

What is Enlightenment?

By

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ABSTRACT

Enlightenment is a condition completely unknown to modern science. It covers the psychology of the supra-normal or trans-personal, a realm, which has been completely overlooked by modern psychology. Religions define Enlightenment as the loss of 'ego' or the loss of the delusion of the 'me.' The 'ego' of philosophy is different from the ego of psychology. The average person believes in and identifies with a separate ego or 'me' residing in the body. This is a delusion. The delusion consists not in the me itself but in believing the me to be real, to be an entity by itself, and in identifying with it. This belief gives rise to me-based conditioning, which creates a picture of the 'what should be' based on ego-based desires. When such expectations and demands resulting from this conditioning are not satisfied, there is me-based or psychological suffering, which is avoidable. Secondly, with the belief in the 'me,' the rest of the world is automatically seen as the 'other.' This leads to conflict. This is the me-centred or self-centred living of the average man or woman, with its ego-based suffering resulting from non-fulfilment of ego-based desires.

When a rare person evolves in psychological maturity to the point where he sees through the me-delusion, he is said to be Enlightened. Enlightenment is a change of perspective from the limited viewpoint of a me to a view of life in its totality. Enlightenment completely transforms the entire outlook of the individual, and initiates a process of reversal of the me-based conditioning. This process of deconditioning is the process of Liberation. Enlightenment and Liberation are not magical processes and do not give a person supernatural powers. Nor do they adversely affect a person's ability to live his daily life or pursue his profession. On the contrary, life becomes simpler and work more efficient. The end-point of this process of deconditioning is a state completely free of me-based suffering, a state wherein no one is seen as 'other,' a state of absolute, causeless compassion. This is the state of Final Liberation, called *jivanmukti* or *pari-nirvana*.

Introduction

Enlightenment and Liberation (or Salvation and the Kingdom of Heaven) are conditions well known to religion, but modern science pretends complete ignorance of them. Religion and spirituality are generally considered as complete outsiders by modern science. Certainly, one of the reasons why the conditions of Enlightenment and Liberation get such short shrift from modern science is because they are thought to refer to nebulous, mythical after-death states. In fact, that is often the belief amongst the more superficial adherents of most religions themselves.

Religions are concerned with Salvation, and “Salvation is ordinarily conceived as being attainable only after death” (2). But there is a deeper real meaning which, though it may escape the average ritualistic practitioner of religion, must concern the serious student of philosophy, spirituality and mysticism: William Stoddart, author of *Sufism* (the mystic tradition in Islam), writes “the difference between spirituality (or mysticism) and religion in the ordinary sense, is that spirituality envisages as its main end the attaining of sanctity even in this life, here and now” (2). Hinduism, too, talks of ‘*jivanmukti*’ which means “Liberation during life.” And Christian mystic Meister Eckhart described his experiences as the ‘Now-moment’ or the ‘Eternal Now’ (and not as the “Eternal Hereafter”). So it is clear that the religions are really talking of some state in this life, some state which involves the end of (psychological) suffering. Both the Buddha and the modern philosopher J.Krishnamurti have been much more explicit about this, and were quite clear that they were not talking of after-death states, but rather of accessible, practical states in this very life and what’s more, compatible with ordinary daily living. Even Freud recognised what he called the “oceanic” experience but misinterpreted it (15).

Enlightenment and Liberation

(Enlightenment: Awakening, realisation, self-realisation, *jnana*, *satori*, Salvation.

Liberation: *moksha*, *mukti*, *nirvana*, *Brahman-Nirvana*, the Kingdom of Heaven)

Religions all over the world, from both the East and the West are familiar with the conditions of Enlightenment and Liberation. So unanimous are they on this point that Aldous Huxley has called this the Perennial Philosophy (after Leibniz) (20, 21). Christianity has the concepts of Salvation and the Kingdom of Heaven, and there has been no dearth of mystics in the West, St.Augustine and Meister Eckhart to name just two. The Eastern religions talk most explicitly about Enlightenment and Liberation, and insist that these two conditions are the most supreme goal of human life.

Thus the ancient religions are a treasure house of psycho-spiritual thought, seeking the deepest meaning of life. Their profound spiritual ideas and thought really form an in depth basic research in human psychology. There is no doubt that such ideas can enrich modern science. Famous psychological theorist Ken Wilber (3, 4) has pointed out, that whereas modern psychology deals primarily with the normal and abnormal, the psychology of spirituality covers the large and important blind spot in modern psychology – the further psychological evolution of man beyond the normal, to the supra-normal.

