

Article

## Learning to Forget: Deprogramming as a Precondition for the Occurrence of Non-Dual States of Consciousness

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### ABSTRACT

Deprogramming appears to be a necessary prerequisite for transition to non-dual states of consciousness. I begin by peeling away layers of conditioning around the existential triad of aging, disease, and death, before questioning the necessity of deprogramming itself. The induction of transcendence is offered as an alternative to surrender along with warnings about the need for adequate preparation before encountering the transcendent. This discussion is situated within the context of the philosophy of Franklin Merrell-Wolff.

**Key Words:** deprogramming, non-dual consciousness, transcendence, Franklin Merrell-Wolff.

Franklin Merrell-Wolff was an American mystic who realized a non-dual state of consciousness on August 7, 1936 followed by a state of “high indifference” on September 8, 1936. A conference is held every year at the Great Space Center, property on which he had lived on the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains near the base of Mt. Whitney in California. The following is the keynote talk given by the author at the 2013 Franklin Merrell-Wolff Conference at the Great Space Center on August 10, 2013.

I thought that we could go on a walkabout and just talk for a while. And then, maybe if we are lucky, by the time we get back to the starting point, we will know less than we did before we started.

So let us start with one of my favourite quotations from Franklin Wolff: “The mystical participation in the object holds mankind in an hypnotic spell which is harder to break than bars of iron.”<sup>1</sup> When I read that, I get an image of myself gripping black, vertical bars of iron desperately peering out from behind them. What makes this somewhat ironic, is that in that image of myself, there are no bars beside me, or behind me, or above me. Just in front of me. And I am grasping them with a considerable degree of desperation. Notice the implications of that image. We are not in a cage. No one has jailed us. We simply choose to hold on to participation in the objects of experience in a mesmerized state.

Several years ago, I was at dinner with Jeanette Wayne, a practitioner of traditional Chinese

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<sup>1</sup>Merrell-Wolff, F. (1970). *Introceptualism: The philosophy of consciousness without an object: Volume II*. Phoenix: Phoenix Philosophical Press. p. 158

medicine in Toronto, and I asked her to help me to become enlightened over dinner. “Ok,” she said, and told me what to do. Then: “Stop holding on!” she said. “Let go!” “You’re like this,” she said, clawing at the dinner table with her fingernails. But much as I tried, I could not let go. That would be the me that is desperately grasping the bars of iron. So how do we do that? How do we learn to release?

For Franklin, that release is essential for non-dual states of consciousness to occur. “There is one safe way alone, and essential to that is the sacrifice of everything that the aspirant possesses, and everything that he is—a holding to nothing, to wealth, to position, to career, to family, to preferred conceptions, to life itself. That alone is the secure way. That is essential. All else, including meditative techniques, are of the nature of aids, and not essential. . . . The keynote, so far as the breaking through to the Transcendent is concerned, is purity, not alone in the more familiar sense in which one eschews obviously lurid ideas, but purity in the far more comprehensive sense of completeness of self-giving.”<sup>2</sup>

Let me just grab onto this notion of releasing “preferred conceptions” of reality. I want to talk about this in the context of the British biologist Rupert Sheldrake’s notion of morphic fields. For Sheldrake, morphic fields are patterns that structure everything in physical manifestation. These can be concrete sorts of things such as the actual shapes that living beings have. For instance, the reason that an insect has the shape and organization that it does is because there are morphogenetic fields that guide physical development. But they can also guide patterns of behaviour. And those patterns of behaviour become increasingly entrenched the more frequently they occur. All the letters of the alphabet are laid out on in a particular arrangement on a keyboard and through repeated use of that particular layout people get quicker and quicker at using it. If one were to change the placement of letters on a keyboard, Sheldrake’s theory predicts that it would take longer to type something, not just due to lack of familiarity with that particular keyboard, but because the morphic field for that keyboard is not as strong. And there is some evidence to support this contention.<sup>3</sup> By this theory, cancer has a morphic field that guides the sequence of events that occur for someone who experiences this disease including typical reactions by medical personnel, treatments, outcomes, and so on.

For those of you who prefer a more esoteric account of reality, the notion of morphic fields can be broken into two components, one of which is that of a “thoughtform” on the astral planes, and the other of which is an etheric matrix on the etheric planes that is created by that thoughtform and that serves to direct physical manifestation. Identifying morphic fields as thoughtforms also shifts the objective notion of a morphic field onto our subjective territory since we are thinking beings creating our thoughts. The idea is this, that if we create and hold a thoughtform with sufficient intensity, it will manifest at the level of physical manifestation in our lives. This is just the idea that energy follows thought. By this account, we lend our energy to the morphic fields that condition our lives. We create the bars of iron, which we then grasp with all of our might.

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<sup>2</sup>Merrell-Wolff, F. (1995). *Mathematics, philosophy & yoga: A lecture series presented at the Los Olivos Conference Room in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1966*. Phoenix, AZ: Phoenix Philosophical Press. p. 5

<sup>3</sup>Sheldrake, R. (1988). *The presence of the past: Morphic resonance and the habits of nature*. New York: Times Books.

## Aging

So that we understand just what is at stake here, let me just say a little bit about three of these morphic fields: aging, disease, and death. I was just reading Thich Nhat Hahn's new book *Fear: Essential Wisdom for Getting through the Storm*. Here is what he says: "I am of the nature to grow old. I cannot escape growing old. That is the first remembrance: 'Breathing in, I know I am of the nature to grow old. Breathing out, I know I can't escape growing old.' . . . This contemplation comes from the sutra in the Anguttara Kikaya III 70–71. *Surely I will have to grow old*. This is a truth that is universal and inevitable."<sup>4</sup> So, notice what Thich Nhat Hahn is doing for us. He reaffirms the morphic field of aging for us; lodging us more firmly into its grasp. And he helps us get even more stuck by citing some holy book in case we dare to question such absolute truths as these.

