

## Everything is Wholeness

*About discovery, realization and terms of wholeness*

Seeking and separateness are one

Since time everlasting human beings have been seeking and exploring the world and universe, both “out there” and in themselves. This endeavor was mostly rooted in a sense of duality: the human being at one side of it as a subject that was exploring, and the world on the other side of it as a separate object that was being explored.

This sense of separation probably occurs early in life, when the human brain captures the concept of “I am”. It then suddenly finds itself as a separate “thing” amidst of the “Ten Thousand Things of the World”<sup>1</sup>. This is a total and compelling illusion that is impossible to break on the level on which it occurs. Only later in life some humans



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transcend this level of occurrence and correct the mistake by realizing the truth about reality. Most humans spend their lives searching for it, consciously or (mostly) unconsciously, by trying to find “happiness” which apparently they feel they have lost. Tragically, they look for it in the wrong place, in the world out

there, where it is not to be found, and with the wrong means (the mind) , and the search only reinforces the sense of separation. They start collecting the world in the hope of feeling complete again, gathering things, knowledge, convictions and relations, never being satisfied because there always is the feeling that there must be more than what meets the eye, but never able to actually realize this “more-ness”.

This search for “more-ness” was done on all levels of our imagination. It occurred as mysticism, religion, philosophy and science<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Dao de Jing, this is the term that refers to our perception of the (apparent) multiplicity of reality that distracts us from the fundamental wholeness.

<sup>2</sup> Also another, more profound type of search always existed that transcends the division between these “methods” by using the process of creativity to capture the essence of reality, in the form of Art. It is not surprising that there are many accounts of art evoking temporary glimpses of wholeness, and vice versa.

## Discoveries of seeking

These efforts resulted in the most wonderful and divine discoveries. To mention but a few, discoveries like DNA (the biochemical code of all life), and the insight into the chemical arrangements in matter that produced the periodic table of elements. In the physical realm the scientific search into the appearance of light, time, space and matter revealed (so far) the four kinds of forces being present: the electromagnetic force, the nuclear (weak and strong), and the gravitational force<sup>3</sup>. It resulted in models of reality presented in theories, like Newtonian mechanics and Quantum mechanics, general and special Relativity etcetera. It also resulted in the “understanding” that matter is not made of matter but consists mostly of energy and space, the atom is not irreducible, and the universe must consist for 95% out of something we have not yet detected, by lack of a better name called dark matter and dark energy<sup>4</sup>.

The search was also visible in the appearance of religions (like Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Zen, Judaism, Christianity, Islam), prophets and saints like Buddha, Laozi, Abraham, Jesus and Mohammed and scriptures like the Vedas, the Sutras, the Dao de Jing, the Torah, the Bible and the Koran. Also several (other) philosophies occurred, with their respective “thinkers”. It is important to realize though, that this conceptual division between religion, culture and philosophy is by no means clear, nor the division between philosophy and science.<sup>5</sup>

## Seeking points to wholeness

The list of “discoveries” made by all of these endeavors is astounding and too large to sum up. Humans became very “knowing” in all kinds of ways. But in the end, although trying to discover the Ten Thousand Things of the World, the endeavors and the discoveries all seem to reveal processes rather than things, space or fields rather than matter, connection rather than apartness, unity rather than separation. They all point to the same “truth”, all discovered the same general “property” of existence: by lack of a better word called Wholeness<sup>6</sup>.

Most religions are based on – and in awe of – an all-encompassing principal that rules everything, be it a god or a family of gods, or a natural “movement”. And even the physical endeavor, that since the scientific revolution seemed to be focused at “tearing

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<sup>3</sup> Two of which had a local effect (the nuclear forces), the other two were non-local (infinite range).

<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dark\\_matter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dark_matter).

<sup>5</sup> Particularly the Eastern philosophies/religions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Daoism are not like our Western religions or philosophies. If anything, they more resemble our psychotherapy, because they deal with techniques, methods, to change one’s state of consciousness by self-inquiry.

<sup>6</sup> Also the words Consciousness and Awareness can be used (for me, wholeness is more neutral though). A beautiful talk about how the human seeking-endeavor in the realm of separateness must lead to a paradigm shift when it all turns out to be about wholeness (consciousness) is by Peter Russell, “The primacy of Consciousness” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-d4ugppcRUE>).

the world apart in ever smaller things”, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century surprisingly came up with signs of unification rather than separation: Einstein’s insight of the two unifications of time and space, and energy and matter; the almost incomprehensible wave-particle-duality in quantum-mechanics; and the even more strange effect of quantum entanglement – all pointing to a non-duality or wholeness at a higher level. These effects so far completely elude the realm of knowing/understanding<sup>7</sup>, yet they present themselves to us clearly and are undeniable.