Though efforts have occasionally been made to relate spirituality to modern science, such efforts have dabbled mainly on the peripheral matters in that field – meditative practices, physical yogic exercises, and so on. Very few scientists have studied the core or central assertions of the spiritual teachings. The major religious traditions revolve around the idea of **spiritual knowledge**, **spiritual truth**, and the conditions of **Enlightenment** and **Liberation**. These conditions form the central theme of the religions and it is the Enlightened or Liberated person, the “sage” whose words are taken as the most authentic in these systems. But with a few notable exceptions, there does not seem to have been much study or even speculation about what exactly these conditions mean in modern psychological terms.

These traditions also make the fascinating claim that Liberation leads to the end of human suffering, and even hold that human life is hardly worth living if it is not in the pursuit of these eventual goals. The Liberated person is not only rid of his own suffering but is also an ocean of compassion and a great boon and source of solace for the average people who may come in contact with him. Thus, Buddhism exhorts people to self-exploration in search of the highest goal, “the Buddhist ideal: the ultimate compassion of the liberated *bodhisattva*.” (15, p.7) The Buddha taught about *Nirvana* for many years and his last words were

“be ye lamps unto yourselves ... (and) seek Salvation alone in the truth ... (so that ye) may, whilst in the world, overcome the grief which arises from the body’s cravings” (5).

Echoing the same sentiment, the Bhagavad Gita says:

He whose bliss is in himself; whose solace is in himself and who is an inner light unto himself: such a *Yogin* . . . attains *Brahman-Nirvana*. . . . Such sages are then engaged in the good of all. (V:24-5)

Even so, a large part of the world has probably not even heard of the term Enlightenment. Most people who have, think of it as, if not an after-death state, at least as some magical, mysterious state with supernatural powers. They associate it with the occult and paranormal. This is not very strange. Even in the religious world, where everyone is agreed that Enlightenment is the ultimate spiritual goal, there is still much confusion about what it really is, and how one is to go about realising it. Conflicting statements and contradictory accounts abound. So, much of the magic and mystique associated with the subject of Enlightenment is because this condition has been grossly misunderstood even among the religions themselves. It is therefore no surprise that science has confused it with states of transcendental meditation, or states of trance, or with paranormal powers like precognition. There have even been suggestions that the so-called Enlightenment experiences may really represent abnormal mental states like Temporal Lobe Epilepsy (TLE) which is said to have symptoms (like visions, hallucinations and such like) which are similar to *what is thought to be* Enlightenment. The key words here are of course “what is thought to be,” because what is thought to be Enlightenment is most often not so. What has been sought to be explained as TLE, may very well *be* TLE, since no one seems to have properly defined and explained even tentatively what Enlightenment is in proper psychological terms. As a result, most people have no clear idea about what exactly constitutes the phenomenon of Enlightenment, and many states, which have nothing to do with Enlightenment, are confused with it. We will be showing here that Enlightenment is not about having visions or hallucinations, or anything remotely similar.

To relate the condition of Enlightenment to modern science and psychology we must therefore do two things. One, we must first define and state what exactly is meant by the term ‘Enlightenment’ in the religious context itself and say how it can lead to the end of suffering as the spiritual traditions claim. We must separate the reality from the myth, demystify the whole subject, and present it cleared of all the confusion and conceptual cobwebs that have gathered over the millennia. Secondly, we must put this in the language of modern psychology.

The theory behind Enlightenment science

Before elaborating on the practical psychology of Enlightenment, a brief, tentative outline of the psycho-spiritual theory behind it will be helpful. It must be said here that just as the proof of the pudding is in the eating of it, the proof of this theory is the mystic who *sees* this theory to be true as a form of primary, intuitive “knowledge of being.” This proof is accessible to others only in the sense that they too can become mystics and see for themselves. It is thus not a theory accessible to mathematical proof. But knowing this background will help us understand the psychology of Enlightenment.