When I was still a graduate student in mathematics, my thesis advisor, Professor Verena Dyson, taught me a couple of graduate courses in advanced logic. I was the only student in the class and her way of teaching me was to tell me that I was going to come in and lecture to her for two hours a day, twice a week. In other words, she was not going to teach me anything. I had to learn it myself and then teach her.

But that was not the end of it. I went to pick up one of the first homework assignments that I had handed in to her for grading. She gave it back to me and said "I don't want to see garbage like this from you ever again!" When I looked at it, everything I had done was correct. Her problem with my work was that it was too pedestrian. She insisted that I learn to prove mathematical theorems in a more conceptually sophisticated manner. I pointed out that I had followed the protocols used by Michael Arbib and Ernest Manes in a textbook that we were using.<sup>5</sup> Her response was: "I don't care what they did. You have to get it right!" with an emphasis on the word "right." I realized at that point that all bets were off. I could trust no other mathematician's work because nobody's standards were up to Verena's standards. I realized that I was going to have to do everything myself even if it meant reconstructing all of mathematics from first principles. And, of course, since we were working in mathematical foundations, those first principles were in dispute in the first place. That was probably the most valuable lesson that I learned from Verena: Do not believe anything! Do the work yourself! It is this independence of thinking that has allowed me to cut across the various conventions in academia and to follow the truth using logic and the results of empirical investigation. I think that it is also important to remember that, for Franklin Wolff, logic is our friend, right up to the discontinuity in the transition to transcendence.

I am also reminded of one of my favourite Zen stories: "The Zen master Mu-nan sent for his disciple Shoju one day and said, 'I am an old man now, Shoju, and it is you who will carry on this teaching. Here is a book that has been handed down for seven generations from master to master. I have myself added some notes to it that you will find valuable. Here, keep it with you as a sign that

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<sup>4</sup>Hahn, T. N. (2012). *Fear: Essential wisdom for getting through the storm*. New York: HarperOne. pp. 30–31

<sup>5</sup>Arbib, M. A. & E. G. Manes (1975). *Arrows, structures and functors—The categorical imperative*. New York: Academic Press.

I have made you my successor.’ Shoju burned it immediately!’<sup>6</sup>

So, Thich Nhat Hahn is showing us how mindfulness practice can help us to come to grips with the inevitability of aging. And certainly, acceptance of a situation as it is, is the first necessary step in its transformation. So now that we have accepted the presence of this morphic field, can we get out from underneath it so that it does not bind our actions? In other words, can we stop from getting older?

First of all, we can simply regard aging as a biological problem, to be solved through advances in medicine. This is not as crazy as it sounds. “Scientists are tackling the almost incredibly complicated story of the biochemistry of the aging organism. A base of knowledge concerning the normal cell is being established that makes it possible to recognize and analyze the pathological cell. However distant the goal, we are now at last on the road to a successful solution of this great problem.”<sup>7</sup> This statement might not surprise you, but you might find it interesting that this is Warren Weaver, who would go on to develop the notion of “information,” writing in 1948.

So what do we know 65 years later? Well, for one thing, we have a much better understanding of the role of nutrition in the development of chronic diseases. In his new book *Whole*, Colin Campbell not only discusses the benefits of a plant-based diet but the social factors that have contributed to the concealment of that knowledge.<sup>8</sup> There is also ongoing research into the biochemical processes associated with aging. For instance, in experiments being carried out at Yale University, the SENS Research Foundation Laboratory, and the Institute of Biotechnology at Cambridge University, researchers are trying to cleave crosslinked proteins that lead to hardening of the arteries. At the Wake Forest Institute for Regenerative Medicine efforts are being made to reconstitute the thymus gland, which is responsible for the production of some of our immune cells, and which shrinks with age.<sup>9</sup> Through advances in the understanding of the biochemistry of aging, nutrition, and so on, I think that we will continue to live longer and longer until we live indefinitely with the body’s aging process completely neutralized. I sometimes tell my students that they could be the first generation to live indefinitely. And once indefinite life becomes the norm, that will become the morphic field.

But if we wish to live a long life, we might not individually have enough time for medicine to catch up to us. However, we might not need to. By deliberately moving out from underneath the morphic field of aging, we might be able to achieve some benefits. Professor Ellen Langer at Harvard University conducted what she called “the counterclockwise study.” In 1979, eight elderly men

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<sup>6</sup>Feldman, C. & Kornfield, J. (Eds.) (1991). *Stories of the spirit, stories of the heart: Parables of the spiritual path from around the world*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco. p. 257

<sup>7</sup>Weaver, W. (1948). Science and complexity. *American Scientist*, 36. 536–544. p. 540

<sup>8</sup>Campbell, T. C. (2013). *Whole: Rethinking the science of nutrition*. Dallas, Texas: BenBella Books.

<sup>9</sup>SENS Research Foundation, *Annual Report*, April 2013. (SENS Research Foundation, 110 Pioneer Way, Suite J – Mountain View, CA 94041 – USA)

were taken on a retreat for one week during which time they had to live as if it were 1959. A control group of eight men got to experience the same retreat except that they reminisced about 1959. The participants in the experimental group had greater improvements on joint flexibility, finger length, manual dexterity; higher IQ; better weight, height, gait, and posture than the participants in the control group. By pretending that they were twenty years younger, the bodies of the elderly men in the experimental group became functionally younger. There were improvements in the control group as well, so these changes were on top of those that these men experienced just as a result of getting out of the nursing homes in which they were incarcerated.<sup>10</sup> In other words, just imagining that it is 20 years ago can cause physical changes in our bodies. Our bodies follow what our minds imagine.