However different, all these endeavors, the entire seeking and searching in all ways and directions, have a common place: the human being and that in which everything occurs (called “reality”). The results of these are discovered by human beings through observation. That is, we did not create them, but only made them visible or apparent to ourselves, they were there all along, and in human beings they can be known or even realized.

Wholeness cannot be known, but can be realized

So far, in human beings these discoveries however have mostly triggered a conceptual process. Especially in the physical endeavor, the results are apparent to us in the form of “knowing”, understanding, reasoning, theories, models, causal relations, test-results, etcetera. And also the metaphysical endeavor has this “knowing” part, visible in the appearance of separation as different religions, different gods, different schools, different Books, different philosophies and a lot of (sometimes violent and fanatical) fighting between them as a result of human beings becoming “followers” of certain differences, becoming identified with those differences and defending their version of truth.

However,

*“the mystery of life is not a problem to be solved,  
but a reality to be experienced”<sup>8</sup>.*

It cannot be put into words or concepts but is only revealed in a living experience of reality. And sometimes, mostly in the realm of the metaphysical searching, the results become apparent in a certain human being not only as a conceptual and dual “knowing”, but also in the form of a so-called “realization”. Particularly in Daoism, Hinduism and Buddhism this interest in realization is built in, it is much more like a method or way of life than a belief. There is not merely an interest in knowing or believing anything, but in experiencing, and realizing the experience for yourself. In order to do that, one must

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<sup>7</sup> Even Einstein called particle-entanglement “spooky action at a distance” (*spukhafte Fernwirkung*). And Richard Feynman is quoted to have said: “If you think you understand quantum mechanics, you don’t”.

<sup>8</sup> This quote has been attributed to several sources, i.e. Søren Kierkegaard, Thomas Merton, Frank Herbert, Gerardus or Jacobus van der Leeuw.

of course first realize who this “self” is. In this realization, the human being not only discovers a certain “knowing”, but he “becomes” this knowing, there is a unification. The seer and the seen become one (or disappear into each other). In this realization, what actually happens is that the knowing of wholeness, the discovery of unity and inter-relatedness, becomes all-encompassing. It takes place not only at the level of the mind/understanding, but at the level of wholeness itself. The unity that is discovered as a knowing, as an object of the endeavor, starts to expand itself on the level of the subject, the researcher. If this process completes itself, it results in the fusion of that what is known (the object of knowledge) and he/she who knows (the subject, the researcher, the seeker), to the extent that both disappear in wholeness. Of course, physically, the human does not disappear and nothing changes. What disappears is the knowing of separateness, the experience of being a separate human being in an otherwise separate world. Because the knowing itself disappears into wholeness, this wholeness and the disappearance can’t be known anymore by someone. And it never was knowable, because all knowing is pointed at “separated things and pieces of knowledge”, and wholeness is not such a thing or piece.

Mostly, separation is described from the perspective of the separate human. At first there is wholeness, then in the human the sense of “I am” appears and from his perspective, he is pulled out of wholeness and remains as a lonely separate thing, bereft of the wholeness. It then starts to seek (in the wrong place at first and mostly) until in some cases it stumbles upon wholeness again and falls into it, disappearing as separate.

This, in my experience, however is only one side of the dual story. There is another perspective to it, namely the perspective of wholeness itself. Now, this perspective of course also “exists” only as an illusion, only on the level of apparent separation itself, not on the level of wholeness, where nothing ever happens. So, I am only talking about the “story of separation”, which is an illusion that only occurs on the human level, not on the wholeness level. What happens at this separation level however, feels very true for the human. And it is not only the human being pulled out of wholeness, but also wholeness being pulled out of the human!

This is one reason why the human being itself can never end separation on its own by simply stepping into wholeness again. It would be only one part of the process, and it will not result in the realization of wholeness. Sometimes the mind can make it appear like this happened, and then a spiritual “person” appears, who thinks he knows wholeness, but actually does not have the realization. No doing will ever make him accomplish this. This is possibly<sup>9</sup> why most humans who really have realized wholeness

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<sup>9</sup> Another reason is more common: for any human being, it is impossible to know or describe all the “causes” that “led to the current now”, be it a state of separation or a realization of wholeness. A true answer to a question of that kind should either be: “I don’t know”, or: “everything” (and nothing in particular). This also reflects the notion that reality is essentially “unknowable”. From a realization of wholeness, this unknowing is as obvious as it is free and joyful, but from the state of separateness this

again, are absolutely convinced that they have not “done” anything to “make this happen”, not even the seeking process itself is recognized anymore as something that contributed to the wholeness happening again. “Doing” only exists in the mind. Wholeness just happens. To quote a Zen poem<sup>10</sup>:

