

Conscious Being

Reading Two: Core False Beliefs

From Chapter 3 of Conscious Being

What is Wholeness?

Our wholeness, our essential nature, is who we are without all the false identities we have accumulated throughout our lives. Finding our wholeness is a matter of living beyond all the illusory ideas we have accumulated about ourselves. These ideas have created a false, limited sense of self, known as our ego. Recovering our wholeness, therefore, involves allowing these illusory notions to dissolve so that our inherent, pristine self can be revealed. There is nothing we need to add. Nothing we need to acquire. Nothing we need to learn. Nothing we need to do. We are already whole and perfect. Life is not about learning, it is about unlearning all the limiting stories we have believed about ourselves and the world. Asking ourselves the question “What do I need to release?” will take us in a useful direction. As the saying goes, “When life isn’t adding up—start subtracting.”

There is a Hindu story that I heard while I was staying in an ashram in India. Even though, in this story, God is framed as an anthropomorphic entity, the story itself has a powerful message. The story portrays God as talking to his students. They are asking him, “Where shall we hide you? Shall we hide you in the depths of the ocean? Or perhaps we could hide you in the highest star!” The students come up with many different ideas about where to hide God, so that he won’t be easily discovered by human beings. And God says,

“No, no...I know where to hide myself! I’ll hide myself deep within the heart of every human being. That’s the last place they will think to look!”

Forgetting our wholeness is at the root of all our problems, struggles, conflicts, and crises. It is inevitable that we grow up learning to see the world—and ourselves—through the eyes of our primary caretakers and the influential in our lives. Along with all the necessary information about life, a lot of false information is also downloaded into our young minds. This happened long before we developed the ability to analyze the incoming data and decide what we want to take in and what we do not. Our subconscious mind is therefore programmed, from the very beginning, by the environment into which we are born. Whether we want it or not, as children, we inherit the “BS” (belief systems), perspectives, stories, and traditions of our family and of the culture in which we were raised. This downloaded information forms a kind of cultural operating system in our minds.

In the process of growing up and individuating, we differentiate ourselves from our family members, to a certain degree. However, much of our unconscious programming remains intact for the rest of our lives. Nonetheless, we can begin to question it and do the important inner work of releasing those aspects of our conditioning which no longer serve our highest good. This involves becoming conscious of the lens through which we are viewing the world. We might ask ourselves whether we are in agreement with that view. First we need to become conscious of the ingrained habits of mind that cause us to judge, to have biases, to be fearful when there is no reason to be, and to think in limited ways—about ourselves, others, and the world in general. Once identified, we can evaluate these inherited habits of thinking. Are they true or useful for us? Do they

come from a loving, openhearted place or a closed-hearted, fearful one? If we have outgrown those patterns, attitudes, and actions, we can begin to live beyond them, trusting in this natural process of updating our beliefs and perspectives.

Unlearning

An important part of my work with individuals, as a recovery specialist, spiritual counselor, and inspirational speaker, involves helping them uncover the unconscious beliefs they have adopted. It also involves discovering decisions they made about themselves, usually as young children, which are creating the issues they are currently experiencing. Even though they have reached adulthood, they retain the belief systems and decisions they made as children. Those early learnings still shape their inner experience, as well as the outer events in their lives.

I remember coming to the conclusion, when I was a child, that I was not "good enough." As a young adult going out into the world, this story about myself was repeatedly mirrored back to me in different situations. Each time it seemed to confirm my belief that it was true. I learned, however, that our outer lives are a projection of our inner reality, our beliefs and attitudes. These get played out in our daily experiences. As long as we continue to believe in the concepts of separation, lack, and fear, they will indeed appear to be "real." Our lives will validate what we hold to be true. Conversely, if we begin to see life as abundant, rewarding, and delightful, these concepts will also appear to be real. And our lives will take shape to validate those experiences. Until we recognize that our lives are being created 100 percent by what we are projecting, we cannot experience true freedom. Releasing

the false notions about ourselves and about life in general is how we uncover the deeper, essential truth that will set us free.

Spiritual psychology recognizes the existence of the transcendent aspect of human beings, as well as the separate, physical self. It encompasses the full range of our existence, rather than merely the visible, human aspect. This enables us to integrate the different aspects of ourselves into a whole. Just like two sides of the same coin, our transcendent or spiritual self and our human self—although apparently diametrically opposed to each other—are intrinsically one and the same. They are the two ends of the whole spectrum of our existence, as human beings.

