our ethical judgements. Naturalism has no place for good and bad in the

world itself if all we have is a purely physical world. A physical description can provide a pattern, but it can't give us a standard.

Patterns vs standards

Consider the difference between a pattern and a standard. A pattern can't be right or wrong, but a standard is a rule by which we can judge something right or wrong. A pattern is just a regularity, a description of how things are. A standard is a measure that things can fail to meet; it tells us how things ought to be.

A hurricane has a stable centre. The water in a river flows along the path of least resistance. These are both patterns produced by an aimless process and neither can be right or wrong. There's no standard to determine what patterns air currents should form or which path a river can take.

We may think a river taking a path that floods a town can be judged wrong, but that judgement can only be made against our standard that flooded towns are bad. We supply the standard, the river doesn't know anything about towns. The river itself isn't making an error.

What about patterns that have a function?

Some patterns do have a function and so give us goal-directed systems. A thermostat has a set-point. A heart has a function: it's for pumping. A standard seems to come along with the function. If a thermostat doesn't reach the set-point, it's in error. If the heart doesn't pump, it's not performing the function and so we say it's failing.

These functions give us working vs failing, success vs error. Here a standard seems to arrive with no mind behind it. Goal-directed systems generate standards without anything extra required. Maybe coordination is just a big feedback loop.

But we need to look more closely at where the standard comes from. The set-point of the thermostat is supplied by us, not the thermostat. The thermostat doesn't judge that the room should be a bit warmer. The error is an error "for us," relative to the standard we supplied, just like the river that floods the town. Even if the standard is built into the function of the machine, it's still a standard borrowed from us.

Doesn't evolution set the standard without a mind?

What makes pumping the heart's function rather than making a thumping sound which it also does? We can judge a pumping heart is better than a failing one, but what makes the pumping its function is that it was selected by evolution and gets passed on. Nature selects what the heart is for, its goal. And if something has a goal, it has a way to be in error. That looks like a standard with no mind behind it.

Evolution gives us many such examples. When a baby sea turtle hatches out of its nest, it crawls toward the brightest part of the horizon. For as long as there have been turtles, the brightest horizon has been the open sea, because the sky and water retain the last light while the sand dunes are dark. So heading for the brightest light reliably took them to the water, they survived, and the trait was passed on through successive generations.

But in the modern world there are sometimes street lights behind the beach. The hatchlings follow the brightest light and they end up on the road and die. Everything in the hatchling is set for the ocean, but there's no ocean. That's an error in the strongest sense: it's a state that can be right or wrong. Either the ocean is there or it isn't, and no mind is involved.

But what makes the ocean the goal?

It's true that the hatchling's state is about tracking the ocean, because that's what it was selected for. But the hatchling is never wrong about

which light is brightest. It's only in error if reaching the sea is its goal, rather than tracking brightness. What makes the ocean its goal? Only that turtles who followed the brightest horizon reached the ocean, survived and reproduced. But that assumes survival counts as success.

Survival isn't success, it's a pattern. What reproduced, reproduced. Calling it success requires a valuer who judges it so. A machine keeps to a target, and nature installs targets, but nature doesn't decide which target is the right one.

The examples all show the same thing. Every borrowed standard points to a prior one. The thermostat's set-point came from the engineer; the engineer's sense of a comfortable room came from what he found good.

Every standard inside a mechanism is a real standard only because something that can judge value stands behind it. We can only have a genuine standard when there is something an outcome can be better or worse for. It needs a perspective the outcome can matter to, from which one thing can be found more significant than another. And only something mind-like does that. Something that set the point or the goal, because it judged it good.

The same point applies to the coordination of multiple wills with conflicting goals. That can't be done by maintaining a borrowed set-point. It has to sort countless outcomes into better and worse for each of the wills involved. That is standard judging through and through. Whatever does that sorting isn't an aimless process. It's a valuer, not a mechanism.

The field as coordinator

We've seen that coordination requires a genuine standard and a genuine standard requires a valuer. So whatever sorts the conflicting wills of the individual subjects in the field must be mind-like, because to sort is to judge outcomes better or worse. We've already seen what it is to

find something better and reach toward it: that's will. A valuer isn't a static judge; valuing is a movement toward the good.

So whatever does the sorting is a valuer with a will of its own. We understand the nature of our own will, but what kind of will is this?

It can't be merely the aggregate of all the individual wills, because every subject is bound within the field and screened from all the others. If any of the individual wills were the standard for the rest, it wouldn't be a universal standard. It would be a single will elevated above the rest by decree and that's no less arbitrary than the strongest will determining the outcome.

Coordination of wills requires a vantage point none of the individual subjects have: one that can't be screened or parochial and has access to every perspective at once. It must have an agency over and above the individual wills. The coordinating will is itself a mode of the field, distinct from the individuals within it.

The field can't lack a will, because will can't be a new property that appears only once the field has bounded individual subjects. A boundary can concentrate, differentiate, or constrain the field, but it can't create a novel property the field doesn't already have. A boundary can only reveal what is already there, the same way a prism reveals colours already latent in white light.

If bounded consciousness has will, then the field must also already possess will. And will, as we've seen, is never neutral: it always points toward the good. So the luminous field has a will of its own, directed toward the good, just like ours.

The intuitive image for this coordinating role is the conductor of an orchestra. An orchestra is made up of a collection of individuals with different instruments that produce different notes. A conductor is needed to harmonise all these divergent sounds. In one sense the conductor is

part of the orchestra, yet at the same time must also be different from it. This is the same pattern of unity in difference: they are one thing (the orchestra) and also many things (individual musicians).

But the orchestra image is also misleading, because a conductor stands out in front of the orchestra, he's not part of the music. That's an image of a bound individual, not the medium in which those individuals are moving.

The sound waves of the individual musicians travel within a medium, and it's the medium itself that's conscious and mind-like. The coordinator doesn't passively register the waves as an audience may hear the music. It hears each wave as better or worse for the will of the musician who sounds it. The coordinator is the witness to the entire depth and breadth of the field.

The laws of nature

In the luminous field the subject is the bounded light, reflected inward by its own boundary. The coordinator is that same light, but unbounded. It pervades the entire field, both inside each individual's boundaries as well as in the connecting medium between them. This is one dynamic field of waves in motion, with two modes of activity.

The structure of the field itself coordinates the divergent wills, its responsive movement harmonising them into a coherent whole. We could think of the stable, measurable background of this coordination as the laws of nature. Just as our behaviour is the outward movement of our will, the laws of nature discovered by science describe the outward movement of the field's will.

This ordering principle isn't like an engineer who sets the parameters of allowed movement and then stands outside the system. It's the internal dynamics of the system itself. The dynamic field has an independent movement of its own.

If the field's will is directed toward the good, its first priority is the conditions each subject needs to sustain a stable resonance pattern, or in other words to survive. On the most basic level, our first desire is to survive and continue our existence. This orientation characterises not only individuals but the movement of the field itself. Survival is the precondition that must be in place before any other good can be pursued. Which means survival must be favoured by the structure of the field. Evolution by natural selection is one expression of this, it selects traits that sustain existence.

But survival alone can't be the highest good. No one wants to survive at any cost. We need food to survive but we want enjoyable food. No one wants to eat gruel every day. We need air to breathe, but we want clean, fresh air, not foul, polluted air. We want an occupation that pays the bills, but we also want it to be an enjoyable and meaningful pursuit.

We're attracted to beauty, justice and a whole life we would judge worthwhile. This orientation is as universal as hunger and as difficult to silence. Beyond survival we want fulfilment. Survival is an instrumental good, it's a necessary condition that makes the pursuit of intrinsic goods possible. Everyone must obey the laws of nature, but within those laws, our free movement is allowed.

Chapter 2 – Alignment and Inner Freedom

When we picture the luminous field, we see it spread out before us. We're above it, looking down from a vantage above and beyond the field itself. It's a natural viewpoint, because it's how we navigate the world, and it seems like a neutral stance: a detached observer, free of the biases that arise from being within the world. It's also the same viewpoint science takes when it intentionally brackets the observer to study the world objectively.

Because of the success of science, we've come to see that view not as a limited and intentional stance we use in the laboratory, but as one that encompasses the whole of reality: the measurable third-person structure that science explains so well.