*“The wild geese do not intend to cast their reflection  
and the water has no mind to retain their image”.*



*The realization of wholeness - Debbie Jordaans-Parkins © 2019*

For wholeness to appear, the human cannot do anything. He must vanish, which is a not-doing. And it is the wholeness coming into the human again, that actually completes the “realization”. This has a completely different quality than anything the human has “done” as “preparation”, which is a not-doing anyway: dropping the effort of pretending to be separate by silencing the mind. Sometimes this dropping is

sudden, without any conscious seeking leading up to it, for instance if the mind becomes so unbearable and dense that it collapses in on itself. This, for example, happened to the modern-day spiritual teacher and author Eckhart Tolle. In his own words

*“I was so stunned by this strange realization that my mind stopped. I was fully conscious, but there were no more thoughts.”<sup>11</sup>*

Sometimes it seems more like a gradual process of a new dimension of reality slowly becoming visible. But even if there has been a period of seeking actively and consciously, this all happened on the level of separation, the level of knowing, doing and effort. Even when this is followed by the collapse of the effort of being separate, what happens after that is happening on the level of wholeness itself and therefore totally un-describable and unknowable. The remaining being, not being separate anymore but pervaded by, and changed into wholeness, does not experience the happening at all, because he is no longer there (which caused, or better: “is”, the return of wholeness). And on a bodily level – if there is such an experience to be felt - it does not present itself as a doing, but

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unknowing is often denied and/or felt as a threat, something that must be fixed, by the mind making up a “convincing” story.

<sup>10</sup> From the Zenrin-kushū.

<sup>11</sup> Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now*, New World Library, 1999/2004, p. 4.



as something that “happened to” the human. This is the actual realization, which is the wholeness coming into the human again when the mind and the separation-illusion cease to be<sup>12</sup>.

### Terms of wholeness

When asked about the perspective of wholeness, most “realized” humans are reluctant to report about it. This is firstly because language and thinking are by very nature dualistic, always coming from subject-object relations, from “doing”, and the wholeness-perspective is one in which these relations do not exist. And furthermore there is no separate “I” that “experiences” wholeness, there is just wholeness pervading, and no one left to report about it<sup>13</sup>. Trying to talk about wholeness is like trying to dig a hole in the ocean with a spade<sup>14</sup>. So, wholeness can’t be known by the mind, it therefore can’t be taught by one person to another in the way that knowledge propagates<sup>15</sup>. Wholeness can only be “realized” as a perspective by those who realize it, by those who have this unified perspective of reality. After that, everything is exactly as it was before, but totally different. There is a notion that everything just (or better: joyfully) happens, not to anyone, but as wholeness, in which the former illusions of “the me to whom everything happens” and “all the things that happen to me” have disappeared. This remaining happening feels completely intimate, acute, friendly, fully “known”, not by a separate mind or person, but as a the impersonal knowing that is all encompassing and whole. It is not the arrival of enlightenment, but rather the stopping of “obscurement”. It is not light or dark, but light and dark, and neither, and beyond. It’s complete. It is the child-like joy and openness that we experienced very early in life, before separation became apparent. Still there are preferences of the body according to its nature and nurture, but no more compelling judgements, cravings or rejections. The impersonal knowing appears in all happenings, pervades all appearances and is the completion of completeness.

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<sup>12</sup> The wholeness never having been absent of course, only in the illusion of the separate human it seemed like that.

<sup>13</sup> A beautiful report from “no one” can be read in The Open Secret (1995) by Tony Parsons (<https://www.theopensecret.com>).

<sup>14</sup> Paul Morgan-Somers, <https://www.facebook.com/onefreedom.song/>, for whom wholeness is like “the wetness of the ocean” and who also coined the wonderful word “Neverything”.

<sup>15</sup> This is why Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), the famous Indian sage, mostly “taught” by being silent. Only as a secondary way of teaching he taught a method of self-inquiry, that pointed seekers back inwardly, to investigate not the mind itself, but its origin – which was wholeness itself.

Those who talk from the perspective of realization, therefore use words like unconditional love, joy, life, completeness, wholeness<sup>16</sup>, isness, thusness<sup>17</sup>, simplicity, peace, freedom, liberation or bliss, to describe the un-describable. It is nothing appearing as everything. At the same time, most of them helplessly emphasize that these words are not to be understood in the normal sense, even not as a superlative of their normal meaning, but as a totally deficient pointing to something completely un-describable and unknowable. Like Einstein's space-time is not some sort of mixture of space and time as we know it, but something completely different, a different dimension altogether<sup>18</sup>.