Perhaps specific knowledge concerning longevity already exists. The Buddhist practitioner, Padampa Sangyey apparently lived for 572 years. Of course, it could just be that Buddhists cannot count. But what if it turns out that they can? Sangyey's longevity has been attributed to his practice of *chu len*, the ability to absorb "universal nutrition" without eating any food. Apparently there are four main ways of carrying out this practice: "extracting essential nutrient from flowers, extracting the essence of stone, taking the sky as food, and living on purified mercury."<sup>11</sup> He used the first of those techniques whereby a practitioner takes a few pills made from flowers each day. Consistent with the advice about siddhis given by Franklin Wolff, in writing of this practice, the second Dalai Lama warns that only those who "have renunciation that sees the entirety of samsara as a pit of fire" should engage in it and that "this teaching should not be imparted to . . . the foolhardy meditators who wish to engage in exotic austerities merely to achieve fame and the material benefits that come with it."<sup>12</sup>

According to the second Dalai Lama, the benefits of the "practice of living on mystical essence flower pills" include the following: "It heals every type of disease, extends lifespan, and increases bodily vigor. It restores youth and causes signs of age, such as wrinkles and white hair, to disappear. It provides immunity to illness and causes insects and infections to leave and stay away from one's body. . . . [It] increases wisdom, generates a clearer intellect, and, by freeing one from negative means of livelihood, makes it easy for profound insight and realization to be accomplished and the spiritual path traversed. One will become loved by people, guided by the divinities, and will achieve every joy and happiness."<sup>13</sup> While there have not been any scientific studies to examine these claims, this is a living tradition with yogis engaging in the ritual of making the flower pills and with some having apparently ceased to eat ordinary food and able to subsist solely on the flower pills.

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<sup>10</sup>Langer, E. (2009). *Counter clockwise: Mindful health and the power of possibility*. New York: Ballentine.

<sup>11</sup>Mullin, G. (Ed.) (2006). *The Dalai Lamas on tantra*. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications. p. 319

<sup>12</sup>Mullin, G. (Ed.) (2006). *The Dalai Lamas on tantra*. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications. pp. 326–327

<sup>13</sup>Mullin, G. (Ed.) (2006). *The Dalai Lamas on tantra*. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications. p. 331

We started with the assumption that aging is inevitable, but even within a few minutes of thinking about it critically, we can see that perhaps it is not. And in the course of our deliberation, we also have some reason to think that perhaps disease is not inevitable. So let us consider whether we could achieve states of continuous physical health.

## Disease

One way that good health could be possible might have to do with a better understanding of time and our ability to anticipate what will happen in the future. The following is one of my favourite examples of a premonition. In Beatrice, a quiet town in Nebraska, on March 1, 1950, the pastor lit the furnace at the West Side Baptist Church in anticipation of the 7:20 p.m. choir practice and then went back home planning to return with his family at 7:15 p.m. when everyone would show up. The choristers had a tradition of punctuality. At 7:25 p.m. the church exploded as a result of a gas leak set off by flames from the furnace. The walls of the church blew outward and the roof collapsed. But the church was empty. None of the 15 choir members had showed up. That had never happened before. Nor were there any reasons for the no-shows such as bad weather or competing events that would have kept people away. Subsequently, Warren Weaver, the information theorist we have already met, calculated the odds of all 15 choristers not showing up on a particular night at one million to one. It would seem that people just knew that they needed to stay away.<sup>14</sup>

There has been considerable scientific research into various forms of premonitions. For example, a paper written by the psychologist Daryl Bem was published in 2011 in one of the most prestigious psychology journals, *The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. In that paper Bem describes nine experiments with four different experimental protocols in which he successfully demonstrated the anticipation of future events. Let me describe the last of those, Experiment 9.

Fifty participants in Experiment 9 individually arrived at the laboratory and were seated in front of a computer screen. Forty-eight words were presented to participants one at a time and they were asked to visualize the referent of each of the words as they were shown. These were common and uncommon nouns such as tables and rabbits, or pomegranates and rabbis. After being presented with the 48 words, participants were asked to type out as many of the words from that list as they could remember. After a participant had produced a recall list, the computer randomly selected 24 of those words, presented them to the participant, one after the other as before, and then had the participant work with those words. The question is, did that later practice help with the recall task that came just before it? In other words, did participants anticipate which words they would be practising? The answer was “yes.” Bem found a large effect with more practiced words than not-practised words showing up on the recall list.<sup>15</sup>

One of my thesis students, Vanille Rabier, decided that she wanted to try to replicate the results of

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<sup>14</sup>Dossey, L. (2009). *The power of premonitions: How knowing the future can shape our lives*. New York: Dutton.

<sup>15</sup>Bem, D. J. (2011). Feeling the future: Experimental evidence for anomalous retroactive influences on cognition and affect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100(3), 407–425.

that experiment. So we set up Experiment 9 in my laboratory at King's University College. It took about 1½ years to gather data from 102 participants. In the end, we found no effect of future practice on the words on the recall list. This result is consistent with most other replication attempts. But this raises questions about what happened in Bem's two experiments.

Why am I talking about something that did not come out as expected? One reason is because I am tired of new age types who present only evidence that supports their claims and ignore all contrary evidence. I spoke earlier about the importance of logic and empirical observations in guiding us toward an understanding of reality and this is an illustration of what that process looks like. Not everything is always weird. Another reason for talking about it is that the experimental protocol is clever and easily instantiated informally in our lives. My students and I had a long discussion about this experiment in class and we realized that if retrocausal recall really does occur, then they could study for their exams after they had written them. This has implications for other aspects of our lives. If something happened in the past that we do not like, what if we imagine changing it now, in the present? Perhaps we can manipulate the past.

Failure to replicate has not been a problem with the so-called presentiment studies. When presented with unexpected stimuli, such as emotionally provocative pictures, human beings respond with a distinctive pattern of physiological activation. Various measures can be taken to detect such activation, including measures of the electrical conductance of the skin. In one experiment, 24 participants were each shown a series of photographs while their skin conductance was measured. Some of the photographs were expected to have a calming effect and others of them were expected to have an arousing effect. As anticipated, afterwards there were increases in skin conductance for the emotionally arousing but not the calming photographs.