The basic concept in this theory is that Consciousness is One. This ‘singular’ Consciousness animates all beings much as the ‘same’ electricity activates and manifests through different appliances or the “one Sun illumines all the worlds” (*Bhagavad Gita*, XIII:33) or “the one moon is reflected in multifarious vessels of water” (*Shrimad Bhagavatam*, XI:18.32, XI:7.51). This is the basis of Hindu Advaita Vedanta. This one Consciousness is also the trans-personal “organismic” consciousness of Ken Wilber, the *prajna* of Buddhism, the *al-Haqq* (Reality, Truth) of Sufism, the Godhead of Christianity and the *Brahman* of the Vedas (*prajnanam brahman*,

“*prajna* is *Brahman*”). In thinking beings like man, the power of thought creates an identification of the consciousness with the physical body, and creates an *illusion of separation* in the one Consciousness. The result of this illusion of separateness is the human ego (*ahamkaara*) of philosophy. This illusory splitting or schism of the original Consciousness into multiple apparent individual units of consciousness creates the duality, the ‘original sin,’ of the ‘me’ and the ‘other,’ which rules the psychology of the average human being and results in his predominantly self-centred type of living, the only type of living that he knows. The original Consciousness is That which really animates our bodies and is the true Subject or Self (capital ‘S’), whereas the apparently separate individual consciousness is referred to as the ‘self’ (small ‘s’). The separate self is just an appearance resulting from the superimposition of the illusion of separateness on the one Self.

Philosopher J. Krishnamurti said

“... it is not a fact that one's consciousness is totally separate from that of everybody else – one sees that separateness is an illusion ... one is the whole of mankind – not an individual consciousness ... one's consciousness is the consciousness of mankind.” (6).

And Jesus prayed,

“That they all may be One; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they too may be One in us” (7).

It would be pertinent to mention that now, modern science is hovering tantalisingly close to this concept through quantum mechanics, and concepts of field theory, process metaphysics, and the zero-point field (8).

Enlightenment – the loss of the illusion of the ‘me’

Having seen the theory behind Enlightenment science, let us see how our spiritual tradition actually defines Enlightenment. As mentioned above, *ahamkaara* is the “I-consciousness which identifies the Self with the body” (11), and this state of *ahamkaara* is referred to as the state of (spiritual) ‘ignorance’ in Hindu tradition. “As a result of ‘ignorance’ (spiritual ignorance), such finite ideas as ‘I,’ ‘me’ and ‘mine’ are superimposed upon the Self” (11). The loss of *ahamkaara* results in Nirvana.

He who is ... without egoism (*nir-ahamkaara*), who has lost the sense of ‘me’ and ‘mine’ (*nir-mama*), he attains to peace. This is the *Brahmi* state (state of realisation of oneness with *Brahman*) ... having realised which, one attains *Brahma-nirvana* (Liberation).

Bhagavad Gita, II:71-2, also see VIII: 53 (9,10)

Spiritual tradition thus defines Enlightenment specifically as the loss of *ahamkaara*.

“The knowledge produced by the realisation of the true nature of Reality destroys immediately the ignorance characterised by notions of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ (*aham mameti cha-ajnaana*) as the sun the mistake regarding one’s direction.”

(*Atmabodha* of Sri Adi Shankaracharya, v.46)

Though *ahamkaara* has been loosely translated as ‘ego,’ this translation has caused immense confusion. Most people cannot understand how one could live without the ego, how normal life could go on, or even whether such an ego-less state is at all possible, or desirable. Some may feel it to be a psychologically abnormal state. Therefore it is important to point out at the outset that the ego in philosophy is not exactly the ego of psychology. It corresponds rather more closely to the self-image in psychology. It can be described more accurately as the mental image which a person has of himself, and with which the person *identifies* himself. It is the self-image

crystallised in thought and belief to the extent that it is mistakenly considered to be an independent self-entity, a 'me,' residing in the body, a homunculus (the little man inside), a definite individual 'self' which passes through the different stages of life. Religious people further believe that this 'me' will survive after the death of the body and refer to it as the individual soul. But even if the person does not believe in the soul or afterlife, there is still the conscious or unconscious belief in (and *identification* with) a me which exists **during** life, and which passes through the different stages of life – from birth to youth to old age to death. There is the belief in the *continuity* of a me which is seen as going through time in a linear fashion. Therefore the ego of philosophy is the same as the so-called individual self, 'soul' – or the 'me'.

The birth of the me

Let us now see how this ego develops. It is in the nature of living things that when a sentient organism evolves, and develops in consciousness to the point of self-awareness, it reaches a dramatic evolutionary milestone. It acquires a self-image! With language, this self-image is refined and re-defined to great precision. It crystallises into a detailed verbalised image of the 'self' or the 'me.' In the individual case, the average person is not born with this image, but acquires it as he grows up. As the self-awareness becomes more refined with the learning of language, the image of the me becomes stronger, clearer and more elaborate. Family and society contribute to the building up of this image of the me. By the time the child is an adult, this me-image is fully formed.