When we bracket the observer, we create the image of a self-contained box, a third-person structure with an outside edge. And as soon as we think of that structure as the whole of reality, it leaves no place in the picture for the one thing that doesn't show up as third-person structure, the experiencing subject. The only place left for it is outside the structure, hovering above it like an immaterial ghost.

The hovering ghost is you, picturing the world from that viewpoint. To stand outside reality and view it as an object is to take the ghost-eye's view, a detached observer with no place within the reality they survey. But it's a viewpoint that was never a real place, it was only an abstraction for a useful method. The third-person stance is what happens when we intentionally remove ourselves from the reality we're studying and then forget that we did it.

If reality is a conscious field you aren't standing outside it because there is no outside. You're not a spectator to the world; you're always im-

mersed within the larger field of consciousness. The field is the coordinator, the witness present throughout the medium.

The field as witness is what each individual tunes to. It's both the responsive presence that hears each wave and the scale the whole field is tuned by. The coordinating medium isn't passively receiving those waves of will the way air receives sound. It's the dynamic medium those waves are propagating through and it's actively harmonising them.

So from the inside viewpoint, what is the good?

We're within the field's movement, a willed movement toward the good. We're not outside it; not walled off from it; we're seated within it. In this view, the good is alignment with that movement, a flow we're already immersed in. This movement of the field isn't a law imposed on us from the outside that we can choose whether to conform to or break with.

If alignment seems like a power set over us, acting on us rather than through us or with us, we've slipped back into the vantage of the ghost. The correction is to adjust our perspective so we're within the field.

The field is a harmonising force, and when we're aligned with it, our will is directed toward the universal good. This means we're aimed toward what is actually good, not our mistaken or parochial understanding of it. What we want is genuinely worth wanting. When we aren't aligned with the movement of the field, we're reaching toward a counterfeit: something that may seem good to us in the moment, or good from a skewed perspective, but it isn't actually good.

Why that good is everyone's

The movement of the field is the actual good, not because the field is the biggest thing encompassing everything, being vast isn't the same as being good. It's because the field is present in everything, the one wit-

ness permeating all. A will that follows the universal good doesn't harm others for its own personal gain. The will of the field is universal: that everyone can flourish cooperatively, not that one agent flourishes at the expense of another. This is the universal standard.

This movement toward the universal good isn't merely harmonising the multitude of wills. A society of cruel actors can be harmonised so their wills mesh and their cruel project runs smoothly. But that would only be efficient cruelty. That isn't the good; that's the bad running without friction.

The universal good doesn't mean the sum of all the wills, to be balanced and traded one against the other. The field isn't an outside observer looking at the whole. It's the witness both within each individual's boundary and between them.

Seen from that universal perspective – not from outside the field and not a parochial perspective within it screened from the whole – there's no sum to balance. Harm done anywhere can't be taken from one place and added somewhere else to neutralise the loss. There's no separate ledger. There's one single witness that bears the same wound that's inflicted within any of the individual boundaries.

We already know what this is like from the inside because we're the larger field for other smaller organisms. When the microbes in your gut are out of balance, the disturbance isn't confined to the microbe; you register the imbalance as discomfort. Now flip it so that we're the microbes, the individuals within a larger field that registers the balance in the whole. Our harm isn't sealed off from it, but felt by the field we're a part of.

Imagine someone who spends their life harming others and feeling vindicated that they're working to enact the good. A hero in their own eyes, and possibly in the estimation of the society. They prosper, gain

honour and die contented. No felt cost has ever been registered for the hero. The harm stayed only with the victim. We think this is where a terrible wrong has been committed and it's made worse because it has no price. No justice was served. It's an out and out loss for the victim only.

But the wrong was registered not only in the suffering of the victims, but in the field itself. The detection didn't fail. What failed is the hero's registration of the harm, their ability to feel their own dissonance. That's a far greater failure for the hero than doing wrong and registering it as wrong. To not register is to be maximally disconnected from the good, to not even know the shadow of it, to lack the ability to hear it at all.

The hero's lack of dissonance isn't evidence they got away with it; it measures how distant they are from the good. They're not only cut off from knowing that their movement is out of harmony with the good. They're disconnected from the deepest level of their being, the foundation in which they're immersed. Their very existence is degraded and they're unaware of it. There couldn't be a more superficial life than one that is completely severed from the good but convinced it embodies it, celebrating and enjoying what is only the absence of the good.

The boundary: real but not ultimate

This view relies on keeping the individual in clear focus because there are two more familiar pictures it's easily mistaken for.

The first is the separate-selves view: each self really is a separate thing, there's no underlying field to connect them or register the harm. If that were true the hero really pays no cost, my loss could be your gain and the boundary between us is solid. So the price I pay never comes through to you.

The second is the all-is-one view. Here the field is real, but the boundary between individuals is, in the final analysis, an illusion. The separate self dissolves and merges into the one field. That dissolves the problem, but it takes everything else with it. If the boundary isn't real, then neither is the individual. If the individual isn't real, then neither is their will. There is no-one to be aligned or misaligned, no-one whose will reaches for the good. There is no real person to suffer the harm. It saves the victim by extinguishing them.

The separate-selves view keeps the individual but loses the connection, so harm can't travel. The all-is-one view keeps the connection but loses the individual, so there's no one for harm to travel to. This view is the path between those two.

Think of a wave in the ocean. It really is a wave. It has its own shape and rises and falls in its own way. It's one wave distinct from any other, not just the ocean manufacturing the illusion of being many. At the same time it isn't sealed off from the water it moves within; there's no barrier around it that makes it something different from the ocean.

The boundary is real enough to mean you are someone and what you do matters. But not so absolute that causing harm to others can be free of cost. The suffering is real. It's wrong, and it matters.

Peace and inner freedom

When our will moves in harmony with the field's movement, there's no friction, and that absence of friction is what we experience as inner peace. Peace isn't a mood we create, it's resonance with the field. It's what alignment with the field feels like from the inside.

A tuned instrument produces clear music; an out-of-tune instrument produces only noise. By itself the instrument can't know its own dissonance. It makes the music it makes. It can only know when it's out of

tune by judging its own music against something outside it: the musical scale, the other instruments, and the rhythm of the whole.

We don't find our own misalignment by looking inward to our own preferences and desires; we find it by testing against reality. The harmony of inner resonance is with the underlying structure, like the musical scale rather than the melody being played. At the level of surface events there's always friction because wills collide, but when our instrument is tuned to the field's musical scale and rhythm, our experiential core remains in harmony even when chaos surrounds us.

There's no submission to an outside lawmaker because we're part of the movement of reality itself. There's no dilemma of asking whether something is good because the field wills it, or if the field wills it because it's good. That dilemma needs the will and the good to be two separate things. But there's only one thing. The field is the valuing, and the good is its flourishing.

We generally think of free will as the ability to choose between options: the power to move in whatever way we please, to go this way or that. But in this view, we're wills that move by their nature, and the direction is already part of the movement. We're not particles pushed from the outside.

That's the foundation of freedom: inherent self-movement, not the lack of an outside cause. A self-moving will isn't most free when it can go any direction for no reason, but when its movement toward the good is without obstacles, clear of error and not overpowered by impulses it didn't choose and can't control.

Alignment is freedom moving according to its true nature. It isn't a surrender of our freedom. The will that aligns is becoming most fully what it is.

When the will instead moves in error or compelled by lower urges, it isn't moving according to what it truly is. That isn't freedom but a deviation. It's the will obstructed from the direction of the good, following a counterfeit version and pulled away from its own existential core.

To our modern ears this doesn't sound like freedom, it seems like a will that can only move one way being labelled as free. But notice what viewpoint we must take for it to look that way. We must be viewing its movement from the vantage of the ghost, where self-movement toward the good is something pushed by external force along a track. Viewed from within the field, there's no track or external force. There's only a will moving in a way that is true to its essential nature like a note ringing true to its harmonic. Aligning ourselves with the structure of reality creates the conditions for peace.

Chapter 3 – Why Misalignment Feels like Suffering

If alignment with the movement of the field creates peace, how can we discover it? If peace is the felt quality of moving in harmony with the good, we need a reliable way to know when we've drifted off course and which way to move to adjust. The main obstacle to moving toward the good is when our will turns inward. Instead of reaching outward, it revolves back into itself.

