



FALL 2021

CHENG HSIN NEWSLETTER



August 2021 Volume: 76

Dear Cheng Hsin Community,

Looking forward to the Fall Retreat coming soon, and the Consciousness Apprentice Program coming sooner! Looks like we have a good group for the program. It will be hard work but deeply satisfying.

Unfortunately, I had to cancel the Holland workshops this summer because although statements kept coming out about Americans being able to come to Europe, this wasn't backed up by governments who didn't actually allow it until too late.

We are looking forward to a robust Fall Retreat, even for Europeans. It seems the visa waive program is still active but the ban on the EU coming to the US may not lift by late September. Hopefully it will, but if you have signed up for an in-person retreat you may want to be mentally prepared to switch to Zoom participation. Zoom participation feedback has been very positive and the workshops are as effective on Zoom as they are in-person. Of course, I always prefer in person participation but Zoom works.

Peter

C O N T R I B U T I O N S

I was suffering at the contemplation intensive back in 2013. I asked you what I was overlooking. You said something like, "stop doing that!"

I just realized what you meant. Happiness/serenity/peace is an intrinsic state when I don't do the thing. The thing is comparing myself to an ideal—a future self, not good enough, not enough. That's the thing. Thinking I need to be doing something else. Stop doing that thing.

I carry a lot of anger. I realized one day I don't have to stop being angry. I have to stop judging myself for it. That's the "thing." Now when I'm angry, I tell my wife, "I'm so angry! Raawwrrr," and we laugh about it and it's gone. Angry and serene. Just having that be my experience now and not trying to change into something else.

I don't know if this experience is happiness. I don't know what that word means. What I'm experiencing is a freedom from suffering. And a strong sense of integrity.

Appreciate the time we spent together
Peter.

Bryan



My Books in the mountains of Peru

WORKSHOPS AT THE CENTER

THE FALL RETREAT 2021
SEPTEMBER 28—OCTOBER 30
with Peter Ralston and Brendan Lea

The Fall Retreat is all consciousness work. It starts with *Communication & Relationship* which is a 3-day workshop, to be followed by the most central and important consciousness workshop *Experiencing the Nature of Being* (ENB), then the new high-powered *Transcending Self Workshop* (TSW), and ending with a Contemplation Intensive to top it off and utilize all the work we've done previously by turning it into pure contemplation. This year we have the possibility of doing a two-week CI, if you are up for it.

The last early **DEPOSIT** deadline for the Fall Retreat is **AUGUST 15th**
Don't forget to send in your deposit by then and save!

Communication and Relationship Workshop September 28—October 2

Guess what it's about. Experiencing the nature of communication allows you to be truly heard as well as grasp another's experience. Moving interaction from a reactive model based on unconscious activities to a more conscious and creative model for relating, empowers greater satisfaction and successful relationships.

Experiencing the Nature of Being October 2—9

The first full week of the Fall Retreat is the famous ENB, where each day is devoted to the fascinating Cheng Hsin consciousness work. Together, we will meticulously uncover the very structures of mind and experience that determine your perception of self and reality. This workshop is most closely related to *The Book of Not Knowing* (but you don't need to bring a copy with you—we'll be doing it live!). It is the most central and indispensable workshop of Cheng Hsin. It is meant to be done repeatedly, creating an increasingly deeper conscious experience of the material each time.

Transcending Self Workshop October 9—16

Standing on the work of the ENB, this new workshop goes deeply into the existential origins of many of the taken for granted and overlooked human inventions that produce what you experience as the world in which you live—your experience of you, others, and life as you live it. In this workshop, you will stretch far

beyond anything humans have confronted or collectively understood heretofore.

You'll probe deeply into the genesis of pretty much everything that makes up your experience of your reality, and become conscious of how it all came to pass. From scratch, you'll be invited to personally grasp for yourself the very creation of self and other, language and mind, society and the formulation of your separate and private inner world. You'll also learn to recognize the overwhelming and overlooked consequences this series of inventions and conclusions produces.

Contemplation Intensive
October 16—23, or 16—30

A “Zen-style” contemplation week where you set out to personally and directly become conscious of who you are at the deepest level (once you've gotten “who” you can work on other questions—what, another, life, et al). Most contemplation will be in a dyad form where two people work together taking turns contemplating and communicating, but throughout the entire day you will be contemplating. This is a solid opportunity to go for a direct consciousness of the true nature of being, also called an “enlightenment” experience. But whatever you've heard about enlightenment, forget it. It's not just something for lifelong monks—YOU can have this consciousness.

This year we are offering the possibility of doing a two-week intensive. You can do just the one or if you are up for even more you can opt for two weeks. It is very intense. If you want to participate in the second week, register for

week one, and then email me, Ralston@ChengHsin.com, and let me know you will also be doing week two.

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For a Fall Series information:

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For more detailed information and videos about the Fall Retreat

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To sign up:

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For In-Person Registration

For Zoom Participation Registration



South Korean Increasing Consciousness Group

ONLINE COURSES

Of course, during this time of pandemic it is good to remember that there are opportunities online you can do at home.

VIDEO COURSES

We have recently created video classes and courses you can access online. The first set are most of the DVDs turned into classes and courses. If you don't have them you can now access them online.