As the me-image develops, it appears more and more real. It soon becomes the centre and the focus of all thought. Everything, every event in life, is viewed from the restricted, limited, subjective viewpoint of the me. The rest of the world is now seen as the 'other,' in competition with the me, and generally in opposition to it. Life now becomes a zero-sum game (12). "You win" becomes equivalent to "I lose."

All this builds up a deep conditioning in the individual, which I have called me-based (self-based or ego-based) conditioning. Me-based conditioning constructs strict, narrow, stringent criteria – in short, difficult conditions for happiness – it builds up a picture of the 'what should be' (J. Krishnamurti). And the slightest deviation of actual events (the 'what is') from this desired picture can then cause immense misery, which may be completely out of proportion to the actual importance of the events. This is most typically seen in the sensitive adolescent, in whom the me-image is almost fully formed, but in whom the adult maturity is lacking. Such conditioning is therefore extremely demanding and allows a person to be happy only when it is satisfied. If not, there is me-based suffering or psychological suffering, distinct from physical suffering. Such suffering is unique to the human race. So we see how the unconscious belief in the me or the self is the cause of much of human misery – quite literally self-created misery! Further, we can also see that if the me does not really exist as a separate real entity, then the me-based conditioning and in turn me-based suffering which it causes, is entirely unnecessary and avoidable. And this was precisely the key point stressed upon by the Buddha.

Beyond this point, most human beings do continue to evolve further in psychological maturity, but to varying degrees. When an occasional such person reaches a point where he (or she) can actually, intuitively see the me for what it really is, as just an appearance, then *this realisation is Enlightenment*. Enlightenment is thus the irrevocable loss of the delusion of the me. And spiritual knowledge (*atma-jnana*) is the term used to indicate this insight into the true nature of the me.

Science and spirituality actually agree on this essential point, that in actuality there is no homunculus, no me, inside our bodies – that the separate me's and you's which we expect will survive our mortal bodies as separate entities, do not really exist. And Enlightenment is simply the name given to the direct intuitive perception of this very fact.

The me is not an illusion

(Believing the me to be real is the illusion)

To be precise, Enlightenment is the loss of the **delusion** of the me, not the me itself. It is important to be clear about this. The me is an appearance – like the circle produced by a whirling torch. *It is not a total illusion* (like a hallucination) because the appearance does exist. But it is a relative reality – transient and ever changing. The delusion consists in believing it to be more real than it is —believing it to be an entity by itself, a homunculus, or even a ‘soul’ inhabiting the body – and **identifying** with it.

The truth is, that like a corporation or a nation, the me is a useful working concept – but that’s all it is. The Buddhist monk Nagasena explained the same idea to his king by his classic example of the chariot. He dismantled the chariot part by part to demonstrate that it was simply the name given to a particular assemblage of things. Beyond this, there existed no chariot. Similarly, sensing and acting occur through the agency of the body-mind. This is real. But there is really no separate ‘one’ who touches, tastes, sees, hears – (except the One Universal Consciousness, if the theory of the One Self is to be invoked). The apparently separate ‘me’ that is doing all of these things is an executive ‘me,’ a working reality – not a real, permanent ‘me’ that will survive the death of the body. The me is thus an abstract concept, and not a physical, nor an ectoplasmic reality.

Upon his Awakening, the Enlightened person sees all this very clearly. In a brilliant, blinding flash of intuition, the me is seen for all that it really is – an ephemeral, ever-changing mirage. And life is never the same after that.

The self-image

What happens to the self-image after Enlightenment and in the process of Liberation?

The Self-image is the me. Before Enlightenment or Awakening, it is believed to be real, and life is lived in the full light of that firm belief. This is self-centred living, the life of the average man or woman.