Two grades of self-centred willing

Self-centred willing is an attachment to what we judge to be the good. It comes in two grades. The first grade is obvious: selfishness. We want what we want without regard for how our actions affect others.

The second is more subtle and easily slides into self-deception. Here we don't think we're being selfish. We want what we think is right and moral, and so we're attached to achieving that outcome. This is also self-centred because we take our judgement to be the universal good.

If we treat our will as the arbiter of the good and what should happen, we're attached to the outcome. But the outcome isn't ours to legislate, it's determined by forces outside our control. We only control our actions, not the final result.

You can aim an arrow at your target, but once the arrow leaves your hands you can only wait and watch. Where it lands depends not only on your aim and skill but on the wind and other forces beyond your control. The same principle applies to your actions in the world. You aim for your target, but the result depends on the interference patterns of other wills moving in the space between you and your target.

The field gives those wills a common medium with the same laws for everyone and it registers how the outcome stands for each of them. The goal of our actions is what we've judged to be good. If we're attached to that outcome, a different outcome causes friction and dissatisfaction. The dissatisfaction comes from treating the outcome as the measure of whether we aimed at the good. But the outcome was the product of many wills and forces, and was never ours to judge.

Once we see that, we can remove attachment to the outcome and the friction disappears. Our responsibility is only the shooting of the arrow. We aim as best we can, but if a sudden gust of wind takes it off target, that doesn't settle whether our target was right. The wind could be a force to be overcome, or it could reveal our target was misjudged and it wasn't the good. We can't know this from a single gust of wind; it can only be discovered by a pattern over time.

Being attached to our target turns the will in a self-centred direction. We make what we want the criterion for achieving the good, rather than accepting what actually happened. Attachment binds the will to particular outcomes, and this imprisons the will within itself as the only arbiter of the good. This attachment is a type of love, but it's love of self rather than love of the good.

Detachment is the test of whether we're aimed at the good. If we're detached from the results, we're not thinking of how the results will benefit us; we're equal between fame and infamy, profit and loss. This gives us the lens to see the universal good. The field is impartial between outcomes, but not indifferent to the good. Under its laws, each will is free to act and no action goes unregistered.

Self-centred willing produces attachment, attachment produces inertia, and inertia produces suffering. Our will forms a particular orientation toward the world, and when that orientation repeats often enough, a

habit is formed. Once established, this habit diminishes the role of our active choices, carrying the action forward on its own momentum.

We often do things on autopilot, performing activities while our consciousness is absorbed elsewhere. Most of us have experienced driving somewhere so absorbed in thought that we arrive with no memory of the trip. The body reverts to habitual movement while our consciousness wanders. Habit reduces the need for active will. Our behaviour becomes inertial: a groove, a tendency to continue on the same path.

We can dissolve these inertial grooves by changing the orientation of our will. When we aim our will beyond our own interests, we move from a self-centred orientation to a universal one. Aligning with the universal will, without attachment to the results, produces peace.

This is what it means to align with the good in practice. It's not just consulting how we feel about it. It's about following the good for its own sake, doing what we understand to be good to the best of our ability, and staying detached to the results of our actions.

What does that alignment feel like from the inside?

We previously saw that the felt qualities of our experience reveal a deeper biological need. Pain isn't an arbitrary unpleasant feeling on the surface of an injury; it informs us of what's happening at a deeper level. The feeling is the inside view of the biological signal and hunger, thirst and exhaustion are the felt signals telling us how we're doing regarding our biological needs.

And just as feeling is the inside view of biological need, mood is the inside view of how our will stands in relation to the good. Mood is the felt quality of a real movement: our will flowing with the field's current or against it. The need here goes beyond survival. Survival is only the foundation; it's the necessary condition for pursuing what's good.

This is the need of the whole person: what we need for a worthwhile life. And like the felt quality of hunger or pain, mood is both a gauge and a motivation. It doesn't just register how we're doing; its distinctive quality motivates us toward behaviour that meets those needs.

Friction, not penalty

We all know what it's like to say something in anger that we regret. The regret we feel is the experience of having done something that conflicts with our real intentions, with how our will moves when it's true to itself. The contradiction between will and action registers as a felt quality.

Misalignment isn't a punishment from the field. It's the felt quality of a structural contradiction: how we're moving in relation to the field. The felt qualities of our biological needs aren't something different from the physical mechanisms; they're the view from inside the boundary of the field, and that principle applies equally to our moods.

These felt qualities signal how we're moving in relation to the actual or universal good, rather than our private idea of what's good. The signal registers as a felt quality because the field responds to our movement; it's not an indifferent or insentient structure. When our will moves against the good, the ache we experience is the deformation of our movement, felt from inside our own boundary.

Harmony with the field goes beyond momentary pleasure or pain. Pleasure fluctuates, but harmony is structural. This inner peace is a sustained resonance beyond mere survival: an existential well-being. Most of us can imagine a state of being that's satisfied, peaceful, and unagitated, even if we don't know how to reach it. That's the experience of harmony with the field. It's not found in immediate reactions, but in our existential core, in what we might call our background resonance.

This background resonance is a stability distinct from emotions. Strong emotions or desires can pull us away from our centre of control, causing us to compromise ourselves by pursuing overpowering impulses. Equanimity is prior to any particular emotional state, and from it we can stand as witness to our passing emotions.

This is like the difference between weather and climate. Climate is the background condition that produces transient weather patterns; our core is like the climate and our emotions are like the weather. The emotions arise from sense perception. Someone cutting us off in traffic spikes anger; missing a bus creates anxiety. These emotions are reactions to whatever interferes with us fulfilling our desires.

If our actions are in alignment with the rhythm of the field, our core remains peaceful even during surface disturbances. This background equanimity is a sustained condition, not something produced instantly. Like health, it's not a trophy we earn and then place on a shelf. Achieving it requires constant and repeated actions.

When we experience negative moods, sadness or melancholy, we tend to withdraw from life. Often, this felt disruption signals our will is misaligned between what we judge to be valuable and what actually is. The cause is often self-centred willing: the will turned back on itself, reaching for what it takes to be good for itself at the cost of harmony with the universal good.

The two tempos – instant and slow

The felt signal of misalignment can be instantaneous or delayed. We feel stepping on broken glass immediately. Over the longer term, cumulative actions affecting our physical health manifest their consequences slowly: the effects of a sedentary lifestyle, for example, accumulate with age.

The emotional signal works the same way. The immediate flash of anger happens before we have time to reflect on what we really mean. The delayed signal is quieter and harder to detect. The dissonance doesn't register quickly and intensely; it accumulates into a background unease, the sense of a life that's slowly drifted from worthwhile without any particular event registering the shift.

A series of small decisions and actions, each taking the path of least resistance in the moment and choosing surface comfort over more challenging options, seems insignificant in isolation but adds up to take us a long way from the goal. The dissonance of instant regret is loud enough to notice. But when our way of living is out of tune with what constitutes a good life, a life we can look back on and say it was worth living, identifying the cause can be difficult. It can appear simply as a general malaise and apathy that permeates our lives without spiking into a recognisable form.

A smoke alarm, not a map

The felt signal not only gives us a gauge to judge how we're doing in relation to the good, it also motivates us to change our actions. The behaviour our moods cause is how we regulate our alignment at the level of conscious choices and will: not merely maintaining stability, but adjusting toward what we take to be good. Pain signals misalignment or discomfort on a physical level and we instinctively act to change our state. But a negative mood signals that our way of living and personal choices don't align with what is actually good. It's a signal we need to adjust our will to realign with what's actually good.

The signal tells us that we're out of alignment, but it doesn't tell us what the good is. It's a smoke alarm, not a map. It tells us that something is wrong, but it's silent on where we should go instead. In this model, where the good is harmony with the field, we discover it through participation. This silence is a natural consequence of the only way we can

discover the good: because the good isn't fixed in advance, no signal can point to it before we move.

We may carefully choose something we believe will make us happy, only to discover we misjudged its value. We realise we were mistaken in taking it to be good, not because its value changed but because our perception did. This is why alignment can't simply mean following our feelings. The signal can tell us we're off course, but it can't reveal the destination. The feeling sends us outward to test against reality, not inward to consult itself. Alignment is something we learn to recognise through participation. It's discovered rather than invented.