Video Classes include:

Martial:

Introduction to the Arts of Cheng Hsin

- 🕒 Tai Chi
- 🕒 Sword
- 🕒 Fight-Play-Demo

Consciousness:

- 🕒 Introduction to Consciousness
- 🕒 Introduction to Contemplation

To learn more about **Video Classes:** <https://chenghsin.com/online-video-classes/>

Video Courses include:

Martial:

- 🕒 Body-Being Instruction in three parts
- 🕒 Mastering Effortless Power in four parts
- 🕒 Cheng Hsin Striking Arts in four parts
- 🕒 San Shou in two parts

Consciousness:

Experiencing the Nature of Being video Course

The most central and powerful consciousness workshop done at Cheng Hsin is Experiencing the Nature of Being. If you've been involved with us in any way, you likely know this fact.

Heretofore, this valuable and in-depth material could only be accessed by attending the workshop, or buying this video course and participating in it at home. Although live attendance is always the most effective way to study, you now have access to this material in video form.

The ENB is a live-in workshop that spans a week. The ENB video course is done where ever you are, with a new lesson each week over a period of about a year. These lessons are accompanied by a manual that provides advice and visual aids. The value of spending a year with the material is that it allows you to immerse yourself in each aspect of the work for a week or more, and to study it not just in your contemplations and investigations but also in your life as you live it.

Advanced Consciousness Video Course: Alphabet Soup

A cross section of deeper consciousness work from delving into the existential nature of reality to unearthing core assumptions about self, as well as considering such matters as being happy, the meaning of life, suffering, the nature of perception and experience, and much more. This course consists of a weekly video lesson that is followed up with assignments and homework for each lesson.



Advanced Consciousness Video Course: Satsang with Ralston

30 videos, each about an hour and a half, of lecture and dialogue with Peter Ralston about consciousness.

To learn more or to register about **Video Courses**: <https://chenghsin.com/online-video-courses/>

eCOURSES

Sign up and begin an eCourse whenever you want!

There are five, excellent year-long eCourses:

- 🎧 Transcending the Self
- 🎧 Transforming Your Experience of Relationship
- 🎧 The Principles of Effective Interaction
- 🎧 The Principles of an Effortlessly Effective Body-Being
- 🎧 The Power of Contemplation

And two eye opening six-week eCourses:

- 🎧 Increasing Consciousness
- 🎧 T'ai Chi Body-Mind

For more information on these **eCourses** go to:
<https://chenghsin.com/ecourses/>

AUDIO COURSES

Sign up and begin an Audio-Course whenever you want! These are recordings of Peter Ralston communicating about consciousness.
<https://chenghsin.com/audio-course/>

There are two audio courses:

Consciousness Audio Course

The Consciousness Audio-Course consists of 55 lessons with lectures and dialogues by Peter Ralston on subjects ranging from contemplation, transformation, and perception, to enlightenment, death, and the many challenges that face us in our efforts to increase consciousness. These audio-files were taken from live interactions and discussions with students, often apprentices.

<https://chenghsin.com/consciousness-audio-course-learn-more/>

Experiencing the Nature of Being Audio Course

The most central and powerful consciousness workshop done at Cheng Hsin is Experiencing the Nature of Being. If you've been involved with us in any way, you likely know this fact. Although live attendance is always the most effective way to study, you now have access to this material in audio form.

<https://chenghsin.com/enb-audio-course-learn-more/>



THE SPRING RETREAT 2022

APRIL 2 — 30

Peter Ralston and Brendan Lea

NOVEMBER 15 is the **FIRST** early **DEPOSIT** opportunity.

Early deposits provide savings over full price, so don't forget to send in your deposit by then.

The Spring Retreat is divisible: if you cannot attend the entire four-week retreat, you can do one, two, or three weeks. The first three weeks will immerse you in intense consciousness work—we've added the ENB because it is our first most central workshop, to the existing TEL and IEW—and the last week will introduce you to

the Art of Effortless Power. If there are participants who want to do more than one week in the Art, we can extend it an extra week or two or even three, depending on the demand, just let us know.

CONSCIOUSNESS

The first three weeks are three Consciousness Workshops: *Experiencing the Nature of Being*, *Transforming Your Experience of Life* and *Insight and Enlightenment Workshop*.

Experiencing the Nature of Being

April 2—9

The first full week of the Spring Retreat is the famous ENB, where each day is devoted to the fascinating Cheng Hsin consciousness work. Together, we will meticulously uncover the very structures of mind and experience that determine your perception of self and reality. This workshop is most closely related to *The Book of Not Knowing* (but you don't need to bring a copy with you—we'll be doing it live!). It is the most central and indispensable workshop of Cheng Hsin. It is meant to be done repeatedly, creating an increasingly deeper conscious experience of the material each time.

Transforming Your Experience of Life

April 9—16

The TEL workshop is about undertaking a shift in perspective that will change your experience of self and life. Our most common self-experience is based on a sense of separation that occurs along with an activity that produces a rather small and isolated domain of self. This fails to produce the satisfaction or happiness

that we seek, and always will. One of our goals in this workshop is to understand and expose these activities for what they are, and begin to free ourselves from them.

Creating a new context for relating to others transforms our experience of ourselves as well as of life—developing a much deeper and more real level of communication, reducing our sense of stress and isolation, and changing our perspective to one of unity rather than conflict. If such an undertaking sounds appealing to you, I invite you to participate in the TEL workshop this spring.