What is surprising, perhaps, is that the levels of skin conductance for emotionally arousing photographs were higher than those of calming photographs for about 3 seconds prior to the presentation of the photographs. Furthermore, using data from 33 participants, when emotionally arousing photographs were separated into those with erotic themes and those with violent themes, it was found that there was greater prior skin conductance for the photographs with erotic themes than those with violent themes, suggesting that participants' bodies were reacting to the meaning and not just the shock value of the pictures. When the anomalous presentiment study was replicated in a separate laboratory by a different researcher with 16 participants, again, the levels of skin conductance were higher prior to viewing emotionally arousing photographs than calming photographs, and photographs with erotic rather than violent themes.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Radin, D. I. (1997). *The conscious universe: The scientific truth of psychic phenomena*. New York: HarperEdge.

Radin, D. I. (1997). Unconscious perception of future emotions: An experiment in presentiment. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 11(2), 163–180.

Bierman, D. J., & Radin, D. (1999). Conscious and anomalous nonconscious emotional processes: A reversal of the arrow of time? In S. R. Hameroff, A. W. Kaszniak, & D. J. Chalmers (Eds.), *Toward a Science of Consciousness III: The third Tucson discussions and debates* (pp. 367–385). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Radin, D. I. (2004). Electrodermal presentiments of future emotions. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 18(2), 253–273.

Julia Mossbridge with some of her colleagues recently did a metanalysis of 26 reports of experiments with arousing vs. neutral stimuli or correct vs. incorrect guessing tasks and found overall evidence of precognition. The odds against chance of getting those results was one million to one.<sup>17</sup> So we might not be able to pick up on specific words that we are going to encounter, but there is good evidence for other types of precognition.

The most common occurrence of premonitions is in dreams. In my case, I have precognitive dreams on a regular basis. Let me give one example. This is a dream I had written down on the morning of Saturday, April 21, 2012, just a little over a year ago: “I had gone somewhere where I was supposed to sing, and realized that I should have brought better clothing to wear. Then it occurred to me that I hadn’t actually left, and I could still bring the clothing with me.” I had learned, over decades of analysing my dreams, that singing in my dreams is a symbol for my service to humanity. In real life, I had been invited to be the International Speaker at the California Cognitive Science Conference at the University of California Berkeley where I was to speak in exactly one week. That could be the activity in real life that corresponded to the “singing” in the dream. I almost never wear nice clothing, and certainly not when I travel, even if I am speaking. So I was just going to bring my usual clothing with me. But my dream appeared to be telling me that I would wish that I had brought nice clothing to wear. My dreams are often self-referential and so, in this dream as well, I realized that I had not yet left and had a chance to correct the situation. In other words, the dream is referring to itself as a premonition of a future event. I decided to bring some nice clothing with me and was glad that I had done so.

So, I dream about something that will happen in the future. I am not happy with what will happen. And I realize that the future is not actually here yet, so I can change it. Can this be applied to our health? Of course. On September 1, 2010, I wrote down the following dream: “I was in a house. There was a large, dark cloud outside, that had a blob in it that had descended all the way to the ground. It was coming toward the house that I was in.” Two weeks later, doctors found a blob the size of a lemon in the middle of my liver. They told me that they were pretty certain that it was cancer and sent me to a surgeon to have the right lobe of my liver cut out. I never went to the surgeon. Instead I followed my dreams until the health crisis had cleared. I have described the details of this process in Chapter 4 of my new book *The Impossible Happens*.<sup>18</sup>

If we do not like the way things are, we can sometimes change them. But what if we miss the warning dreams or do not see how we can change an outcome? Perhaps healing can nonetheless take place. I was talking to Michael Hall a while ago. Dr. Hall is a psychotherapist and an enlightened Zen master. He told me that prior to his enlightenment, he had learned to do energy healing. He said that he had reached a point where all that would need to happen was for him to hear about someone who was ill and that person would be healed. Is such radical healing possible?

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<sup>17</sup>Mossbridge, J., Tressoldi, P., & Utts, J. (2012). Predictive physiological anticipation preceding seemingly unpredictable stimuli: A meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology: Perception Science*, 3, 1–18.

<sup>18</sup>Barušs, I. (2013). *The impossible happens: A scientist's personal discovery of the extraordinary nature of reality*. Alresford, Hampshire, UK: John Hunt Publishing.



I read Richard Bartlett's book *Matrix Energetics: The Science and Art of Transformation* in which he has provided instructions for the use of techniques whose purpose is to create radical transformation, including healing. According to Dr. Bartlett, we can make up the rules by which reality functions: "God give me the grace to accept the things that I cannot change. And grant unto me the power to change the things that I cannot accept!"<sup>19</sup> I ended up learning ME, that is to say, Matrix Energetics, and running two experiments over the course of three years in remote healing using techniques derived from ME.

These experiments were done entirely over the Internet. In the second experiment, I would e-mail a participant and tell her the time at which I would begin a session for her. The participant had to answer three questions on a six-point scale indicating whether or not anything unusual had happened, whether she had felt more fatigued than she had expected to have been, and whether she had felt more energized than expected. Once I had e-mailed the participant, I would flip a coin. If the coin landed heads, I would do a session for her. If the coin landed tails, I would do nothing further. What I found was that there was a statistically significant difference between the changes to energy levels of participants when I did a session than what I did not. In other words, I seemed to be able to jiggle the energy levels of participants.