Chapter 4 – Hearing the Good

We trust our experience to reveal reality to us. We couldn't function otherwise. Mostly we're right to trust that our experience points to something real. Hunger and pain are signals pointing beyond themselves to something real in the world. Hunger implies food exists; it isn't an illusion but a signal pointing toward something that can satisfy it.

We trust pain as a signal that something is wrong, even when we can't explain why. We may not understand the cause or the mechanism behind the pain, but no one doubts that the pain is real, or that it's a message that our biological system is damaged. The reliability of the signal doesn't depend on knowing its cause.

Ethical signals are just as trustworthy. If we see someone torture an animal for entertainment, we know, without needing to know why, that the action is wrong and shouldn't be done. Although we can't point to a mechanism, our confidence in the signal isn't weakened. Ethical knowing arrives directly and defies intellectual denial. Whatever we may say in theory, none of us live as if wrongness weren't real.

Yet in theory we're more willing to doubt the ethical signal than the pain signal. That isn't because the signal is weaker; its strength doesn't change. It comes from another invisible metaphysical assumption: if reality is only physical structure, it's hard to see where wrongness could be found in the world.

The two signals also differ in how they can be explained. Pain is the inside view of what it signals: the signal and the damage are one event, seen from two sides. Evolution can explain why we have an ethical signal, because it helped our ancestors survive and live together. But that explanation doesn't mention what the signal detects. If the signal is

there because it was useful, it remains an open question whether it also detects anything.

On this consciousness-first view, the ethical signal is like pain. The universal witness registers a wound inflicted on any part of it, inside or outside a boundary, and the signal is the inside view of that registering, just as pain is the inside view of damage to the body. The two signals differ only in scope, not in kind.

The development of the ethical sense

Just as hearing perceives certain wavelengths in the world, our ethical sense, on this view, detects something real. Moral perception isn't something manufactured by our cognition.

Pointing to the evolutionary history doesn't settle whether the sense detects anything. The human ear also evolved, but that doesn't mean sound isn't real. Evolution explains how a mechanism was built, it can't explain away what the instrument detects. Our moral sense has the same relationship to right and wrong that the ear has to sound: a specialised sense that's honed by a long evolutionary history to detect a particular phenomenon.

Our senses don't arrive complete, they develop through contact with the world. Our physical senses act as apertures in the boundary between self and world, illuminating the features significant for a self.

Our moral sense works the same way. When we see someone torturing an animal, we don't just manufacture an emotional reaction, we detect a wrong in the world. And just as an unused sense of hearing will atrophy, our moral sense atrophies without practice.

Ethical action requires continuous practice. Musicians practice not only to refine their technique, but to tune their ears to harmony and dissonance when playing with their fellow musicians. Ethics needs the same

practical discipline. We can lose our ethical sense if we never practice recognising the good.

We can also damage it if we suppress our feelings of dissonance by choosing what we know is wrong for selfish reasons like our own profit or comfort.

The silence at the edge

This is the extreme end of ethical dissonance. The misalignment is so extreme that even the ability to hear their own dissonance is lost. It's a kind of narcissism: a will so self-absorbed it takes itself as the measure of the good. That deafness isn't the absence of misalignment, but misalignment at its extreme.

The misalignment is structural, it isn't the feeling itself. If misalignment was the feeling of dissonance, those who feel none would be the most aligned of all, when in fact they're the least. The signal can go unheard, but the misalignment it reports is still there. We measure the good against the field, not against whether we happen to feel out of tune with it.

A will that's reflected so far inward that the signal falls silent is the furthest extreme from a life that's truly good. It's so out of tune it even loses the ability to hear the background scale and is deaf to the actual good.

We can't rely on the absence of inner friction to distinguish between the peace of alignment and the silence of ethical deafness. Silence is only the absence of the signal, and from the inside it can feel like peace. But inner quiet never proves alignment with the good; it's a signal that needs context. We have to ask whether the quiet depends on outside approval, or on outcomes going our way, and whether it harms others.

Reaching this far end of dissonance doesn't happen instantly; it takes repetition. Each time we hear the dissonance and override it, we

strengthen a habit. The habit isn't in the actions we take, it's in the suppression of the dissonance: silencing the discomfort of our ethical conscience.

This is different from weakness of will, where an uncontrolled urge overpowers our actual will. In that case, our will is overpowered by something outside our control. When we silence dissonance by telling ourselves an action isn't wrong, the habit slowly becomes self-deception.

Self-deception aims to remove the dissonance rather than struggle against an overpowering influence. In weakness of will we know the will is aimed incorrectly; in self-deception we silence that knowledge by convincing ourselves it's right. When that happens, the ethical sense atrophies.

When we struggle against a force overpowering our will, we retain our ethical sense because we're actively using it. When we silence the dissonance, we suppress our ethical sense, transforming the type of person we become. Then we're out of tune with the deepest level of our being. We're no longer a good person who fails to live up to a standard we know is right, but someone who removes the standard until they can no longer recognise it.

Where resonance leaves us

This is a picture of a dynamic and luminous reality. We're fully immersed in a responsive reality, not existing on the surface of a static world. If our experience is a signal pointing toward real discovery, then value isn't a mere preference we impose on the world.

We discover value by participating in the structure of reality. This removes our alienation from nature, because our values aren't human inventions in an uncaring world, they're existential truths awaiting dis-

covery through lived participation. And that world is structured so that we can find our way to flourishing.

We have both freedom and responsibility. Hearing the harmonising rhythm of the conductor over the din created by misaligned agents takes sustained and careful effort.

If reality isn't indifferent but responsive, with its own movement and direction, then we can't avoid the question of how to align ourselves with it. We can only distract ourselves, ignore it, or salve our discomfort with consumer goods and material comforts. Those surface comforts can palliate, but they can't cure.

Everything we've mapped so far reveals the shape of an absence. The signal points home, but home itself hasn't been described. Is alignment only the absence of the negative, the cessation of suffering? Or can we move beyond and describe the positive state of being?

Section 3 – When Love Overflows

Chapter 1 – Peace Is Not Enough

We search for peace as if it were the highest goal. We try to remove suffering and agitation, hoping to reach a state of satisfied equilibrium. But suppose we did achieve that state, would it be enough?

When our will moves in harmony with the universal good, the friction falls away. The resulting peace is the felt resonance of alignment with the good.

But even this peace is still self-focused. The friction is gone and there's no agitation, so the will rests in its own equilibrium. This is love that's stopped aiming for the wrong thing, but as yet it lacks its proper object. It's a peaceful background that provides us with the precondition we need to flourish. Alignment ploughs the ground and removes the weeds, but it's not yet planted with things that can grow. Peace is the ground, not the final destination. Consciousness doesn't rest there.

Peace is a state where the negative has been removed. It's the absence of friction but not yet the presence of anything in particular. An athlete who has recovered from injury has removed the negative, but they have yet to play their sport.

Since our will is dynamic, always moving, the stillness that comes from removal of agitation can't be its resting point. A will with nothing left to correct doesn't become static, it continues moving in a positive direction toward the good.

Fulfilment is the deepening movement of consciousness beyond equilibrium. Equilibrium produces stability, but fulfilment intensifies and makes consciousness richer. Because intensification requires movement, it involves change.

We might think that change implies a lack, and so equilibrium is the ultimate state. But it's only corrective movement that implies a lack. Movement can also arise from fulfilment and the overflow of abundance. If our cup is full, any movement causes an overflow. So the movement of fulfilment doesn't arise from a lack; it's the natural expression of plenitude. This is movement beyond equilibrium, taking us past the correction of a negative state into an ever-deepening positive state of joy.

A musician who creates once they have mastered their craft isn't moving from any lack, but expressing their perfection. Their abundance naturally flows outward. Their melody contains equilibrium within it; it has moments of silence, structure and rhythm. But it's also inherently relational and each note resonates with the others rather than merely following in sequence. Without that resonance, it's mere sound rather than a harmonious melody.

Consciousness that has freed itself from the revolving prison of self-centred attachment doesn't become still, it seeks an object. Like a melody, the will comes alive in relation.

Our will seeks the infinite

We've seen that the field is responsive and not indifferent to us, but responsive in what way?

Our will always aims toward the good, but not for a finite and limited good; it aims for something complete. Fulfilment overflows, and an overflow must move toward an object. If fulfilment implies a relational overflow, what kind of object does consciousness seek?