Insight and Enlightenment Workshop April 16—23

The IEW is a new approach where contemplation intensive work is blended with ontological work. In a typical CI, we spend all of our time contemplating such questions as "who am I?" and then communicating about this to a partner in a dyad form with the intention of having an enlightenment experience. In the ontological or consciousness work, we investigate the mechanisms of mind and self to create insights into the nature and dynamics of our experience and the world in which we live.

In this workshop, roughly half the time will be devoted to pure contemplation, and the other half will be dialogues, exercises, and guided meditations about subjects aligned with this contemplative effort, or to create insights and breakthroughs that open the mind beyond its normal limitations. Such a two-fold approach both opens and grounds our work. It is a purposeful week of contemplation and

meditation that wraps up the consciousness aspect of the spring retreat.

The Art of Effortless Power April 23—30 (or beyond)

Dive into a week of The Art of Effortless Power! This week will be an organically unfolding study of the Art and will also consist of a study of Body-Being and Cheng Hsin T'ai Chi. Learn principles and techniques that improve all aspects of your mind and body.

Also, you will learn more about yourself and even how to better learn, not to mention have fun and develop great new skills. If you have only done the consciousness work you might want to expand and ground your work in physical skill and interaction, receiving instant feedback about your level of awareness and ability to learn and take to action what you've learned.

Continue into week two and you can expand with even more effective interaction, learning principles and techniques that improve all aspects of your mind and body. If you are new to the Art, you should start at week one, and then continue with week two or beyond.

For more information, go to:
[Spring Retreat Learn More](#)

or contact us at:
Ralston@ChengHsin.com

[For In-Person Registration](#)

For the ENB, TEL, and IEW on Zoom:
[Zoom registration](#)



South Korean ICG Graduates!

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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Lukas Glowacki  
Namyslow, Poland  
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Hello Peter,

If you could go back in time and be, say, 20 years old again, would you again start training martial arts or would you focus solely on the consciousness work? If you think that you would start training martial arts again which ones would you focus on most? Because you trained different things so maybe now you're able to tell which arts you wouldn't bother to train again and which ones, say 2 or 3 (or maybe just 1), you would try to master as much as possible?

Thanks
Lukas Glowacki

Lukas,

Well, first of all at 20 I had already been doing martial arts for 12 years, so it wouldn't have been a start. Are you asking if I went back as me now but had a 20 year old body? It's hard to tell, at this point my ambitions in life are different. To be clear, I did contemplation and consciousness work just as

diligently as I did the martial since I was 21 years old.

When I was about 30, I decided I wanted to devote my life strictly to consciousness work, but people objected strongly and begged me to continue with my physical work. My girlfriend at that the time said, 'there are many people doing consciousness work, but no one is doing what you do in the physical domain, and besides you *are* the body!' Of course, she missed the fact the no one is actually doing the consciousness work that I am doing, but then again, she never did any of my workshops. In any case, I stayed with the martial also and continued to investigate and master it.

But I suspect you just want advice on which martial art to study. That is hard to say, because it really depends on what you want to develop and why. Also, learning pretty much every martial art there is, may have taken a lot of time and work, but it solidly showed me what everything is and what not to do and why. This is valuable education.

But in the end, although I learned much from various arts, I also worked to get beyond on the traditions and dogmas to delve into what is actually true about fighting relationships. So, the Art I would recommend is the Cheng Hsin Art of Effortless Power, not just because of the art itself but because of the spirit, approach, and depth of study it contains. Perhaps to balance the overly intelligent complexity of my Art, if you are interested in fighting skills you could also study BJJ or MMA, Judo and Boxing, perhaps fencing and some internal arts like t'ai chi or aikido just to fill out your knowledge base.

There are other skills from various arts that might be useful in some way, but in the end you could create them yourself. Yet creating them takes intelligent creativity and study. Basing your study on what's real and founded on every aspect of that relationship —physics, mind, perception, force, strategy, body-

awareness, movement, intelligence, sensitivity, physiology, anatomy, mechanics, and so on—you could invent all that you need. A big chore perhaps but valuable in the end if you want to master the fighting arts.

Of course, first learning what others have invented and training your body-mind to be able to do the many technical aspects involved in martial encounters is necessary since you are not likely to come up with all of that by yourself in one lifetime. In short, there is no quick solution, and a very good teacher is invaluable as well.

Peter

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Daniel Lobron  
San Francisco, CA  
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Hi Peter,

I'm writing to thank you and Brendan for another great experience at the center (I did one week of TEL to follow up a week of ENB from the fall)!

Once again, I left feeling I've learnt something important about my own experience and how I create self. I also feel hopeful and intentional that my insights will allow me to create a more fulfilling, graceful and powerful experience of life.

My question is about the matter of principle we investigated during TEL and a practical application of it I'm encountering in my life.

As the country is rolling out the COVID vaccine and is granting increasing freedom to

those that are vaccinated I'm running into a dilemma: One of the principles I have been living with (although I didn't call it that explicitly until TEL) is one of interfering as little as possible with the natural processes of my body. This means avoiding pain killers and other pharmaceuticals as well as flu shots and is born of a skepticism with the general premise of modern medicine which seems to be interested primarily in treating symptoms rather than causes and which seems to treat the human body in a fragmentary rather than a holistic way. I decided to adopt this principle not just because I think it's healthiest for me personally but also because I believe that by embodying it, I might be able to convince others to live from a more powerful perspective.

