

responsible for the ease with which Germans were hypnotised by Hitler. Our childhood experience will either encourage or inhibit our ability to fully inhabit our bodies, though we can learn to become more embodied through a range of practices and therapies. Cultures in which children are held, touched and carried for much of their babyhood and not forced to sleep alone tend to produce more securely attached and embodied adults. One of the effects of trauma is a tendency to shut down or misinterpret our bodily sensations.

We know from a range of studies that human touch or physical contact with animals brings down blood pressure and provides comfort. How sad that teachers, nursery workers and therapists are no longer allowed to touch their charges or clients. As a private therapist I have not stopped hugging clients who are crying (with their permission, of course) or before they depart if it seems appropriate. One person whose heart rhythm is ordered (coherent, as it is known) can positively affect the disordered heart rhythm of another person or group. The Institute of HeartMath has conducted extensive research into the heart brain connection and the impact of the electromagnetic field of the heart which can be measured at a distance of 12 feet away.

We have the choice to view our bodies as machines or as organisms imbued with intelligence, their messages to us necessary for our navigation through life. Iain McGilchrist comments: "The body has become an object in the world like other objects, as Merleau-Ponty feared." For women today the body is a commodity to be displayed to attract approval, a defensive measure in a society ready to judge a book by its cover, and much anxiety is associated with whether it looks right. Anorexia is the expression of an extreme disconnection from the body as our living home. Only by creating a relationship with our embodied self as a source of wisdom and intelligence can we resist the extreme pressures to view our bodies as shop windows or machines.

Descartes considered animals to be without souls and saw the people passing his window as robots, a typically schizophrenic view, but one that has greatly influenced our thinking in the West. Chief Seattle had already recognised the connection between animals and humans when he said, "If all the beasts were gone, we would die from a great loneliness of spirit, for whatever happens to the beast, happens to us. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the children of the earth." The nineteenth century saw the

removal of draft horses from city and country and the killing of nearly sixty million buffalo in the US. Morris Berman writes: "Organic life doesn't fit well into urbanized, technological societies, and the result is that it got removed from them, creating what John Berger calls "a new solitude". Nonhuman Otherness is not merely degraded now, but absent; and so, in a sense, are we."

The antidote is to embrace the view of our bodies that Clarissa Pinkola Estes advocates in her ground breaking work: *Women Who Run with the Wolves*:

"In the instinctual psyche, the body is considered a sensor, an informational network, a messenger with myriad communication systems... In the imaginal world, the body is a powerful vehicle, a spirit who lives with us, a prayer of life in its own right....Like the Rosetta stone, for whose who know how to read it, the body is a living record of life given, life taken, life hoped for, life healed. It is valued for its articulate ability to register immediate reaction, to feel profoundly, to sense ahead. ...It speaks through the leaping of the heart, the falling of the spirit, the pit at the center, and rising hope.

The body remembers, the bones remember, the joints remember, even the little finger remembers...

To confine the beauty and value of the body to anything less than this magnificence is to force the body to live without its rightful spirit, its rightful form, its right to exultation."

To close, I quote Peter Levine's 'definition' of embodiment: "The way we know we're alive is rooted in our capacity to feel, to our depths, the physical reality of aliveness embedded within our bodily sensations – through direct experience. This, in short, is embodiment." On a more poetic note, Mary Oliver expresses it perfectly:

Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert,
repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your
body love what it loves.

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Toward a New Conception of God

Jacob Needleman

Jacob explores an immanent conception of God within human experience.

In the present highly publicised debates about the nature and the existence of God, both sides tend to treat God as a purely external entity said to be accessible only by faith—faith, in this case, defined merely as belief unsupported by evidence or logic. Entirely missing from these debates is the idea of God as a conscious force within the human psyche which is accessible through deep self-examination. A study of the psychological disciplines at the heart of all the great spiritual traditions of the world shows us, however, that the process of precisely guided self-examination brings about a knowledge that is as rigorous and as supported by evidence as anything science has to offer. At the same time, this point of view redefines faith as a form of knowledge that is attained not only or not principally by intellectual means, but also through the rigorous development of the emotional side of the human psyche. Such emotional knowledge is unknown to the isolated intellect and has therefore been mistakenly labeled as "irrational."

This "new" idea of God proposes that all the characteristics traditionally attributed to the purely external God are, within the scale of the human psyche, also attributes of this inner force of consciousness. When this inner energy of higher consciousness is experienced, it then becomes clear that such an energy permeates the entire universe. In this way, it is through self-knowledge that the existence of an external God is verified and understood.