The statistical analyses did not surprise me because I had already heard this from the responses that I had received from participants. For instance, during an ME session for her, I had imagined sending energy down a participant's arms into her hands. The participant wrote back that she had not even seen my e-mail when she says "I became aware of a pulsating feeling in the fingers of my left hand (I'm right handed. Yes, it momentarily was a what in the world is this all about concern. But the feeling, shortly, ceased.)" It would appear that the participant could feel the effects of my efforts.<sup>20</sup>

I knew what she was talking about because I had been on the receiving end of this kind of attention from Jeanette, the healer that I mentioned previously. One evening, I was driving Jeanette and one of her acolytes back to Jeanette's place in my car. I was talking to the acolyte who was sitting beside me in the front while Jeanette was sitting quietly in the back. We were stopped at a traffic light when I noticed something happening in my head. I said: "Jeanette, are you doing that or am I doing that to myself?" Jeanette said: "That depends on what it is." I said: "The stuff in my head." to which she replied: "Oh yeah, that's me." She explained that she was just removing infarcts from my brain. I said "Thank you!"

Dramatic healing is possible. I think we can all do it to some extent. And I think that it occurs more frequently than we think that it does. But there needs to be considerably more research in order to determine the parameters of such healing. Nonetheless, both because we can anticipate situations that could lead to illness and because we can heal ourselves, I think that we can challenge our conditioned attitude that illness is inevitable.

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<sup>19</sup>Bartlett, R. (2007). *Matrix energetics: The science and art of transformation*. New York: Atria. p. 51

<sup>20</sup>Barušs, I. (2013). *The impossible happens: A scientist's personal discovery of the extraordinary nature of reality*. Alresford, Hampshire, UK: John Hunt Publishing.

## Death

What about death? Does it all just end when the physical body ceases to support life? Near-death experiences, experiences in which people have been close to death, continue to be studied scientifically, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to discount what occurs during such experiences as brain blips and wishful fantasies. I like Anita Moorjani's account of her near-death experience in her book *Dying to be Me*.

Anita had lymphoma, a type of cancer. After more than three years of treatment, there was nothing more that doctors could do for her. She needed to use an oxygen tank in order to be able to breathe, she could not lie down as she would drown in her own body fluids, she had skin lesions throughout her body, she could not sleep, her digestive system could not absorb nutrients so that her body consumed itself and she became a skeleton, her muscles disintegrated and she could no longer walk. One morning her face, arms, and legs swelled up and she went into a coma. The doctors told her husband that it was too late to save her.

Anita however, felt fine. More than fine. She felt that she had awakened to a consciousness that extended across space and time so that she "encompassed . . . everything and everyone."<sup>21</sup> "Although I try to share my near-death experience here, there are no words that can come close to describing its depth and the amount of knowledge that came flooding through."<sup>22</sup> So she uses the following metaphor. She asks us to imagine a dark warehouse in which we are wandering around with a single flashlight. Suddenly someone throws a switch and all sorts of lights, neon signs, and fireworks come on, illuminating the varied contents of the warehouse. She says "Even when the switch goes back off, nothing can take away your understanding and clarity, the wonder and beauty, or the fabulous aliveness of the experience."<sup>23</sup>

Anita says that she also knew that if she chose to go back into her body, then she would heal within days. She says: "I understood that my body is only a reflection of my internal state. If my inner self were aware of its greatness and connection with All-that-is, my body would soon reflect that and heal rapidly."<sup>24</sup> According to the medical records at the hospital in which Anita was treated, within several days there was a 70% reduction in the size of her tumours. A physician investigating her case afterwards could not understand how billions of cancer cells could leave her body so quickly since her internal organs were barely functioning.

Why are we talking about this? Anita says that her life had been driven by fear. It took almost four

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<sup>21</sup>Moorjani, A. (2012). *Dying to be me: My journey from cancer, to near death, to true healing*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House. p. 64

<sup>22</sup>Moorjani, A. (2012). *Dying to be me: My journey from cancer, to near death, to true healing*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House. p. 71

<sup>23</sup>Moorjani, A. (2012). *Dying to be me: My journey from cancer, to near death, to true healing*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House. p. 72

<sup>24</sup>Moorjani, A. (2012). *Dying to be me: My journey from cancer, to near death, to true healing*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House. p. 75

years of having cancer take everything away from her before she was willing to surrender. The night before her complete collapse she says: “I could feel myself relaxing and letting go of the strong grip with which I’d been clinging to life. . . . I was finally ready to let go of everything that I’d been gripping so tightly.”<sup>25</sup> In her case, that literally included her life. So when Franklin Wolff says that one must surrender everything, even life itself, he is not exaggerating. In Anita’s case, the result was a non-dual state of consciousness. And with the actualization of that state, harmony was restored.

Here is an important point. The active ingredient in ME is the ability to enter, as much as possible, into a non-dual state of consciousness, because it is from that state of consciousness, where all possibilities for reality exist, that change can occur. In my second ME experiment, I found that the more I could enter into a non-dual state of consciousness when doing a session for someone, the more likely she was to feel fatigued. That relationship was statistically significant. To me the fatigue signifies states in which someone can dramatically readjust her manifestation in reality.<sup>26</sup>

So, Anita found that her physical body is an expression of a deep part of herself that is not conditioned by what happens with her physical body. She found, in fact, that reality works the other way round, so that the decisions that she makes from the deep parts of herself are necessarily reflected in physical manifestation, even if it means having billions of cancer cells miraculously disappear so that she can be in good health. And that deep part of herself is already beyond death.

If the dead are not dead, then where are they? Are they still with us? Are they just hanging out with us? Some people, we call mediums, can apparently communicate with the dead. Sherifa, Franklin Wolff’s wife, was a medium. Angie Aristone is a medium who worked together with me on some research projects and who used to come to my classes to give demonstrations to students. The first time she came to one of my classes, she turned to one of the students in the class and said: “Your mother was one of seven children in the family,” then went on to tell her various things about herself. Then she turned to another of the students in the class and said: “Your mother was one of seventeen children in the family.” Both numbers were correct. The following is an actual interchange between Angie and myself about a deceased friend of mine:

Angie: Is there, okay, I’ve never been to Montreal. Is there a “Lafal” or “Laval” or a place that sounds like that? . . . Is Lafal or Laval like a city, or a place or a neighbourhood?