With that said, there is uncertainty around:

1) how much I might be putting others at risk in this particular situation by not getting vaccinated, and

2) how much risk is associated to getting vaccinated vs. getting COVID?

My questions:

Is it accurate to call my intention here a principle? Or is the issue with it that the very definition of doing something "as little as possible" leaves room for interpretation?

I suspect there is no perfect answer to this but can you speak to the conditions under which you would drop a principle? For example, is the potential threat I'm posing to others by adhering to it a sufficient reason to drop this? Is a principle that can't be broken not more similar to dogma?

As always, I'm looking forward to and am grateful for your insights!

Daniel

Daniel,

Thanks for the feedback. Your position and question elicit two responses from me. As for your stance on vaccines, the first career I pursued was medicine, so I have a background in physiology and pathology. I also worked with doctors in various capacities for several years. I then studied "alternative" health practices. I agree that western medicine tends not to be holistic and puts too much attention on symptoms rather than the source or the whole. I too avoid overly using drugs, etc., sometimes to a fault. But as in all such things, balance seems to be an important principle.

When I was a boy polio and small pox were big problems and crippled or killed millions. Vaccines pretty much eliminated both of those, and the reason you don't have to worry about them today is because of the wide spread use of these vaccines taken by the majority of people around the world. A vaccine simply trains your body to produce antibodies to handle a virus when it enters the body, so it is actually your body that naturally destroys the antigen (virus).

Since you say "as little as possible" you have to decide where that line is. My view is you should definitely get the vaccine. I have gotten both doses myself, and it wasn't a difficult decision. You might want to watch the movie: *The Story of Louis Pasteur*, to get some historical perspective on this matter. Also, it makes clear that health was much worse prior to acknowledging micro-organisms and inventing vaccines, as well as cleaning practices, not contaminating shared objects, and so on.

The issue of principle is one thing, a belief system is another. Perhaps it is possible to

adopt a belief system as a principle by remaining consistent to that way of thinking. But believing in something is not the same as operating from a principle that is clearly experienced—such as honesty or honor or integrity, etc. These are principles you can experience and choose to adopt. Believing in something and so adopting as a principle like "as little as possible" would be a governing element of behavior and so dictate your decision making regarding that arena. Yet it is also founded on a belief and not experience, and so it does seem to lean more toward dogma.

Any principle, just like any dogma, can be dropped. But if dropped, you break your integrity with that principle, so it won't be as effective if readopted. But your principle of not interfering if possible, doesn't mean you can't take action contrary to doing nothing. The intent is about health, not blind faith, correct? So, if you assess or become convinced that some action is healthier than none, it isn't inconsistent to your principle, is it?

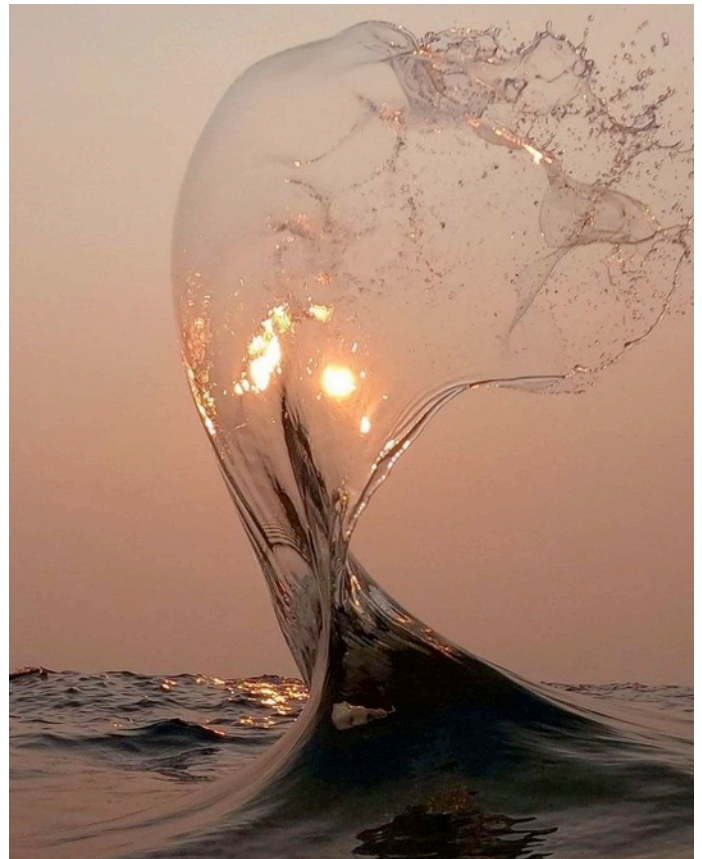
You could get cut, and do nothing, letting the wound be filled "naturally" with contaminants and become dangerously infected, but would you? Or would you clean it and take care of it because you believe in the discoveries of microorganisms such as bacteria and virus and fungi, even though you can't see them without a microscope. You might also use an antibiotic cream if it is bacteria, or antifungal if a fungus, because your commitment is to health not dogma. But you also might not use such assistance, wanting the body to manage by itself and hoping it can manage.