The answer becomes clearer if we consider the direction of our will. When we direct our attention toward the finite, the infinite is occluded from our view. But our real desire is for the infinite. Our will always seeks the whole. Think of the moment we achieve what we aimed for:

the job promotion, money or fame. The yearning is quiet for a while but it's still there underneath, undissolved by the thing meant to satisfy it.

We seek knowledge, but our search is for complete knowledge, the theory of everything that explains all other things. When we pursue joy, we don't want a momentary experience but a lasting and complete state of being. By our nature, we're ceaselessly drawn toward the ultimate good.

So in all ways we seek the infinite, and looking for it in finite and limited things leaves us disappointed. A finite object cannot satisfy an infinite orientation of will.

This infinite orientation of the will is a movement toward the highest good. It's a continuous good we participate in, not an end goal to be reached. Participation in a dynamic and living reality isn't passive. The movement of the will can't deepen unless it receives a response and so participation opens into relationship.

Love requires a person

Since participation requires relation, what could receive that overflow?

We already distinguish between objects and subjects in how we treat them. If we wake up early and make a cup of coffee, we don't worry about the inconvenience to the kettle. But we try not to disturb other people. We don't treat people as objects, we acknowledge their will and desires. We consider the effect our actions have on them, and then adapt our behaviour. We don't leave our dirty dishes in the sink if we know it annoys our roommates.

Attachment toward matter is self-referential, because we engage with matter to please ourselves. Material objects can't be pleased or reciprocate with us; there's no will there to respond. We can direct our will toward other people and a real response is possible. But it's only partial,

because they're finite, changeable and impermanent. Even the deepest human love is limited by what a finite person has to give and how long they're here to give it.

Attachment is a form of love. The problem isn't that we love or that we're attached, it's that we love things that can't reciprocate in the way we need them to for lasting joy. Think of trying to love someone who doesn't or can't reciprocate. It's love, but it's tinged with grief: a limited love that can't find its fulfilment because the direction is one way. Love requires response and return to fulfil us.

We can't fully love humanity in the abstract, or the highest good as a principle. We can admire it in a detached way, but we can't find joy unless the object of our love can reciprocate. An impartial object can produce alignment, but not love. For consciousness to deepen and intensify there must be overflow, and the will must be directed toward something that can respond. It's this responsive relation of mutual wills that can create intensification.

In the universal will we find a response that removes agitation. That response isn't yet a reciprocation, because what's being related to isn't approached as something that can respond. The highest good can't be grasped and held like an object, it can only be participated in. Love is the most complete form of that participation. The will gives itself freely to what it recognises as good and the object of its love responds. Love isn't one good among others; it's the mode in which consciousness fully participates in the good itself.

A musician playing alone expresses the overflow of their perfection, but there's no exchange. When musicians play together the melody only completes itself once the other answers it. There's a call and response and the notes are enhanced by the response of the other.

Each is expressing their own creative flow, but the reciprocation creates something neither could produce alone. An answer that changes what comes next is the difference between expression and relationship. This is why nothing impersonal can receive it. A room can receive a melody, but only another musician can answer one.

The fullest and most dynamic expression of consciousness is a love that overflows. Nothing impersonal can receive that overflow, it must have a heart that can be moved by it. Love requires a presence that can receive and reciprocate.

If the ultimate ground of consciousness was impersonal, personality would be an afterthought, something the foundation produces rather than something built into it, and love couldn't be ultimate. But love isn't an afterthought, it's the deepest longing of the soul. Like hunger, it's a signal that points to something real. The deepest reality must be a person, and only the infinite can offer a personal and individual response.

What it means to say the Absolute is personal

When we say the Absolute is a person, we shouldn't think of a finite ego that's a larger or more powerful version of ourselves. The Absolute as one person among many would make it one item within reality, and the Absolute isn't a being like you or me. It's the ground on which all things stand and the necessary foundation of all that exists.

Nor does it mean an impersonal force, law or energy. A person in the fullest sense is a centre of knowledge, will, and love. The Absolute has these features not as psychological traits, but as the ground from which all finite expressions derive.

Something personal and capable of reciprocating isn't something that you're absorbed into, it's someone you relate to. The goal of relationship

isn't to merge into the Absolute. This means the individual subject isn't an obstacle or an illusion, but a necessary participant.

Relation is part of what consciousness is, not an accident. A will needs an object; love needs someone to receive it and participation needs something to participate in. The Absolute isn't consciousness that lacks something. Whatever is intrinsic to consciousness is also intrinsic to the Absolute because the Absolute is the fullness of consciousness.

Relation is part of the Absolute as well. An ultimate state that dissolves relation or individuality doesn't fulfil consciousness. It negates it. An object can be described from the outside, but a person must be addressed.

Once consciousness at its fullest can receive love rather than just be accurately described, the orientation has changed. There's no way to speak of a person without speaking to him. There was never a question of whether we relate to him, our only choice is the nature of that relationship.

Why the Absolute is hidden

The Absolute is the source of everything in existence. Everything exists relative to the Absolute, which means all things stand in some kind of relationship to him. Relationship to the Absolute isn't one feature of existence among others but the condition of existence itself.

Relationship is unavoidable and so we must already be in some kind of connection, whether we're aware of it or not. Our only choice is what form the relationship takes and how we relate. The Absolute is personal, but since we have free will, we choose how to relate to him.

The nature of that choice matters, because the relationship we're capable of isn't merely functional, it's personal. And that means we're capable of love. For love to be reciprocated it must be between persons.

Love must be freely given, love coerced is no longer love, but something else entirely.

The Absolute isn't hoping for a response from us, there's already some kind of response. His love toward us is already flowing, constant and unconditional. His capacity to give it isn't changing, our reception of that love is the variable. His love meets us where we are.

Think of a parent who calls their child, remembers birthdays, helps when needed but their adult child is absorbed in their own life. They only call when they need something and don't pay attention to the parent or reciprocate that love. The parent's love hasn't changed, it's not in question. What's missing is the reciprocation. The child can engage as little or as much as they choose, and that determines the substance of the relationship.

Freedom must include the possibility of refusal or withholding a response. That possibility of refusal isn't only a feature of human love, it means the nature of the Absolute must include room for a refusal to reciprocate. This freedom isn't a limitation of the Absolute. It's an expression of his nature as love that has consequences for understanding our situation.

A personal relationship is always responsive. The Absolute responds to us according to how each individual chooses to approach him; he reciprocates on our terms. When there is refusal and withholding of a response, the relationship with the Absolute doesn't disappear. It becomes distant.

If we ignore or deny him, he respects our choice and remains hidden. The silence of the cosmos isn't the absence of the Absolute but a restraint of his presence. Divine hiddenness isn't evidence of the non-existence of the Absolute; it's evidence of non-coercive love.

Physical reality is the external face of a deeper conscious reality, it's not something separate. It's the same reality seen in its purely external features. Which means that any relational fact has to display as a structural, spatial fact at the physical level, because it's one reality being described from two vantage points.

The vast reaches of space and the unimaginable distances of the universe are the concrete form of our relationship to the Absolute: the vastness of space expresses the experiential distance of our relationship and the cosmic silence is our relational stance. This is the hiddenness of the Absolute.

It's as distant a relationship as it is possible to have. We don't even know if he exists, and we have no reliable information about him.

These are the conditions of our existence in this world, and they're the outward form of our orientation toward the Absolute. This orientation doesn't require reflective awareness. Even beings who can't consciously reflect on the Absolute still participate in a relational orientation, because the structure of consciousness expresses a direction of will. Our orientation mostly operates beneath conscious awareness, the way a habit does.

This orientation isn't merely an abstract metaphysical stance, it affects the felt quality of our experience. Our experience depends on the object it's directed toward and its capacity for response. Occlusion is the limiting form of relationship. It's something like when we say "he's dead to me". Not that he is dead, but our relational orientation excludes him.

If this is the most distant relationship possible, and we already exist in that state, what would it mean to move closer to the Absolute?

Chapter 2 – Shades of Intimacy

We can think of the various relationships to the Absolute with a familiar example. A monarch is one person who has many different relationships. His citizens relate to him in an impartial way, they don't know him by name or have access to his private life. Their interactions are indirect and only concerned with the functioning of the public environment.