Imants: I think it’s a place, yeah. I think it’s a university called Laval, but there’s also a district.

Angie: Okay, yeah, because . . . this feels like a neighbourhood, or an area, or a city suburb. You know what I mean? . . . And there’s like brown stones in this area, almost like New York to me. He’s comparing, well I have no frame of reference, so I’m getting the upper west side of New York. So brown stones, . . . and corner cafes, and that kind of neighbourhoody kind of feel.

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<sup>25</sup>Moorjani, A. (2012). *Dying to be me: My journey from cancer, to near death, to true healing*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House. p. 56

<sup>26</sup>Barušs, I. (2013). *The impossible happens: A scientist's personal discovery of the extraordinary nature of reality*. Alresford, Hampshire, UK: John Hunt Publishing.

Imants: He was a neighbourhoody kind of guy.

Angie's reference to "Laval" seemed off the mark. I knew that my friend had not gone to Laval University and I really doubted that he would have lived in the Montreal suburb of Laval. So what was the Laval reference? When I checked with his girlfriend, it turned out that my friend had lived on the corner of Laval Street and the Carré Saint-Louis in Montreal. That neighbourhood, from what I could learn about it, matched the description given by Angie.

So mediums get correct information. This has been validated in formal studies, for instance, by my colleague Professor Gary Schwartz at the University of Arizona and by Dr. Julie Beischel at the Windbridge Institute. The question is, is that information coming from actual dead people or are mediums just able to draw that information out of wherever it is through a process of remote viewing? This turns out to be a nontrivial problem.

Suppose that we can establish that the dead are around. Could they help us? I think that depends on who they are and their ability to get through to us and to have an effect on physical manifestation. I think that some can get through and others cannot. And they could help us with pretty much anything. In the course of working on an open problem in advanced logic for my master's thesis, I asked Kurt Gödel, a deceased mathematician whom I respected, if the proof would go through. I had the impression that he said that it would, and a few months later my advisor and I were able to prove the theorem. That chapter from my thesis has recently been published in the academic journal *Logica Universalis*.<sup>27</sup>

In his most recent book, *The Sacred Promise*, Professor Gary Schwartz discusses collaboration with the deceased as a way of obtaining knowledge. In particular, he says that at this point in time there is interest among the deceased to cooperate with scientists who are alive in order to prove the existence of life after death.<sup>28</sup> So we could see increased scientific cooperation between the living and the deceased with regard to matters that could be important to those of us who are still living.

Near-death experiences and mediumship are just two of the lines of investigation that have been brought to bear on the survival hypothesis, the hypothesis that consciousness in some form continues after death. Other important ones include the study of children who appear to recall previous lives; the visible appearance of ghosts; instrumental transcommunication, which refers to electronic communication with the dead; and direct knowing through an awakening to the nature of reality. Taken together, this research strongly tips the scales in favour of survival of consciousness after death. In fact, having been exposed to the sum of this research, denial of survival is sometimes said to be the equivalent of standing in front of Mount Everest and insisting that one cannot see a mountain. That is how strong the evidence is at this point.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Barušs, I., & Woodrow, R. (2013). A reduction theorem for the Kripke-Joyal semantics: Forcing over an arbitrary category can always be replaced by forcing over a complete Heyting algebra. *Logica Universalis*, 7(3), 323–334. (DOI: 10.1007/s11787-013-0084-y)

<sup>28</sup>Schwartz, G. E. (2011). *The sacred promise: How science is discovering spirit's collaboration with us in our daily lives*. Hillsboro, Oregon: Beyond Words.

<sup>29</sup>Barušs, I. (2003). *Alterations of consciousness: An empirical analysis for social scientists*.

We have just tackled preconceptions about aging, disease, and death, and loosened them up. I chose these deliberately, since they are at the core of much of human suffering. So there is something to be learned from thinking about them anyway. But let us go back to the initial project, which is to realize a non-dual state of consciousness. Do we need to wait until we can surrender? Or is it enough to be willing to surrender even if we have not yet been able to clear ourselves sufficiently in order to be able to do so? Or is surrender necessary? Can we get out from underneath the morphic field of surrendering? After all, Franklin has said that from the point of view of the realized individual, there is no sacrifice. The sacrifice belongs to the time before realization. So can we begin by being in a transcendent state of consciousness so as to negate the need for sacrifice? That brings us to the subject matter of induction.

## Induction

The first appearance of a non-dual state of consciousness for Franklin Wolff occurred in the form of a current that was initially associated with the out-breath. Franklin used different expressions to refer to it, including “the ‘Ambrosia of the Gods,’ the ‘Elixir of Life,’”<sup>30</sup> and so on. Franklin says that this current “penetrates all tensions with the effect of physical release. Spots that are not so well feel both rested and stronger.”<sup>31</sup> This also ties into our anti-aging and anti-disease discussions earlier so I think that the current could also be called “The Fountain of Youth.” So, the current is turned on. And sometimes the presence of the current affects others who come within its range of influence. “A surprising number of individuals are susceptible to the Current,”<sup>32</sup> writes Franklin.

Let me talk about the current in the context of ME for a bit. I was doing remote healing for one of the participants in my remote healing Experiment 2. This was about the tenth session for her and, for the first time since she had been in the study, I saw that there was something physically wrong with her. I identified it as a problem in the back of her mouth where the jawbone is connected to the skull and saw that her condition could be improved to the point where it would no longer be an issue. The participant did not know whether this had been a control session or an experimental session but told me, before I had provided her with any information, that she thought that it had been an experimental session. She said that she had been having pain in the back of her neck for the past several weeks that was now much better although not completely gone, and that she had felt an unshakeable sense of joy the following day in spite of difficult events to which she needed to attend. When I asked her for further details about her state of mind, she said that at the time of the ME session, a surge of energy had begun in her feet and gone up through her body, with the result

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Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

<sup>30</sup>Merrell-Wolff, F. (1973). *Pathways through to space: A personal record of transformation in consciousness*. New York: Julian Press. p. 31

<sup>31</sup>Merrell-Wolff, F. (1973). *Pathways through to space: A personal record of transformation in consciousness*. New York: Julian Press. p. 20

<sup>32</sup>Merrell-Wolff, F. (1973). *Pathways through to space: A personal record of transformation in consciousness*. New York: Julian Press. p. 6

that she had been transported into a state of joy for three days. I found this apparent induction of a current to be interesting.