Certainly, one can go too far with such things, or do something like taking antibiotics for a viral infection due to ignorance, not knowing that can't work (bacteria and virus's are extremely different in almost every way, and antibiotics only work on bacteria). Throwing antibiotics at anything and everything would do as much harm as it might benefit. Again, a decision needs to be made where to draw the line.

So, it seems balance is key. How far you go one way or the other is a decision you make based on your knowledge, beliefs, and philosophy. Your principle dictates you take no action if it is the healthiest way to go, but it doesn't say you do nothing when you assess action is healthier, as long as you don't over do it. You could have tight or cramping muscles and do nothing, or you could massage them, that is a form of action that you may agree with, for example. Massage might be a more natural option than taking muscle relaxants, and so you choose one over the other, but not no action at all. It just depends on what you assess is closest to your philosophy on health.

If you went to school in the US you had to get many vaccines. If you travel to certain countries you may be required to take vaccines. There is a reason for that and it is for public health. The benefits of taking the vaccine far outweigh the risk, of which there is virtually none, and seems consistent with doing as little as possible. Getting COVID is not only much worse than getting a simple vaccine, it is bad not just for you but for everyone. To me it's a no brainer.

Peter



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Bryan Alvarez  
Berkeley, CA  
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Hi Peter,

I remember you saying you spent a year experimenting to (create? discover? invent?) effortless power. And that it wasn't something that existed for you until it did. Would you still be exploring effortless power if you hadn't found it yet?

This process of pursuing something as an intention, without knowing whether it exists, seems mysterious. If I search for a purple dragon for the rest of my life, and fully commit to that exploration, maybe I'll find one. Maybe not. My assumptions that it does or doesn't exist now doesn't matter, except that I will probably quit looking if I believe purple

dragons aren't real. But the truth is that a purple dragon does or doesn't exist, whether I know that or not.

So, did you explore effortless power with the belief it was real? Without belief at all? Does it exist because you made the distinction? It seems like it exists because you made the distinction. But effortless power also seems to be something tangible we can point to and say "That's it and that other thing isn't it."

Same for purple dragons and "me."

I thought of a better way to ask my question:

What does it mean to create something? e.g., you created effortless power. I get that the name is conceptual, but there's also an action that exists that we can point to. You either exert power effortlessly or you don't. Did you create anything then or was it already there to be discovered?

Thanks Peter,

Bryan

Bryan,

Creating effortless power was based on experience and precedent. It was not a mere whim or fantasy. I studied martial arts since I was a child, and over time I discerned a preference for a direction that tended toward less effort and more grace, as opposed to using brute strength and ham-fisted actions. I didn't move in this direction because of an aesthetic concern, or morality, or fantasy of some kind, but because it was more effective. I heard stories about relaxed power and internal power that were rather magical in nature, but in the end found that they simply used a more sophisticated form of strength. I imagined that a

truly effortless power must be possible even though no one was doing it.

So, it wasn't mysterious or random. In your example, if you discovered many dragons of various colors and some were red and some blue, you have a foundation to look for a purple dragon. It is founded on real possibility based on your experience even if no one had ever seen one. In this case, perhaps you might breed one into existence. But the possibility is real and based on experience and precedent.

When it came to truly effortless power I just wanted to go all the way, and not stop with tricks and various uses of strength or fantasy and call it something else. Through my studies, I was getting closer and closer over the years to a more fluid or relaxed power, learning everything I could and, as I said, moving in a direction of less strength. I then created the possibility that no strength could be used and still generate power. It wasn't easy and didn't occur overnight. Countless hours of experimentation and investigation was involved. But I insisted it was possible. Partly perhaps because I simply wanted it to be, but also because in a way I could see it, I somehow just "knew" it was possible.

Certainly, I could have been fooling myself, but like I said it wasn't based on a whim or fantasy, and since I made it possible the only thing left was to discover or invent that possibility in reality. It took lots of work and intelligence and creativity, but I did it. We can't say it was there to be discovered because it had to be created or invented. But that is a bit of a paradox also, since the discovery is the invention, creating it is discovering it. The nature of creating means it comes from nothing, which is to say before it

exists it didn't exist. Therein lies the mystery. People miss this connection between discovery and creation.

Peter



2015 Consciousness Apprentices at Rodeo

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Toon Weltens  
Peer, Belgium  
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Hey Peter,

At this point in my journey towards more consciousness I'm struggling with effort and non-effort.

As I understand from the teachings of you and others, awareness itself is completely effortless and awareness itself cannot be improved by any kind of effort, it already is pure "is-ness".

The level of my consciousness today is that I'm still drawn into the objects of experience a lot and for me to focus on awareness itself requires quite an amount of effort, by for example seeing and suppressing

the concepts and constructs that my mind forms. But how does this rime with effortlessness?

In other words, where should I put my effort (if it is needed), in which practices (if any), to eventually get to the level of effortlessness?

Thanks.

Toon

Toon,

You actually didn't get that from my teachings, or you misunderstood and conflated effortless power or an effortlessly effective body-being, which are both physical, with awareness. I don't speak about awareness being effortless, whether it is or not is an open question, I'm simply saying that was never a concern of mine.