After Awakening, the me or self-image is seen to be unreal. It is recognised for what it is – just an appearance. This insight not only changes the whole attitude to life, but also weakens the self-image itself. The self-image that exists after Enlightenment is thus considerably emaciated, and moreover is seen as an appearance only. The me or the self-image is completely lost only at the point of Final Liberation, at which point it exists only as an executive notion, a mere label, for day-to-day purposes pertaining to that body-mind. Between the occurrence of Enlightenment and the point of Final Liberation, which may be many years away, the me or self-image is weakened tremendously, but nevertheless does exist. However, it is effectively lost, for it has lost its sting, its poison, since it is now perceived to be false, a mere appearance. In other words, it has lost its capacity to reinforce me-based conditioning. In spiritual terminology, it cannot ‘bind’ anymore. This has been explained by the sage Ramana Maharshi with the example of a burnt rope, which while it may retain the likeness of a rope, is really just ashes, and cannot be used to bind anything. In the average man, every event in life is seen from the perspective of the me (which is thought to be real), and this helps to reinforce his me-based conditioning day after day. After the crucial, critical event of Enlightenment, such reinforcement does not occur, and instead, its opposite, namely de-conditioning from the effects of me-based conditioning is initiated.

The self-image continues to get progressively attenuated after Enlightenment till at the point of final Liberation, the self-image disappears completely. The Liberated One or *Jivanmukta* has no self-image. Yet he lives and acts in the world most efficiently. What’s more, this holds true even for the image of ‘other’ people in the Liberated person’s mind. Therefore he deals with people on a moment-to-moment basis rather than with any preconceived emotional bias.

Formula of a sage

We must understand that Enlightenment is not some esoteric, magical process. It does not give a man magical powers, or make him a superman. Enlightenment is simply the disappearance of an illusion, which made him see everything from the point of view of a 'me.' It does not make a person all knowing. The spiritual 'knowledge' that occurs upon Enlightenment is not a form of verbal, temporal knowledge which could be learnt or developed in time. The word knowledge here refers to the true intuitive insight into the way things are in their totality. Enlightenment is thus a change in perspective, a change of focus, a paradigm shift. It is a shift from the constricting, individual focus of a 'me' to a view of life in its totality. To paraphrase Empedocles, it is a shift from being a circle with the illusory 'me' as centre, to a circle whose circumference is everywhere and whose centre is nowhere (13).

Thus we could give the formula of a sage as:

- Human being + 'me' illusion = average person
- Human being + 'me' illusion + experiences of meditative trances etc = 'spiritual' person with spurious "Enlightenment" experiences
- Human being (no 'me' illusion) = SAGE

RESULT: The process of Liberation

Once Enlightenment has occurred, the whole world, and life itself, is seen in an altogether different light. This results in a complete transformation of the individual. Indian philosophy calls it *paraavritti*, the West has called it *metanoia*. Christ referred to it as returning to the mother's womb and being born again. It is a complete 'transcendence of personality,' a total, 'inside-out' transformation.

"What is night to all beings, to him that is day, and what to them is day, that is to him night."

Bhagavad Gita, II-69

The average man's thoughts are usually self-centred or me-centred (me-based). After Enlightenment, the person sees the 'me' for what it is, a mere appearance. All me-centred thoughts are therefore seen to be invalid and void. This does not mean that they disappear overnight. Initially they do occur. But before the involvement can become deeper, the clear perception that the 'me' is just an appearance puts a brake on the thought chain and the me-centred thoughts are seen as the anomalies that they are – based on a delusion, the non-existent, phantom 'me.' This is in fact a process of what psychology calls deconditioning. Behaviour therapy uses it. But after Enlightenment, it happens on its own. The Enlightened person does not have to act upon the fact of his Enlightenment to change himself. The change is a spontaneous result of the Awakening. And this spontaneous process of deconditioning is the process of Liberation or *mukti*.

Liberation is thus, in effect, a process of *spontaneous de-conditioning* (from the earlier me-based conditioning, which is the bane of every man and is the cause of me-based or psychological suffering).

Thus the me-based conditionings slowly begin to wear themselves out. Over the years, as the de-conditioning proceeds to its logical culmination, a point arrives when the self-centred thoughts do not arise at all. This is what is called Liberation, *mukti*, *moksha*, *nirvana*, the Kingdom of God. The Liberated one is completely free of the me-delusion and its effects, and free of psychological suffering.

Having realised his own self as the (Universal) Self, a man becomes selfless; and in virtue of selflessness he is to be conceived as unconditioned. . . . through selflessness he has no part in pleasure or pain . . .

Maitrayana Upanishad (14)

In conclusion, the sage is a person who has "purged himself of selfness," whose personal "I" is dead.

I live, yet not I, but Christ – the eternal Logos – liveth in me.