During Experiment 1, at one point I was doing a session for Participant 03 when Participant 05 came to mind. I thought “Why not?” and so for about three minutes I was simultaneously imaging healing both participants. Afterwards, Participant 05 had this to say: “It’s funny, I know exactly what I was doing at that time (I was brushing my teeth). Again, I did not really experience anything unusual, however, I did picture you performing ME at that time. I am not sure if this is coincidence or not. Oh, and my cat was uncharacteristically friendly after that time — as a night owl, he normally does not like to cuddle at night!” Who did what to whom? Was I just “influencing” Participant 05 or did she “want some” and drew my attention to her while I was interacting with someone else? She has told me that the effect of the remote healing on her is like that of recharging her batteries: “Every time you perform a session, I feel like my batteries are recharged again. It is truly incredible!” So did some part of her notice that I was doing remote healing and link in somehow? The technique I was doing at the time is something that I call “alien head.” I go into as much of a non-dual state of consciousness as I can and “track changes” with “automatic” movements of my head. The purpose of such a state is to access deeper levels of reality from which radical transformation can be initiated. It would be as though a shower of goodies were coming down for a while. Did Participant 05 notice the shower of goodies and butt in so that she could get some?<sup>33</sup>

In some ways, ME is a current with the capacity to awaken those who come within its influence. Or if not awaken, help a person to move toward awakening. A year ago this August, two thesis students, a research assistant, and I drove to Philadelphia to gather data at a Matrix Energetics Seminar. Ninety-seven people consented to fill out questionnaires for three days during the seminar and at a two-month web-based follow-up. In addition, during the seminar, the thesis students and research assistant conducted 42 interviews of participants right after they had experienced the effects of ME. Here are some of the things that the participants had to say about their experiences at the seminar:

Participant 54: “It’s like a letting go. You get soft and it’s like a yielding feeling. As I was even lying down I felt like patterns unraveling. I felt like I’ve been constructing in a way over years, and now it is unraveling so it’s a deconstruction in a way. I was very conscious and present to what was going on.” In this case we apparently have a process of exactly what we have been talking about, of releasing conditioning.

Participant 12: “I closed my eyes and dropped into my heart and almost immediately I started feeling what could be described as a pulsating wave or an alternating current running through my body, going up to my head and going down. It created a feeling almost like being on the floor, as if the floor was going up and down like an earthquake, except for that the earthquake’s tremors sort of ran up and down my body as if I was part of the floor and the earthquake just sort of went up and down and up and down.” Here we have a case of a somatic feeling of a current.

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<sup>33</sup>This paragraph is quoted from pp. 36 to 37 of Barušs, I. (2013). *The impossible happens: A scientist's personal discovery of the extraordinary nature of reality*. Alresford, Hampshire, UK: John Hunt Publishing.

Participant 05: “I experienced a wave while my partner was working on me. My body just spontaneously swaying and then I would, what I call, lose my body and I would just go into my head it felt like. It is very, very peaceful and I see a celestial light like its glowing from the inside with occasionally threads of gold. It is just very peaceful and a lovely, lovely spot.” In this case feelings of profound peace.

Participant 25: “I went to the back room and was magically, hypnotically drawn to the back wall, the line down the middle ‘spoke to me’, drew me forth with the power of a Heavenly Father. Slowly I proceeded until I became ultra-sensitive to the patterns on the wall’s surface. I reached up slowly to touch it, knowing that it and I were one. I ended up leaning forward on my toes with my head against the wall, fingers on the pattern, sobbing gratefully for some time.” In this case the participant appears to have merged with an aspect of reality that is external to her body signifying some degree of non-duality.

These effects of ME could be helpful for awakening. What continues to strike me is the fact that small movements of the mind can apparently produce dramatic somatic and psychological effects. That was Franklin Wolff’s observation regarding the presence of the current: “Since that day I have been repeatedly in the Current of Ambrosia. Often I turn to It with the ease of a subtle movement of thought. Sometimes It breaks out spontaneously.”<sup>34</sup> Once he had found it, Franklin was able to release the current with a small movement of the mind. It is the same sort of thing with ME. You imagine something in the mind and sometimes physical manifestation shifts in dramatic ways that are out of proportion to the effort involved. This takes us back to Anita Moorjani’s observation during her near-death experience that physical reality follows the inner reality. And as you get better and better at this, the small movements of the mind become smaller and smaller until, perhaps, we end up like Michael Hall who just needs to hear about someone who is ill and that person becomes well.

So, back to awakening to the non-dual state. I often have a preconception that this is a difficult thing to do that is going to require enormous effort on my part. Let me just take the liberty of reading from *Introceptualism*: “I found that the key consisted in attaining a moment within which there is a thorough-going detachment from the object and from the activist attitude of ordinary consciousness. The simplicity of this statement hides its real difficulty for there is implied an uprooting of very deep-seated inherited habits. There is a sense in which we may say that thoroughgoing breaking of the dependence upon the object and of the activist attitude is like a conscious dying, and long established psychical habits tenaciously resist this. It may take a lot of work to attain the critical state.”<sup>35</sup>

That is what I mean. A lot of work. However, notice that the key itself is nothing other than a small movement of the mind. The work that needs to be done has nothing to do with the key itself but the

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<sup>34</sup>Merrell-Wolff, F. (1973). *Pathways through to space: A personal record of transformation in consciousness*. New York: Julian Press. p. 5