Awareness and consciousness are not the same thing. To be aware of something is an action of mind. Consciousness, on the other hand, isn't an action. So, I think you are conflating those also. When you say something like "pure is-ness" perhaps you could be referring to consciousness not awareness; but even so I think you may misunderstand both.

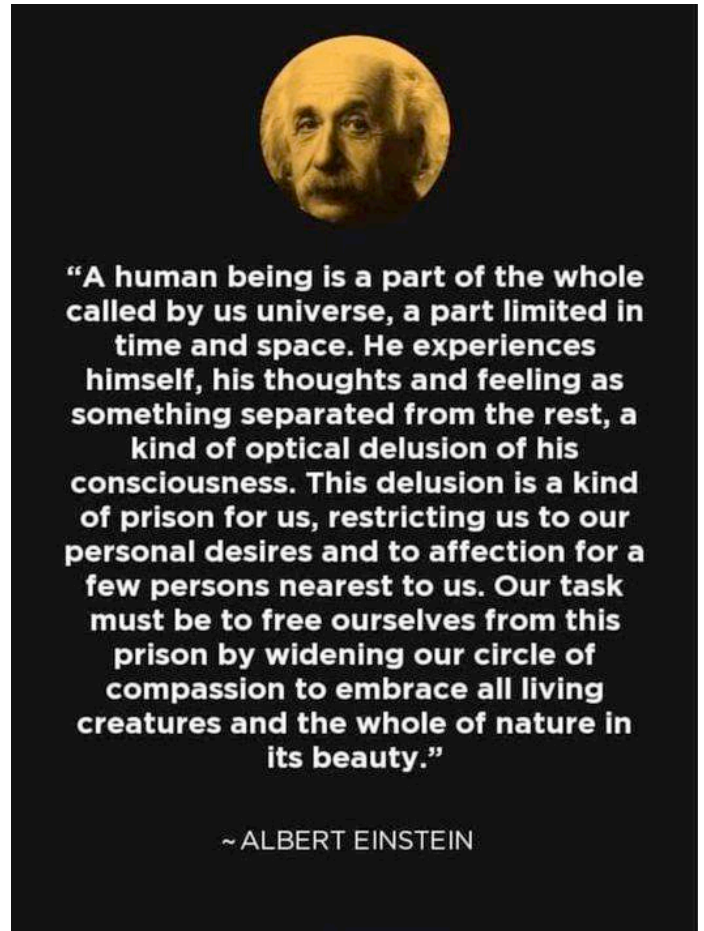
Awareness can be improved and be increased or made more sensitive. Any practice requires directing attention and effort toward some goal, this will involve awareness. In the case of contemplation, the goal is to become more conscious, and that is a leap from awareness to grasping something you hadn't grasped before. Although consciousness itself is simply what it is, our individual depth of consciousness can be increased, otherwise why would we contemplate?

You speak of your awareness focusing on objects of experience, but where else is your awareness going to focus? Do you imagine an ethereal domain of some kind outside of your experience where you should focus? If you found one, it would still be an aspect of experience that you would be aware of. When you speak of suppressing concepts as if this is becoming more aware. You may become more aware but that would only be because your attention is freed of overly conceptualizing and you instead focus on the present moment. This suppression of concepts is really taking action to stop interpretive additions to what is there. In this way, you become more aware of what is simply there without the abundance of "for-me" add-ons. Yet this is still experience, just minus a lot of conceptualizations.

It may be possible to be aware—or to even stop the self-relating conceptual additions to everything—effortlessly. But effortlessness isn't an overall philosophy of my consciousness work, only to my martial work. My consciousness commitment is to the Truth, whether it involves effort or not.

There are many powerful principles that I've discovered and advocate or embrace. These might apply specifically to physical, social, mental-emotional, or other domains. Some apply to more than one domain, others do not. These are not existential Truths. They are either inventions or facts that found some activity, of which you can become aware. Again, that is not consciousness—but it doesn't hurt.

Peter



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James Beale  
Redland, England  
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Dear Peter,

Thank you for your response (last issue). You comment that what I have retained access to is the mind state or shift rather than the consciousness. I have looked into this and not come to any conclusion as yet because I am not familiar enough with such experiences to be able to draw a reliable distinction. It's not that I doubt you are right, but I don't want to stop at accepting your explanation without getting it for myself.

The shift, or state, that I can access is difficult to describe but it seems like the

experience of the absence of me. It may not be direct consciousness but it is different nevertheless from the conclusions and revised concepts that I formed after the original occurrence and that I am left with in my "normal" state. I welcome any comments you have on this, but in any case, it is changing my perspective in interesting ways so I will carry on investigating.

On the same subject, I have been watching a lot of the recordings of you talking, available online and it is a point that you have made often I think – that an insight or enlightenment is momentary, or at least temporally fleeting, and what you are left with afterwards is the relative, the conclusions drawn, but not the direct consciousness. So, is it true to say that the person has become unconscious again? Not unaware, but not directly conscious – until such time as they become (temporarily) conscious again. Is this correct? And if so, is an enlightened individual able to access this consciousness again at will? Or is it the case that once the associated shift is made, there is no reason to gain access again? Or something else entirely...?