In the Japanese language, we have the word Yūgen, which is an important concept in Japanese aesthetics, being influenced by Japanese Buddhism and Zen. It suggests: that which is beyond what can be said, but is still of this world, this experience. It points to a deep awareness of the universe, the understanding that all things are coming from or dissolving into nothingness, which is not an empty space but the space of potentiality.

It can be imagined by

*“watching the sun sink behind a flower clad hill. Wandering on in a huge forest without the thought of return. To stand upon the shore and gaze after a boat that disappears behind distant islands. To contemplate the flight of wild geese seen and lost among the clouds. And, subtle shadows of bamboo on bamboo.”*<sup>19</sup>

In the end, of course we can never describe wholeness in words that would make the reader or listener realize himself by just listening to them. There are words that can more or less point to realization, like a scent reveals something of its source. We could never picture a rose by just smelling its fragrance without seeing it, but our nose tells us that for sure it must originate from a source of stunning beauty and completeness.

But even these words, although pointing, are essentially pointless in the way that talking about “what is” is not adding to it at all, it is more a process of subtraction, it eliminates

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<sup>16</sup> John Butler early in life got the message “to make whole, be whole” and he dedicated the rest of his life to do just that, a process he calls “spiritual unfoldment”. One can find out about the quest and wisdom of this beautiful old being at <https://spiritualunfoldment.co.uk>.

<sup>17</sup> The Pali and Sanskrit word Tathāgata with which Gautama Buddha referred to himself, means “one who has thus come” (Tathā-āgata) or “one who has thus gone” (Tathā-gata), to imply that he who experiences “thus” is beyond all coming and going, beyond all transitory phenomena.

<sup>18</sup> If anything, it is the total absence of both time and space as we knew it before. It is time and space collapsed into some new unknowable dimension. Which could also do very well as a description of wholeness.

<sup>19</sup> Zeami Motokiyo, as referred to in [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese\\_aesthetics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_aesthetics). More about Yūgen can be found in Andrew T. Tsubaki: “Zeami and the Transition of the Concept of Yūgen – a note on Japanese Aesthetics”, The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol 30 nr. 1, 1971 pp. 55-67. Also there is a beautiful lecture by Alan Watts about terms of Japanese Aesthetics, titled “Uncarved Block” in the series Eastern & Western Zen.

the life out of it. There is nothing *like* reality, there is only reality. Or in other words of Zen:

*“The sound of the rain needs no translation.”<sup>20</sup>*

Wholeness is real

In most humans there is still what can be called a “remembrance” of wholeness, a vague reminiscence of being whole, probably from the time before the mind became active and separated the human as an “I am”. Short glimpses of this wholeness happen all the time to almost every one of us. And in more cases than we know of, when the mind drops - after seeking but always spontaneously - this wholeness can be re-membered completely, resulting in what is called a (permanent) Realization.

There are many well documented<sup>21</sup> and convincing accounts of it, both in famous human beings like the Buddha, Jesus or Mohammed, or in more recent times in humans like the Indian sage Ramana Maharshi, but also in less well-known “ordinary” people<sup>22</sup>. It is probably a much more common phenomenon than we think. As common as space-time, wave-particle and quantum entanglement, dark matter and dark energy – and the fragrance of a rose. And as profoundly (w)holy as well.

After all, wholeness is everywhere and everything, so all of us are already whole. And it is for all of us to realize this.

J.Paul Jordaans<sup>23</sup>

*Grathem, 2 December 2019*

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<sup>20</sup> Alan Watts in this talk: *The world as Just So*, series Eastern & Western Zen; probably quoting Zen *roshi* Morimoto.

<sup>21</sup> One only has to listen to David Godman, or read his books about Indian sages like Ramana Maharshi, Nisargadatta Maharaj, H.W.L. Poonja, Lakshmana Swami and many others. (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBcqQGNwcSEwlv6gJXP-U9A>). For more recent accounts, some have been collected by Iain and Renate McNay who started <http://conscious.tv> in 2008 and done over 400 interviews since with seekers from all over the world, some of which clearly show a living experience of wholeness.

<sup>22</sup> It is now good to recall the Zen poem: “When an ordinary man attains knowledge, he becomes a sage; when a sage attains understanding, he becomes an ordinary man”. (from the Zenrin-kushū.)

<sup>23</sup> I am very grateful to my wife Debbie, who generously dedicated two of her paintings to this writing and contributed to earlier versions of it with her wisdom, wholeness and grace.