The Root of Addiction

When we are out of touch with our transcendent self and have forgotten our wholeness, we believe we need to acquire something from the outside in order to be complete. We might attempt to do this through acquiring material possessions or money beyond what we actually need in order to live happily. We might try to do it through relationships, in the hope that another person will complete us. We might use drugs or alcohol, which temporarily give us an experience of expanded consciousness or numb out difficult feelings. Because all these things give us only a momentary feeling of wholeness, we tend to chase after them, again and again. We hope their effects will last longer next time. But the more we chase something outside ourselves to find our wholeness, the more we lose touch with our true essence. When we repeatedly go after something “out there” to fill us up, we will feel emptier inside.

All addictive behavior stems from our inability to recognize our inherent wholeness, and the belief that something outside of us can return us to a feeling of peace and comfort. It is as though we have our own umbilical cord in our hand, trying to find a place to plug it in, in an attempt to reconnect with ourselves. But the feeling of connection only occurs and remains when we uncover what is buried within—our true essence. Addiction is so prevalent in our lives these days that we don't always recognize it for what it is. We typically think of people with addictions as those who abuse alcohol or drugs. But any repeated compulsive act in which we are seeking something outside ourselves and that is damaging to our quality of life, is addictive behavior. Even some spiritual or religious practices can become addictions. If they create an unhealthy dependency on somebody or a particular teaching outside of us, they can prevent us from reconnecting with the transcendent self within. Although dependency on an external representation of our transcendent self might be a helpful stage along the way, our ultimate satisfaction only occurs when we experience union with our essence, our being.

The Shadow Self

Our shadow self refers to those elements of ourselves that we have disowned or buried below the surface. Many of us try to keep our shadow self hidden, not only from others but even from ourselves. Our shadow is a collection of those parts we believe are "bad," and we therefore judge them as unacceptable and unlovable. The shadow self also holds those parts that we believe are too painful to feel, including the unhealed traumas of our past. We often hide emotions like anger, fear, resentment, jealousy, intense pain, deep grief, as well as feelings of greed and aggression, in our shadow

self. When we refuse to acknowledge these “darker” aspects of ourselves, we live in fear that others will see them, and judge us— just as we judge ourselves. And when we see those same traits in others, we judge and criticize them, for displaying the very traits we deem unacceptable in ourselves. In psychological terms, this is known as projection. Quite often, we see and judge in others what we refuse to accept about ourselves, or in many cases, even fail to recognize.

As human beings, it is sometimes easier for us to point the finger at another, making them wrong, rather than accepting the fact that we are also capable of displaying dark emotions and behaviors. What triggers us in another person is therefore an accurate indication of what we are projecting onto that person, and hiding from ourselves. When we are triggered by somebody or something “out there,” it would behoove us to accept it as the gift it truly is. It is a gift because it gives us important insight into a blind spot about ourselves. When we are emotionally activated by somebody else’s behavior, we often shut down and close off, making the other person “wrong” for what triggered us. But we can choose to remain open and accept the gift that has been offered us. When we have the courage to get curious about what we are hiding from ourselves, we are accepting the opportunity to deepen our self-honesty. We are accepting the opportunity to be compassionate with ourselves and to therefore deepen the intimacy of our relationship with ourselves and the world around us.

When we awaken to the deeper understanding that we’re all one, we experience an immense shift. In this paradigm, we may sometimes still experience pain, but we will no longer blame anyone or any situation as the cause of the pain. We will be accountable for our own experience. It may be that a wound within us is touched by what happened, and in that case, it’s

important to discover how it might help us grow beyond that trigger. As a matter of fact, we no longer focus on triggers at all, but acknowledge that something is activated within us that is wanting to heal. In that way, we can welcome every situation as an opportunity for our own growth and expansion. When we come to see that what other people do or say doesn't impact the truth of who and what we are, and we recognize they are acting out of their own "woundology," we don't make ourselves victims to anyone else's behavior. We no longer blame anyone else for our experiences. We become able to respond to them rather than reacting out of our old programming. In this way, we can be at peace regardless of outer circumstances.