There is a YouTube video where you tell the story of the old monk and young monk travelling together which ends in the lesson that when you want to know as much as the drowning monk wants air, THEN you will know. It occurs to me that in an unenlightened state, there can be no real desire for truth for the sake of truth, because desires are self-serving. So a person may seek enlightenment because they think it would be a great add-on to their persona to be wise, etc., but until they are aware of the truth about this persona, they won't see the appeal of truth for its own sake. Which

means that the first step on the road towards enlightenment is a kind of lucky accident.

Staying on it,
James

James,

As you know, I never want you to simply believe what I say, so your attempt to get whatever is true for yourself is, of course, exactly spot on. Also, again, I can't say for sure what is true for you from here, I can only give you my best educated guess. Remember, what I said was: *Your breakthrough or direct consciousness is true, but inevitably what happens is the actual consciousness will tend to be missed in favor of the conclusions formed from the shift in your experience just after it occurred. You say you can access it with concentration but what you are accessing is probably the shift, and mind state, that arose, and you may well miss the pure consciousness. It is difficult not to do this because this consciousness itself has nothing to hang onto. Still, you can get it when you stop looking for a state or experience but grasp your real nature.*

As for your new question, it is impossible to say with accuracy because of the nature of consciousness, but I will bumble about for a bit and see if I can clarify. Enlightenment is always sudden, but that doesn't mean temporary. The problem is, like I've said, what inevitably occurs when a direct conscious breakthrough is made, is the mind will try to make sense of it. This is a different domain from the consciousness itself.

A shift of state will occur and this is what your experience and attention will focus on. If the direct consciousness is deep, this shift will likely be slow to occur and although an immediate mental "understanding" and

representation of the breakthrough will occur, it may be of small import for a while as you bask in the glow of the consciousness, but this basking is also a state. In any case, over time, usually days or weeks, what you will remember is the state and the understanding, but that doesn't mean the consciousness is gone.

The very tricky part—and why usually only those that have had many direct consciousness breakthroughs on the nature of existence can glean—is that the consciousness itself is not an experience, it is as if "prior" to all experience. So when you look into your experience you won't find it, you find the memory of the shift in state that accompanied it, and perhaps try to get back to that state via concentration on it. You've heard me talk about what I call the Lava Syndrome. This is a metaphor about how all breakthroughs become bogged down in the new shift, or "lava" that occurs after the breakthrough (eruption) has occurred. I observed in the early days of my "enlightenments" that others kept confusing all sorts of stuff for their enlightenment. So, I studied why this would be so.

Perhaps I was just lucky, but for some reason I didn't confuse any state or "understanding" with the pure consciousness, but I saw others almost always did. It still took me decades to fully grasp what is going on with all this. In my case, early on what I "said" about my nature was that it is Nothing. Although that was a true statement it also became an answer. When I told one of the masters at an intensive, months after the breakthrough, he said to me, "don't let the nothing become the thing that is no thing." Of course, I was haughty, and immediately said "of course not," as if I would never fall into such a trap. But upon reflection I realized I had exactly

fallen into that trap. It took more work to permanently free myself from such traps and answers.

It is possible to be directly conscious all the time, but this can't be done via the mind or experience and that is where your attention will fall. So, when it does, you will seem to "lose" the consciousness, and instead only have a memory of the state or understanding. This will be a form of "knowing" what's true, but not a direct access. That's because via mind and experience direct access is unavailable, since these are not direct. Direct has to be the thing it-self as-itself. Yet once you can give up trying to use a tool that can't do the job, you can simply grasp the consciousness directly.

Still, when your attention goes somewhere it will be some form of experience. The only way you can have the influence of direct consciousness as a constant on your experience is to actually identify with this consciousness and not a self at all, but that is unlikely without a life-time commitment to such an effort.

You talk about desire to know the truth as a lucky accident, but is it? There may be more than the delusions of a self wanting to survive. It is not impossible for people to know they are not just their persona. They can glean there must be more to an entity than the personality and the act that they put on, knowing in the background that they are just "pretending" these traits. Therefore, there is room to want to know what is really true. Perhaps a genuine just wanting to know the truth simply because it is what is, is possible. If not, then the desire to know is based on some fantasy or belief. Still, if the intent is true—meaning it has to be what's true even if it doesn't fit the fantasy or belief—

then the result is the same. We get to the truth no matter how we get there.

Peter



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Kieran Perez  
San Francisco, CA  
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Peter,

I have two questions:

1. What makes someone a master when it comes to consciousness work?
2. If there is one, what is the most profound question you've ever ask after all these years of work?

Regards,
Kieran

P.S. It was great to finally meet you in person at the last IEW.

Kieran,

I don't think of consciousness work in terms of mastery. Mastery in my mind involves skill, and what skill would we point to with

consciousness? Perhaps we could consider someone who is excellent at facilitation and thoroughly versed in not only the deepest levels of direct absolute consciousness but also the dynamics of mind and perceptive-experience and life, as a master. But no need really.

I couldn't say what the most profound question is, they are all part of the whole, asking what this really is.

Peter

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Jason Shaw  
Wayne, New Jersey  
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Peter,

Good morning. In regards to our apprenticeship talk yesterday regarding principles, can whatever it is that we call a principle exist in an undifferentiated distinction as whatever it is that we call self and be distinct and/or relational?