When I started my career as a professor of philosophy I was required to teach a course in the history of Western religious thought—much against my then existentialist and atheistic inclinations. In order to teach this course, I had to do a great deal of research in the writings within the Judaic and Christian traditions and I was astonished to find in those writings philosophical thought of great power and sophistication. These writings completely overturned all my opinions about what I had taken to be the irrationality or immaturity of religious ideas, opinions which were and still are fashionable in many intellectual and literary circles today.

God and Inner Reality

But even so, somewhere in myself, I was still unconvinced—deep down I was still an atheist when it came to my personal, intimate feelings. It was only when I embarked on a personal work of guided self-examination that I experienced a glimpse of a reality that could be called "God." As my personal explorations continued, I experienced this quality of inner reality more and more and could no longer doubt that the meaning of God lay in this direction. At the same time, these undeniable experiences lit up and were in turn illuminated by all the philosophical and historical knowledge I had by then

amassed and I began to understand in an entirely new way the teachings of both Judaism and Christianity as well as the teachings of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. I was again astonished that nothing of this understanding seemed to be in all that I had heard about religion and God when I was growing up and when I was being educated in some of the best universities in America.

Here are a few of the many spiritual and philosophical ideas that helped me to glimpse the deeper meaning of Judaism, Christianity and the religions of Asia:

- The idea that God needs man (Judaism) as a uniquely free being who is at the same time under supreme obligation.
- The idea that scripture is deeply allegorical and symbolic, with many levels of highly sophisticated philosophical and psychological meanings. Many of my former atheistic leanings were due to my literal interpretation of scripture, which in numerous places paints a horrific picture of a presumed just and loving God.
- The idea that Jesus Christ was a highly developed human being who was a great teacher and that the notion that he was also God needs to be taken in a much more nuanced way than was commonly presented. In Judaism, for example, a highly spiritual human being was often referred to as "son of God," without thereby implying in some simplistic sense that he was God Himself in the form of a human being.
- The idea that there exists such a thing as genuine mystical experience (as opposed to many self-deceiving claims throughout history) and that these experiences really validate through direct evidence the fundamental teachings of religion.
- The idea that all authentic religions, Western and Eastern and throughout the whole world and human history, converge in genuine mystical experience (which may also be called higher states of consciousness). The differences between religions are only differences involving the pathways that lead toward the practice of directly experiencing higher levels of perception and understanding. All religions are paths to a metaphorical mountain-top variously named Wisdom, enlightenment, self-realisation, the kingdom of heaven, righteousness, etc. Differences that lead to violence and persecution are based on a corrupted relationship to the teachings and practices of religion.

In fact, almost all of us have had experiences during our life when we sense with great clarity and power a tremendously heightened state of presence, of *being there*, an immediate and unforgettable sensation of *I am*. Perhaps it is a moment of great danger or even impending death, or a moment in a strange place or foreign country, or a moment of indescribable joy or a moment with no apparent cause at all when suddenly we are stopped within ourselves and feel our sense of identity more intensely, calmly and purely than anything our everyday life has to offer. Such moments occur more frequently, perhaps, in childhood. These great moments of pure presence are vividly etched in our memory as though they happened yesterday.

Cultivating Spiritual Experience

Our culture does not know how to interpret these moments, these experiences. Maybe they are called “peak experiences” or “mystic moments” or “breakthroughs”—we lack any precise words for them. In fact, they are, so to say, “messages” from our genuine Self as though saying to us: “I am You. Let me into your life.”

The work of cultivating such experiences until they become more accessible is part of the essential nature of genuine spiritual discipline. These are moments, at the very least, of approaching the experiential verification that there does exist something Higher within and perhaps also outside of ourselves. Moments at the very least of approaching what the religions call God.

Every human being is born with an intrinsic yearning to understand, to contact and, eventually, to serve something higher in ourselves and in the universe. Plato calls this yearning *eros*. It defines us as human beings—even more than our biological nature, our social conditioning or our ordinary reasoning capacity. Our modern world-view tragically misperceives and wrongly defines what it is to be human. We are conditioned by our society to believe happiness comes from pleasure, or from getting things or power over people or money or fame or even health and survival. None of these sometimes very good things can bring ultimate meaning to our lives. We are born to be deeply conscious, inwardly free and deeply capable of love. The longing for these things is the definition of what it means to be human. At the present moment in our culture this yearning for meaning and consciousness, this yearning to give and serve something higher than ourselves, is breaking through the hard crust of our widespread cultural materialism and pseudo-scientific underestimation of what a human being is meant to be, together with an equally tragic overestimation of what we human beings are capable of in our present everyday state of being.

Of course, many very serious people believe that God is a personal God, existing outside of themselves, with whom they can have an intimate relationship. And such belief when it is sincerely and deeply held by no means contradicts the central importance of inner experience of a higher power.