Moving closer to the king we have his public servants. They interact with a person but in a formal relationship. They may address him by his title, Your Majesty, rather than his name. But they have some knowledge of his personal preferences, how he likes to organise his day, and they accommodate that in their service.

Closer still are his friends. Now there is equality between persons. You'd call him by his first name, and you may give him an affectionate nickname and tease him. You'd know his personal likes and dislikes.

Once we reach personal relationships, the king's position of power has receded into the background. His power remains intact, but it's inactive and ignored because its presence would impede the friendship. In personal relationships there must be an equality between persons.

As we move even closer, we come to the king's family. This is a more intimate depth of relationship. Parents serve their child. You'd pander to him and try to please him. But you may also discipline and advise him. Now the power of the king has not only been eclipsed, it's been reversed. The parents protect him as if he was helpless. Even closer than this is a spouse. You know him in an even more intimate way, and he willingly reveals his mind and heart to you.

These modes of intimacy aren't descriptions of emotions. They're degrees of self-disclosure and surrender of our will to the beloved's will.

Nor is this a relativism in which any relationship with the Absolute is equal and merely a matter of opinion. These stages of relationship don't represent psychological states, they describe the structure of reality. Moving closer means moving toward what is most fundamental, as physics moves from surface mechanics to deeper field structures, not merely warmer in feeling.

There is no greater unity that retains difference and respects the sovereignty of each individual. This is oneness within relationship. The beloved is ours, as dear, or more dear to us, than our own self. And we belong to our beloved in the same way.

We're willing to give our whole self and sacrifice our own pleasure for the well-being of our beloved. And this is a dynamic state. As we please the beloved, this sparks an impetus in them to please us, and this movement continues in a self-perpetuating and leapfrogging embrace. We become one. The movement of consciousness and will becomes completely entwined and moves in an increasingly fulfilling direction.

Will is the inherent movement of consciousness and is dynamic in nature. Love then, is the ultimate form of oneness: not a static oneness, but a mutual relational oneness that is infinitely deep, endlessly dynamic, and by its nature overflows to inundate everything in its path.

Love moves the way light moves.

Not a single beam pushing in one direction, but a self-sustaining exchange where each pulse attracts and calls forth a response. Nothing holds the exchange together but the exchange itself. Love itself is the generative principle. Love is self-sustaining and reveals the deepest heart of the personal reality.

That's what it means to participate in the highest good. It's not something we observe from a distance, or merely align with. Relationship is participation, it's reciprocal by nature. Love is the highest mode of that

participation because in love each will freely offers itself to the other and the good is shared and amplified in a dynamic and reciprocal exchange.

Love is the supreme controlling principle of all reality. Even the all-powerful Absolute bows down to love and surrenders control to its natural flow. Power isn't the ruling principle. Love is.

Love then, is the deepest expression of the nature of the Absolute. It's the quintessence of consciousness and only finds its complete expression in the infinite and absolute consciousness. For it's only in the infinite that we can find complete knowledge, complete existence, and complete and everlasting joy.

Reason can show us the Absolute must be a person and capable of love. But reason can't place us inside the relationship it describes. Love isn't an intellectual endeavour, it's an orientation of the will. What does it mean to stand at the threshold reason has reached but cannot cross?

Section 4 – Orientation

Chapter 1 – A Religion of One

The picture of reality this book has built is now complete. It started from where we're standing and concluded with love as the controlling principle of all reality. But a picture of reality is something you live within, not something you observe from afar. The intellect has carried us this far. Now we have to consider what our theoretical structure means in practice and the demands it makes for how we should live.

We don't float above the world observing it. To live is to be entangled. Every action moves something and the words we use can change outcomes. Everyone lives from within an orienting framework. Our only choice is whether it's articulated explicitly or functions without being examined. If everyone is already oriented and living within a framework, what does that framework consist of?

A framework isn't just a list of beliefs. It's the underlying structure that organises belief, value and action into a coherent self, and this is what I'll call our worldview. It's what it means for you to be the same person over time: your values are consistent across situations and your actions are expressions of those values rather than scattered reactions. It's not only a map of what's real; it's the structure of our agency in the world and tells us what matters most to us.

What our actions reveal

Most of us have an acceptable-sounding answer to what matters most to us. But the truth of that answer is revealed in our actions. It's found in what we protect when faced with difficult choices and what we sacrifice for more important things. That repeated pattern of actions is our real answer, and it's not always the same as our theoretical one.

We often say we'd do something in theory, but that's a judgement made without knowing the circumstances and lived context of the decision.

The myriad of consequences that surround our choice become visible when we must act.

We may theorise that if we're diagnosed with a terminal illness we wouldn't accept the difficulties of treatment in exchange for small gains in length of life. But if we're actually experiencing that situation, we encounter the sadness of leaving our loved ones and a fear of our own death. These are real and powerful influences on our decision that aren't known in theory, so we don't take them into account when we make our judgement from a detached stance.

What ultimately matters most to us may not be clear until the moment we must act. We can keep multiple options open in theory, but when we're forced to act, our ranking becomes operative. When you have to decide whether to tell someone a truth that would hurt them, you must choose between honesty and kindness. The choice forces your ranking to become explicit.

If orientation is lived prior to belief, then what matters isn't what we claim to value, but the structure of the life we actually inhabit. Beliefs and values are how we try to make sense of our experiences and their articulation comes after our orientation to the world. Everyone has a highest good, but not everyone has looked closely enough to know what it is.

Orientation not belief

We've seen that metaphysics is unavoidable. There's no neutral stance because everyone already lives within a metaphysical framework. Religion isn't simply holding metaphysical beliefs, and it's not distinguished from ordinary life by a set of facts about the world. It's what those beliefs look like when that worldview is named and its ideals are deliberately lived.

The modern idea of religion is that it consists of a collection of beliefs about God, the soul and the afterlife. But reducing religion to a set of propositions assumes a neutral stance from which we can avoid commitment, the same assumption we've already seen fail for metaphysics. It's a theoretical abstraction, not something anyone can live. It flattens religion into an interesting fact you'd find in a dusty old textbook.

Religion is the enactment of a picture of reality and what it looks like to live that truth. That means religion can't be merely affirming theoretical claims. It's concerned with making our orientation to life explicit and then deliberately pursuing what we take to be valuable.

When the Apostles' Creed opens with "I believe," the Latin is *credo*, a word traditionally understood to mean "I give my heart to." That isn't a statement that we've assessed the evidence and judged the propositions credible. It's a commitment to orient our lives in that direction. Religion isn't first a theory that we can accept or reject. Our religion is a lived orientation toward what matters most to us.

We already inhabit a world structured by values and priorities, and it's only from within that space that we can form beliefs about what it all means and how we should live. Our worldview is both our mode of access to the world and the structure of agency itself. Religion as belief leaves a gap between theory and life, because belief can be held without consequence. Orientation doesn't allow that loophole. Religion in this sense requires transformation, not mere intellectual assent to doctrine.

Rejecting belief in God or religious doctrines doesn't mean we can escape a worldview. All positions operate with some kind of hierarchy of goods, even those that take themselves to be neutral, non-religious or just following evidence. The difference isn't between people who have a worldview and people who don't. It's between those who have examined and articulated their worldview and those who inherit one without questioning it.

Chapter 2 – Faith Is Fidelity

Our worldview is necessarily individual, because no one else can occupy our standpoint or make our choices. That doesn't mean it's created in isolation. We inherit our beliefs and values from existing religions, philosophies and our culture. Regardless of those sources, we have to live out our worldview for it to be real.

We rely on second-hand knowledge for many things in our lives: our doctor for knowledge about our physical health, our accountant for our financial health. But when it comes to a worldview, second-hand knowledge won't do. Our choices of how to live are not only personal, they define who we are as a person. What we value and the ideals we pursue must be authentic, arising spontaneously from our inner nature. And the true expression of our nature is shown in the way we act.

Fidelity to our ideals

If religion is orientation toward a highest good rather than assent to a set of beliefs, then faith isn't belief without evidence. Faith is fidelity to our ideals. Fidelity is an old-fashioned word. It's not flashy or exciting enough for marketing copy. It's not impressive in any given moment, from the outside it looks rather dull. The truth of our fidelity is found in the small but consistent actions that show we are true to our ideal.