<sup>35</sup>Merrell-Wolff, F. (1970). *Introceptualism: The philosophy of consciousness without an object: Volume II*. Phoenix: Phoenix Philosophical Press. pp. 142–143

ability to use the key which is hidden underneath layers of conditioning. For Anita Moorjani, it took 3½ years of cancer in order to strip away the layers of conditioning so as to be able to find the key, which was to let go of her life. That is one way to do it. As Franklin says: “In so far as human suffering may serve as an instrument for awakening, the mystic would say that it is good and should not be removed until it has completed its office.”<sup>36</sup> So if you commit yourself to realization, then you might need to be prepared to suffer. When I found out I had a blob the size of a lemon in the middle of my liver, I asked it what it was doing there. It seemed to tell me that it was there to create a sense of urgency for me. I found that with death staring me continuously in the face, it would take me about three hours of intense inner work every morning in order to reach a state of sufficient equilibrium so that I could function during the day. A year or so later I noticed the benefits of that early morning practice primarily in the form of more accurate clairvoyance. But I am certain that there have been other benefits as well.

At one point I was trying to incubate a dream to answer the question “Who is helping me?” The intention was to try to discover who was helping me on the other side. Now, as we try to bootstrap our way toward exceptional well-being, one of the tricks that we can use is to act “as if.” We can imagine ourselves in the situation in which we would like to be, such as in the case of the men in Professor Langer’s experiment. So if we wish to be enlightened, we just imagine already being enlightened. So I borrowed Anita Moorjani’s enlightenment and imagined that I was in the space in which she had found herself.

I fell asleep and in my dream I realized that I was dreaming. So now I was having a lucid dream. I asked my question: “Who is helping me?” I decided to look into a mirror to see if I could observe anyone behind me. When I did so, a young guy showed up. He turned out to be an escort who took me behind a back wall and along a corridor into another room. In that other room there was a young woman who turned out to be the person I was seeking. She showed me that what she does is to cause a perturbation in my life and then she watches to see how I respond to it. When I asked her for her name, she told me that she goes by many names and would not give me a name.

Now this puts my life into a completely different perspective. Here I am whining about all the things going wrong in my life. As soon as I manage to fix one thing, the next debacle shows up. But according to my dream, this is on purpose! The help I am receiving is in the form of obstacles in my life that I need to neutralize while retaining equanimity no matter what happens. Apparently I need to learn to be able to accept anything at all that occurs within the phenomenal realm without losing my poise. At its culmination, this ideal state would just be Franklin Wolff’s high indifference. Now I do not know whether or not there really is anyone behind the veil manipulating reality for me so as to help me along by increasing my difficulties, but it does not matter. All I needed was a recognition of the potentially beneficial value of the events in my life.

This brings me to an important point that I cannot stress enough. An aspirant must be adequately prepared in order to be able to withstand the impact of the transcendent. And that adequate preparation involves the development of an integrated personality. Franklin Wolff discusses the fragility of the physical body for containing the current which has both tonifying and

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<sup>36</sup>Merrell-Wolff, F. (1970). *Introceptualism: The philosophy of consciousness without an object: Volume II*. Phoenix: Phoenix Philosophical Press. p. 148



stress-inducing effects. And he discusses the importance of maintaining a mental orientation rather than defaulting to an emotional one in the face of anomalous phenomena that we do not understand. But beyond the acknowledgement of such constraints, the need for psychological balance is paramount. I have seen a number of people crash who have not been adequately prepared for the inner realities that they managed to release.

Psychological balance involves an integration of the various facets of our personality. It includes the ability to subdue our emotions so that we are able to make decisions on the basis of reason rather than being driven by desire or fear. It includes moral integrity. It includes the development of a healthy will that can be used for directing our lives. It includes the ability to integrate intuitions into our understanding so as to inform rather than mislead. And so on. For those who are not sure what personality integration involves, I would recommend chapters two and six of my book *Authentic Knowing*<sup>37</sup> as well as Piero Ferrucci's book *What We May Be*<sup>38</sup> which contains exercises that can be used for self-development.

So if nothing seems to be happening, that is ok. Keep working on yourself. And relinquish your conditioning along the lines that we have discussed. And then, perhaps “when your dependence for security is upon the Presence alone, beyond your own normal capacities to meet situations, that Presence comes near.”<sup>39</sup> And “When it does happen, . . . [t]he consciousness beyond the . . . veil . . . may be sensed as a something like a deepening, as a palpable silence filled with unformed meaning. . . . It can evoke in those in the vicinity states of a mystic sort—ecstatic states of consciousness, states of delight. . . . The states can be very deep, even as deep as waking Samadhi. . . . This is a little glimpse of something of the Beyond. . . . Actually, it is here now. . . .”<sup>40</sup>

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Doroethy Leonard and Ron Leonard for inviting me to give the keynote talk at the 2013 Franklin Merrell-Wolff Conference at the Great Space Center, and to Huping Hu for publishing the paper. I also thank Shannon Foskett for feedback and proofreading the manuscript. And I thank King's University College at the University of Western Ontario for research money and travel funds that made giving this paper possible.

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<sup>37</sup>Barušs, I. (1996). *Authentic knowing: The convergence of science and spiritual aspiration*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press.

<sup>38</sup>Ferrucci, P. (1982). *What we may be: Techniques for psychological and spiritual growth through psychosynthesis*. Los Angeles, CA: Jeremy P. Tarcher.

<sup>39</sup>Merrell-Wolff, F. (1995). *Mathematics, philosophy & yoga: A lecture series presented at the Los Olivos Conference Room in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1966*. Phoenix, AZ: Phoenix Philosophical Press. p. 59

<sup>40</sup>Merrell-Wolff, F. (1995). *Mathematics, philosophy & yoga: A lecture series presented at the Los Olivos Conference Room in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1966*. Phoenix, AZ: Phoenix Philosophical Press. p. 16