St.Paul

And the "not-I" which remains is the same as what other people call 'God.'

Daily life

This is not to say that the person becomes incapable of living his daily life, or following his chosen profession, whatever that may be. In all probability he will continue to do both. And there will be no lapse in efficiency either. Rather, when the false is seen as false, work becomes more efficient. Because now there is not the overlay of undue me-related anxiety over the results. Work is done with the full attention that it deserves, with what Zen Buddhism calls a "whole mind" – work done for its own sake. It is important to understand that the Enlightened person can very well continue to be goal oriented, but unlike the average person he is no longer result-obsessed to the point of anxiety. This is incidentally the *karma yoga* taught by the Bhagavad Gita, the famous Hindu scripture. And today's management experts also observe that an excessive obsession with results detracts from the work at hand and affects its efficiency.

The 'other' – and compassion

As the 'me' weakens during the process of Liberation, so does the feeling or concept of the 'other.' This is because, the me is inextricably linked to the concept of the 'other' – they are the two inter-linked opposites, two sides of the same coin. Without the me, there can be no other. Thus finally, a stage comes when the Enlightened person no longer sees the rest of the world as a competitive 'other.' The natural result of not seeing the rest of humanity as 'other' is a spontaneous outflow of deep, causeless, motiveless compassion. Life, for the Liberated One, is no longer a 'zero-sum game.'

If Consciousness is one, as Enlightenment theory says, then compassion should be always potentially there. In the average individual, compassion is (partly or fully) blocked or masked by his sense of separateness, which makes him think of the different body-minds as 'others'. It is thus the feeling of 'otherness' which blocks compassion in the average man. A sage, on the other hand, sees no one as 'other'. To him therefore compassion occurs naturally – as naturally as anyone would feel for oneself.

Final Liberation (*jivanmukti, parinirvana*)

The theoretical endpoint of the entire process of Liberation is when there is complete extinction of the me-illusion with all its related conditionings. This is then a condition totally devoid of me-based conditioning, in which (as Sri Ramana Maharshi said) no one is seen as other, a condition of spontaneous, absolute compassion, and total absence of unnecessary psychological me-based (self or ego-based) suffering. This is the condition of Final Liberation (*jivan-mukti, pari-nirvana*).

And it is this compassion, we can now understand, that is responsible for the "river of peace" effect described by English author and Orientalist Paul Brunton, which he felt upon his very first meeting with Ramana Maharshi, an Enlightened sage. This is his description of that first encounter from his book *A Search in Secret India*.

“There is something in this man which holds my attention as steel filings are held by a magnet. I cannot turn my gaze away from him. [--] a steady river of quietness seems to be flowing near me, ... a great peace is penetrating the inner reaches of my being [-] “Does this man ... emanate the perfume of spiritual peace as the flower emanates fragrance from its petals?”

Paul Brunton (16).

Mainstream psychology

Psychologists doing studies on meditators have noticed certain changes in their thinking patterns (19, 15). These changes which occur during intentional ‘sitting’ meditation *occur spontaneously in the Enlightened person*. Some of these changes are:

1. There is an extra keenness of sensations. Sounds are heard with greater crispness, sights with greater clarity. This has been noticed by the investigators as “intensified perceptual awareness. Objects ... appear more vivid” (15).
2. Seeing things “as they are” or in their *tathatha* or ‘suchness’ is frequently described in Buddhist descriptions of the Enlightened state. “Any object in this state can be seen more for what it is than for the function it represents” (15).
3. Otherwise commonplace sights begin to acquire or signify a strikingly special mystical meaning. Even a leaf falling is noticed and carries mystic significance. “Thus objects acquire a quality of firstness that, like most experiences, carries an original meaning” and “familiar things ... are suddenly perceived in a new light” (15, p.4). This is a familiar and frequent description of the Enlightened state in Zen literature.
4. ‘De-automisation,’ that is, familiar objects and ideas appearing forever fresh and new (19, 15).