When we expect our faith to overcome intellectual doubt, we've reverted to thinking of faith as belief in facts. When we continue despite our doubts, that's faith as fidelity. Faith doesn't defy or deny the intellect. It recognises its limits and steps out into territory the intellect can't penetrate. Fidelity isn't holding on in spite of not knowing, it's the shape a life takes when it's lived honestly at the edge of what can be known.

When we look back on a marriage that lasts through the long decades of a life, we find the satisfaction and the love were in the commitment.

At first we have only the promise, a verbal and legal contract. But fidelity goes beyond the legal contract and fulfils the substance of it. Our actions are the substance of a marriage.

The commitment isn't an intellectual acceptance of a theoretical truth. Faith is the theory brought to life. It's an act of will, not a belief.

Faith is orientation without guarantees, and on that basis, we must step out alone in untravelled territory. Doubt and hesitation can't help us, they'll paralyse us on the threshold. You can't know the truth of faith by affirming it in theory, by preaching its glories to others, or by casting doubt on its virtue from the sidelines. You must live it and experience it first-hand.

Grammar, not vocabulary

This conception of religion leaves room for many vocabularies. The structure gives the grammar, not the vocabulary. It describes how a relationship with the highest good is structured, what it must include and how its parts relate to each other. The vocabulary builds the words on that structure: it names how you understand the highest good and the practices you undertake to reach toward those ideals. The words are unique to each individual.

But unique doesn't mean arbitrary. This is like a plant that can only flourish when it's in harmony with its environment. Each individual has unique characteristics which must be aligned with its environment, and those conditions are independent of the individual's preferences; they're an objective standard.

Two different plants growing side by side may not flourish under identical conditions. That isn't relativism; flourishing occurs when the nature of each individual organism is brought into relation with an objective structure, its environment. Only when the individual is aligned with the external conditions can a harmonious resonance be achieved.

Because each individual is unique, we can't outsource this alignment. We have to discover it through our own participation, no society or tradition can do that for us. Sometimes that means going against prevailing opinion, because harmony is determined by alignment with the structure of reality itself, not by alignment with the group consensus.

Value isn't created by participants but discovered through alignment with a prior structure. It's real and out there to be discovered, but only you can find your particular path to it.

Having an individual vocabulary doesn't mean there's no truth and all religion reduces to personal opinion or preference. The ultimate nature of reality is independent of our beliefs about it, and that independence is what stops the personal and individual nature of religion from collapsing into a relativism. Our worldview names the alignment of our will and describes what we aim toward as valuable.

One reality, many levels of realisation

Our freedom lies in our independent choice of the relation we adopt toward the Absolute, how we stand to face it and how we interact with it. No one can occupy our standpoint, adopt our orientation or make our choices. That's what our freedom consists of. But the deepest nature of the Absolute isn't ours to choose. It exists independently of what we know about it or how we feel about it. Reality stands in the absolute position. We can only choose how we stand in relation to it.

These different choices are also different understandings of what reality is like. They're different levels of realisation. Reality itself doesn't have levels; our knowledge of reality does. Think back to the king, someone who doesn't believe the king exists, or a citizen only obeying the king's impersonal decrees isn't living in a different reality. There's only one king, and each person has a partial understanding of him. Their under-

standing doesn't include his personal features, only the enactment of his power.

Our knowledge of the king deepens through our relationship to him, and how much of him we know and experience in our lives. Knowing a person is a type of knowledge that can only be discovered by interaction. You don't need to know everything about a person to start a relationship, your knowledge can only deepen once you begin moving toward them.

Knowing the king personally means adapting our will to align with his. We can follow the laws he sets, but when we voluntarily align our will with his, it creates a deeper relationship of friendship and love. It becomes our will to please him.

When it comes to the plurality of worldviews, the same principle applies. The Absolute is known in levels of realisation, and these levels represent our knowledge of the highest good. Each of us understands the highest good at varying levels of resolution. If we're viewing a mountain from a distance, we see it in lower resolution, it appears as a hazy blob on the horizon, but as we move closer we see more detail.

Your worldview isn't something you have or don't have. It's not a property you possess; it's the state of your consciousness. Knowledge is a state of consciousness, so there isn't some other thing beyond consciousness called knowledge. When one person speaks from inside their own orientation and describes the deepest level of reality, they aren't wrong; they're accurately describing what they see. That's what depth sounds like, spoken from inside it, rather than described from nowhere.

We can of course be wrong about the ultimate nature of reality, but our worldview isn't merely a theoretical stance, a ghost's-eye view from nowhere. Our judgements about the ultimate nature of reality deter-

mine our stance toward the world and how we respond to it, but our interactions also determine our view of reality's true nature.

A worldview that can change

Our worldview is a dynamic structure: we continuously update it with new discoveries, both theoretical and practical. We're not committed to a rigid identity label and so not forced to adapt our experience to fit the theory. We're not restricted to an eternal set of propositions or one method of discovery. We're free to trust our own judgement and adapt our worldview accordingly.

If we find an organised religion that has doctrines we can't believe, but being a part of the community of believers helps us be more honest, more compassionate and loving people, there's no contradiction in our participating. If we find that we're more motivated outside any organised community we're free to walk alone. If we find wisdom in another tradition we can incorporate it into our own set of values.

This is a structure that can function in our modern culture. It leaves room for the freedom of individual conscience while retaining debate and a cooperative search for knowledge. It avoids tribalism since we're all a religion of one. As such we're unlikely to be confident that our beliefs are absolute truth writ in stone. At the same time, we know that only we can decide where to place our next step, and we can only do that from where we stand now.

Our worldview isn't a purely intellectual structure, so its truth can't be judged on only one axis: it encompasses both theory and practice. On the theoretical axis, we judge its truth by its correspondence with reality. This is the only axis that religion as belief can accommodate. But on this model of religion there's also a practical axis, and it must be judged by how closely we enact our metaphysical theory. If we claim to value

honesty, or think that treating others with love and respect is a high priority, our actions reveal how true we are to those ideals.

Three levels of alignment

A worldview aims at a deeper level than ethics, because good isn't only the duty we owe to others to produce the universal good. It also means the duty we owe ourselves for how we live. It aims at a worthwhile life in all aspects. The same alignment we've seen with ethics must happen at this deeper level.

On the purely physical level, the movement of reality is toward survival, or mere existence. Our feelings of pleasure and pain are signals of how well our movement is aligned with the movement of the field and negative feelings like pain signal misalignment and tell us our survival is threatened.

On the ethical level, the movement of the field is that of an impartial witness aimed toward the universal good. Our mood is the signal of whether the movement of our will is aligned with the movement and a negative mood signals dissonance between our will and the field's.

Our worldview is aimed at the deeper existential level and tells us whether our life as a whole is good and worthwhile. This existential level isn't a category distinct from the first two; it's a progression of description that becomes more complete, and it's what the first two levels rest on. The existential level is metaphysics, the question of what exists.

Metaphysics has always aimed at these questions by asking what exists and what that means for creating a worthwhile life. The creation myths of human cultures aren't primitive attempts to explain the mechanics of how the physical world evolved; they're narratives telling us who we are, why we exist and what that means for how we should live.

Our modern culture has separated these questions, as if reality could be studied in isolation from what it means for how to live. But this distinction is artificial, and it assumes naturalism is true: that the purpose of your life isn't a fact each individual can discover, but something we impose on a purposeless world.

This existential level includes both survival and mood but it's a holistic measure of our existence and could be called the flavour of our life. Like the first two levels, the flavour of our life is a gauge and a motivation. It tells us whether we're aligned with the movement of reality at its deepest or most complete level, and it pushes us in a particular direction: toward a fulfilling and worthwhile existence.

There are stages to achieving the flavour of a worthwhile life. First there must be survival: biological health, or alignment with physical conditions. Then there must be the ethical life. A tyrant isn't living a good life even if he thinks he is. And on the existential level, alignment means becoming what we truly are, in the sense of the most complete understanding. This alignment isn't a future static state; it's the ongoing, dynamic discovery of our truest self, and it deepens with the level of our participation.

Just as pain and mood are accurate signals that we're in a state of dissonance, the overall flavour of our life is also an accurate signal. On a consciousness-first worldview, that signal points toward something real. This is *hiraeth*, not a psychological imbalance to be treated or mollified, but an accurate perception that the deepest longings of our hearts are attainable. On a naturalist picture, it's hard to see how the longing could point toward something in the world that can satisfy it. It can only be a by-product of a mind formed by evolution, in a world that can give us nothing more than survival.