Also, around august 22, I am doing a 40 day silent retreat that I have already begun to prepare for. I want to examine my relationship to external silence as well as internal silence and see what aspects of internal talk relate to both external chatter and external silence and what the experience of internal silence has on the form and name of language and communication.

Do you have any thoughts or guidance on this?

Thanks,
Jason

Jason,

No. An undifferentiated distinction is not a distinction, by definition. A principle is clearly a distinction and is relative. It is simply contextual in nature, rather than the content that manifests the principle through behavior or action or relationship, etc., depending on the field. Again, you are overshooting and going into abstract fantasy, not grounded reality. Adopting an effective principle can be profound, but it is attainable without profundity or paradox. It can simply be experienced.

Where people very frequently go wrong is to get it only as an idea and not as an experience. Most people don't get there is a difference, and so stay with the idea or understanding but don't activate the principle through experiencing it.

Once I was teaching a martial workshop in Corpus Christi when I first moved to this area. In the class I was trying to get across the principle of offering and leading. I communicated and demonstrated and had them do exercises and play games all to realize the principle of offering. I kept telling them they had to enter the state and disposition that was actually offering opportunities to the opponent so as to lead them. After one strong talk about the necessity to create an "offering" disposition, only one person out of 32 got it enough to do it. How do I know this? I could see it. With an active principle the actions and relationship that occurs for the person adopting it reveal that principle in action. I could see the others didn't really get it, they only got the idea, but one participant did. Do you see the challenge here?

People listen but they don't get the experience being referred to, thinking all they can get is the idea, perhaps because they mistakenly believe that if something is spoken all that can be had is an intellectual representation. But this is just not true. Most people don't know that though.

Not sure what your goals are for your retreat, or what you mean by all the silence stuff. But without language there is no internal talk. Although not speaking and having external silence might be helpful in some ways, the internal silence or just silence is the important thing. Instead of focusing on not speaking to yourself and so pitting this activity against silence, I wouldn't worry about that. Focus on "silence" whether there is noise inside or out.

Peter

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Kevin Black  
Vancouver, Canada  
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Hello Peter,

What is the nature of God? I have heard that we are God, people saying that they themselves are God, and that we are all the same God, or infinite consciousness (things of that nature). My current experience tells me that I am part of reality, and therefore part of God or an expression of God. But not actually an infinite aware consciousness. Am I missing part of the greater picture? Is there a mechanism of experience that allows one to become aware of their God nature?

Thank you for your time,
Kevin

Kevin,

Well, that's an old question, isn't it? First thing I think we should acknowledge is that we don't know what we're talking about when speaking of God. If we postulate that whatever God is, it is the creator of reality, then we have a place to start.

Our first thought might be if God is the creator of reality, then it can't be reality itself or a part of reality. You might ask: why can't God be part of reality? But consider, if God is the creator of reality then what God is has to exist somehow before reality exists, and so it can't be part of it.

Even if God and reality arise together and somehow in an infinite way, still God is creating reality and so if it *is* reality we still have a hard time understanding the nature of God. Why then isn't God simply reality and we have no need for the concept of God? That would end the discussion there. But if we continue with the idea of God, why would we make it a person or people? Do you or anyone experience actually creating reality? No.

You, and humans, create many things, like perspective and beliefs, culture and values, and many other inventions. But you don't have any experience of creating objects or space, and so on. So, it seems a cop out to say things like I am God, or we are God. Unless someone is directly conscious of what God is and that it is the same as what they are, then such a claim is just hot air. If it is not, then they must be referring to an existence that is the true nature and creator of reality that they are, and not just a person that is only a limited part of existence.

But why speculate? It is silly for us to think that our very limited and biased minds could grasp the creation or real nature of existence, no matter what it is. Perhaps we can become directly conscious of it, but that is not speculation and is not a function of mind. It must be prior to or beyond mind, otherwise it would be stuck in thought and belief, and these don't come close to being able to contain the absolute nature of existence.

I don't speak about God, except as a shortcut sometimes using it as a reference to the absolute nature of existence. The Truth is whatever the Truth is, the word God tends to have so much baggage associated with it, and too much faith and religion attached as to make it merely a belief, and most often a rather silly and simplistic one. I think Buddha said it best: I don't believe in God and I don't believe in not-God.

Peter





That's it for this Newsletter

Let your friends know about our NEW website:

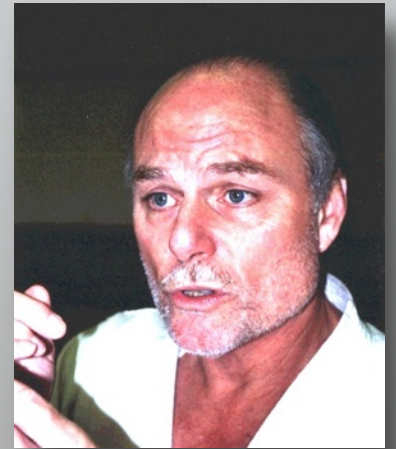
PeterRalston.com

or

www.ChengHsin.com

Keep the e-mail questions and contributions coming! (when you write, please include your full name and location)

Until next time,
Peter Ralston



Submit to a daily practice.
Your loyalty to that is a ring on the door.
Keep knocking, and the joy inside will
eventually open a window,
and look out to see who's there.
– “The Essential Rumi”