These changes are mainly ascribed to “greater use of primary process thinking” because of which things are perceived with greater freshness, novelty and meaning “outside their usual conditioned secondary content.” The stale, mechanical conditioned responses and thinking patterns to which the average person is slave, are broken, “due to the nonlinear and multi-dimensional handling of data” (15). “The many cognitive and emotional alterations result in the destructuring of concepts.” (15, p.5) and “(one is) able to identify and abort the many circular, conditioned mind habits that before had tended to linger and reverberate as ruminations and purposeless obsessions. ... The ability to step out of conceptual limitations and identify new solutions is considered the hallmark of insight and creativity” (ibid). (Note that J.Krishnamurti referred to post-Enlightenment living as “creative” living). In other words, the chain of conditioned secondary thinking is broken, and there is more of pristine fresh, primary thinking.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we see that much of the mystery and occultism paraded in the name of mysticism has really nothing to do with true mysticism. True mysticism, as Zen would say, is *wu-shih*, “nothing special.” It just involves a different perspective of viewing the same everyday world, which is then seen in a different light only because the earlier watertight distinction between ‘me’ and the ‘other’ is seen to dissolve. Using the words in their broadest sense, one could say that the average man’s me-based perspective is a sort of a Newtonian view of the world which sees the world divided into discrete objects and isolated individuals with separate, conflicting self-interests. The Enlightened person’s holistic view, on the other hand, can be likened to an Einsteinian or quantum view where everything is relative, even time, and everything is interconnected. The Enlightened one thus gains the insight with which to see the Newtonian world from the Einsteinian (or quantum) view. What’s more, this happens *without his losing* the everyday Newtonian perspective, so that the sage is perfectly capable of living his daily life with utmost efficiency.

Albert Einstein said, "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler." I believe the explanation given here is sufficiently simple to satisfy both Occam's razor (17) and Hume's dictum (18). We do not postulate a soul, or an afterlife. We do not speak of a personal, anthropomorphic God. We do not admit magic and miracles. Sages like J. Krishnamurti and Ramana Maharshi are not hazy mythological figures – they are men of flesh and blood from this century. The simplicity of what we have just said is captured by this short summary of the essence of Buddhism.

The essence of Buddhism

1. There is no ultimate, unchanging essence like soul (*atman*), no separate, real 'me,' in anyone.
2. When people realise this truth, they become selfless persons. They then experience a mental state of loving kindness (*metta*), compassion, sympathetic joy and calmness of mind.

It couldn't be simpler than this. The first statement agrees with science. The second does not clash with it – only, science has never ventured this far.

It is time that it did!

Notes and References:

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5. *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha: Early Discourses, the Dhamapada and later basic writings*, E.A.Burt, Penguin Books USA Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York 10014, USA, 1991, p.49.
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7. *Gospel of St. John*, 17:21.
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11. *Atmabodha – Self-Knowledge of Sri Sankaracarya, (ahamkaara, p.73, v.5, v.46, etc)*, by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, India, 1997, pp.73, 129, 169-70.
12. Zero-sum game: From *Nonzero: The Logic Of Human Destiny*, by Robert Wright, pub. Vintage Books. He argues that in general the evolution of nature, and in particular the evolution of human culture, are largely shaped by win-win processes which he examines with the help of Game Theory. Evolution has

a non-zero-sum logic, which leads to increasing complexity. He writes that "the directionality in these two evolutionary processes suggests that maybe the processes are themselves subordinate to a larger purpose."

13. "God is a circle whose centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere...." Empedocles, 5th century b.c, Greek philosopher. Found in *Treasury of Spiritual Wisdom* compiled by Andy Zubko p.189.
14. Quoted in *The Perennial Philosophy*, p.206, Aldous Huxley, Harper & Row, New York, 1970.
15. *Meditation and Psychotherapy: A Rationale for the Integration of Dynamic Psychotherapy, the Relaxation Response, and Mindfulness Meditation*, Ilan Kutz, Joan Borysenko, Herbert Benson, *Am. J. Psychiatry* 142:1, January 1985, pp.1-8.
16. *A Search in Secret India*, Paul Brunton, p.141, B.I.Pub.,1970, reprint 1994, pp.53-4.
17. Occam's razor: William of Ockham (1284?-1347?), English philosopher and theologian. In philosophy, according to Ockham's Razor, a problem should be stated in its basic and simplest terms. In science, the simplest theory that fits the facts of a problem is the one that should be selected.
18. Hume's dictum: a preference for less "miraculous" explanations. Hume, David (1711-1776), Scottish philosopher.
19. *Meditative Techniques in Psychotherapy* – W.Kretschmer, in *Altered States of Consciousness* – Ed. C.T.Tart, London & New York, 1969.
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21. Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm (1646-1716); German philosopher, mathematician, and scholar. He was the first to use the term *philosophia perennis*.