And if we assume the signal points toward nothing and is only an evolutionary by-product, we'll never commit to a life that could prove it

true by acting in fidelity to those ideals. If we rule out the possibility in advance because of our commitment to a pre-existing theory, then nothing can prove it true or false. Just as science is accepted as a co-operative attempt to make discoveries, religion is the same kind of endeavour.

This is why the feeling of *hiraeth* can't be silenced: it's the experiential signal of how far our life is misaligned with who and what we truly are.

Chapter 3 – Orientation Enacted

Moving to a consciousness-first view takes a more substantial inversion than we realise. Reading about different theories and judging the logic doesn't make the inversion; we're still in a detached position outside the stance.

Suppose someone completes all the intellectual steps: they follow the argument, judge it true and accept it as the better model to structure their life. They still haven't accepted it on its own terms and made the inversion its truth requires. For that it must be lived.

So what does the inversion entail?

In the simplest analysis, inhabiting our worldview is just the actions we take in living, from the momentous to the mundane. It's found in our choices of what we consume and what we contribute back into the world. Practice in this sense isn't restricted to saying prayers or chanting mantras. Religious practices include those everyday details but they're aimed at the deeper level of resonance our whole existence is oriented toward.

In a consciousness-first view the world isn't indifferent and insentient. It can and does answer back to our deepest longings. The experiences that point toward something beyond the mundane world aren't evolutionary coping mechanisms for a harsh world. They're signals that what we long for is actually real.

The question is: how do we align ourselves with these deepest levels of reality? If we succeed, what will we have accomplished? It's tempting to think that all we're aiming for is a peaceful state of mind, a way to be happier and more contented for the duration of our temporary sojourn in this world. But the deeper sense of what we're achieving is discovering who we really are, our true self. Reality is inherently relational,

so just as our vision of reality gives us access to deeper levels of the absolute, it simultaneously gives us access to deeper levels of our own self.

If reality is participatory, known only in relationship, then our true self can mean many things. Each is true at its own level, but some levels are more complete than others. A true self is true for one person at one stage of their development. In this context, true means how fully we live what we judge to be reality's highest good. That can be true right now, from where we stand, without being the final or eternal truth.

Sacred space as argument

To see how a worldview is lived, think about the flavour of religious experience. You walk into a grand cathedral. Everything about the space is designed to produce an experience appropriate to the metaphysics. Its walls and roof tower over you, humbling you to an accurate idea of your place within the cosmos and before the power of God. Stained glass windows illuminate images of the world beyond. The altar stands elevated at the front, the focus of your attention. The architecture itself orients you toward its ideal of the highest good.

The same thing happens if you enter a Zen temple. You're immersed in simplicity. There are only mats on the floor and no ornate decoration. The mood is quiet and meditative, facilitating an inward journey of discovery, the emptiness of the room a mirror of the inner emptiness you're seeking.

In a mosque you will experience the utter transcendence of Allah. You'll see no images of God; instead the walls are decorated with geometric patterns, repeating and infinitely extended rather than fixed in one representation. You face toward the mihrab, a niche in the wall marking the direction of Mecca, your eye drawn to an absence rather than an image. You stand shoulder to shoulder with the other worshippers, no distinction or rank visible. No matter where you are on Earth, all Mus-

lims face toward Mecca in prayer, every worshipper oriented toward the same fixed point.

In a Hindu temple you'll find the deity on the altar, attended with vibrant offerings throughout the day. The arti ceremony captures all the senses with sounds, smell and sights that evoke the appropriate mood of worship for the chosen deity. Standing before the deity is darshana, a seeing. Not only are you seeing God directly, he's also seeing you.

In each case the physical structure is designed to produce the experience appropriate to the particular understanding of the ultimate nature of reality. It makes no argument in words; its argument is crafted from bricks and silence. But it immerses you in its metaphysical truths, and you know what it is like to inhabit them. It directly reveals the highest good the structure embodies and how each person should approach it, stand before it, and orient themselves toward it.

Everyone's life has some experiential flavour: the lived resonance of our chosen orientation. Religious architecture attempts to evoke that flavour and bring it under deliberate cultivation, but the same principle applies to any worldview.

Naturalism has its own unique flavour. It isn't cultivated as a reciprocal relationship with reality, but one that's manufactured by the individual and placed on a world taken to be indifferent. Its characteristic buildings are the laboratory, the hospital and the technology campus. They're aimed at a function rather than an experience. The function aims at this life: understanding it, extending it or making it more comfortable, since it's taken to be the only life we have. It doesn't orient you toward a responsive world.

Practice as embodiment

The architecture we inhabit has a flavour, but we all still have to act within it. The practices we undertake don't work because they give us

intellectual knowledge, or because they evoke a particular feeling. Neither of those are the goal. Repetition and bodily participation are the vehicle that carries and reinforces an inner orientation. An orientation can exist silently or its theoretical structure can be written down. But it doesn't become real unless it's enacted and lived.

Singing hymns, performing *salat* or chanting *japa* are practices that require the participation of the whole person. They demand our attention, breath, voice and physical presence, none of which are needed to hold a silent belief. You can't perform a practice passively the way you can merely vibrate the sound, "I believe."

Someone can enter the place of worship and enact the outer form according to convention, but without the inner faith aligning with the form, it's not authentic. It remains superficial and hasn't reached their actual state of being. Conversely, we can hold an inner conviction but never express it in our lives; the faith is existentially inert.

We can say we value honesty, but it's only true if we're honest when no one will know and the only benefit is the act of honesty itself. When inner and outer align, then it's true faith: fidelity to what we hold sacred and fully embodied in our lives.

We choose where to align our heart and what tradition speaks to us. Then we adopt its methods and teachings, because they give us guidance from others who share our goal and have found what works to achieve it. This book is no exception. It's written from inside a standpoint.

The consciousness-first structure this book has described advises you to follow your own faith and confirm that with your own experience. But the structure is also a description of one particular tradition, the Gaudiya tradition. And to leave out their credo, what they name as the

highest good and the innermost heart of reality, would leave the capstone off this structure.

The postlude is the music played after the completion of a church service. It serves as a musical sending-off; it transports the divine, along with the participants, back to their secular life.

Postlude

My Credo – Where I Lay My Heart

The grammar is built. Now I must add my own words and sing my own song.

May my prayer travel outward, wide and clear, like the light of the sun following its path. Let it ring true, an authentic expression of my faith.

The words in this world are names frozen in place, disconnected from their source. In the Absolute ground nothing is disconnected and vibrating the sound of the word 'water' quenches your thirst.

The name of the Absolute is connected to who it names and vibrating its sound summons the person.

O Lord, you are known by many names, each embodies your different traits. You hear the call of your name and reciprocate. You appear in whatever form honours our chosen relationship.

The name I call expresses my faith, what is in my heart. To call you God names only your outer role, the supreme power, the all-powerful creator and sustainer of all. Such is your majesty and glory and all must stand in awe before it.

But my heart isn't satisfied by superior prowess. Power enforces; we have no choice but to acknowledge and surrender to it. That isn't true worship. Power cannot capture the heart. Worship is chosen willingly. My heart is drawn to your heart, not your power.

Your love for us is eternal, already in place. It has always been. It was in place before the question was asked, before the yearning was felt. It will never be withdrawn. Your love for us stands with a fidelity that never wavers and cannot die.

You reside in that love. I am so unfortunate that I reside in its lack. I know only the shape of its absence, what it isn't, not what it is. I feel its shadow cast over me, but I cannot feel its substance. When will the day

come that I will turn and face that love? When will I willingly surrender my heart to you as you have done for me since time immemorial.

I don't ask for anything to enhance my knowledge, wealth or fame. I want to know your faith. What is your credo? Where do you place your own heart? What is it that you, the Lord of all the worlds, freely choose? For what, have you left aside your unlimited power and majesty as if it was trifling and unimportant? Where do you bow your divine head and to what do you dedicate yourself to serve above all else?

I find the fullest expression of your credo in the song of Sri Chaitanya.

So I call to Hare, the one who steals the heart. To Krishna, the all-attractive one and to Rama, the source of all joy.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare.

Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