Spiritual experience will show that the conventional sharp philosophical and theological distinction between personal and impersonal God is a purely theoretical or even a merely verbal dichotomy not supported by actual experience. It is a fundamentally false dichotomy often introduced to distinguish the Judeo-Christian-Islamic God from the God of Asian traditions such as various forms of Hinduism which often speak of Brahman only as a supreme energy, rather than as a “person”—or Buddhism in many of its expressions which seem to deny not only the idea of personhood in God, but also the very existence of God and, for that matter, the very existence, or reality, of a personal human self. The higher energy of consciousness in an individual human being exhibits an incomparably intense quality of what one might call “I-ness”. It is a profoundly *personal* force; it is I as I is never known in our ordinary everyday sense of identity. That is why this energy is called the Self, with a capital S in

Hinduism. Similarly, but in inverse form, in Western religion, especially in its “esoteric” or contemplative forms, the experience of a personal God—Jahweh appearing to Moses, Christ appearing to St. Paul, Allah speaking to the Prophet—is a force inhabiting a material reality whether as a great voice or human messiah. This is clearly the case in individual experience—the personal contact with the true person within, the “golden person” of Hinduism, is more truly oneself than one’s socially constructed self or ego.

Space does not permit even a few of the countless examples of the impersonal God being worshiped as a personal figure in the East or the personal God being worshipped as an impersonal energy as in the teachings of Jewish and Christian mystics. The main point to emphasise is that the highest or most real always has the character of I-ness whether it is understood as a cosmic reality defining the fundamental nature of the universe or as the true individuality within the contingent and fundamentally empty reality of the ego as understood in Buddhism. Buddhism concentrates on deconstructing the ego in order to allow the true infinitely personal energy of pure consciousness to shine through and inhabit human life.

There are a thousand aspects to this question which would take us into all the subtle and delicate human experiences and essential powerful ideas related to the idea of God that have been completely lost to view in the cacophony of simplistic argument and fanaticism that can characterise both sides of the atheism/fundamentalism debate.

But one thing more must be said. It is paradoxically both obvious and elusive, that great faith in a “purely” external God can only take place within a transformed human psyche. To have such faith—and space does not permit elaborating on the deeper meaning of this sometimes tarnished word—such faith can only be attained through a transformed relationship to one’s own inner mind and emotional life. Therefore authentic faith in an external God is already evidence of inner work on oneself whether or not it is named as such. It is therefore erroneous and dishonorable to oppose the work of interior self-examination as somehow superior to profound faith in the universal, “external” God of love, justice and mercy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Of course, if one is comparing the deep self-examination of, say, the Hasidic Jew, the Christian monk in the deserts of North Africa or the Sufi in his spiritual brotherhood with naïve, sentimental or fanatical impulses that are given the name of faith, then of course, that is a wholly different conversation.

Spiritual experience will often also show that the inner God of higher consciousness is not simply a product or aspect of the individual person. It is experienced as more intimately “myself” than my ordinary sense of self while at the same time it is seen, with total certainty, as not “my own,” but as a quality of reality itself beyond oneself and beyond man or any other separate entity in the conceivable universe. This touches on an extremely crucial point that we can only mention in passing: namely, that there are many, many ways leading to the mountain, but the work of climbing the mountain is very, very similar in each pathway. Religions that are strikingly different along the way to the mountain are even more strikingly similar in the ascent of the mountain.

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Documentary on David Bohm

F. David Peat



Film-maker Paul Howard, of Imagine Films (Ireland), and F. David Peat, physicist and writer, will be making a documentary on the Life and Ideas of Professor David Bohm, FRS. The film will be either 75 or 90 mins long and can be divided into three 25 min episodes or four 22.5 min episodes for television. The film will be funded in part by television channels in the UK and US with some additional funding via crowdsourcing. For more on crowdsourcing see below and www.thebohmdocumentary.org.

David Peat was a friend and colleague of David Bohm and together they co-authored *Science, Order and Creativity* and were working on a second book *The Order Between and Beyond* at the time of Bohm’s death in 1992. Peat is also author of the biography *Infinite Potential: The Life and Times of David Bohm*.

Paul Howard is a Film and Television Producer and Director of international repute. Recent productions include *Movie Talk*, *21st Century Railways*, *Marsh To The Skies*, *Bloomsday*, and *The Irish In Hollywood*. Paul has also produced and directed and edited multi critically acclaimed documentaries and series for RTE, Channel 4, Channel 9 (Australia), Nomad Films International (Australia), all of which have covered most film genres including biography, natural history, wildlife, food, lifestyle and current affairs. Paul also worked extensively in Australia where he completed *Triumph of the Nomads*, a history of Australia prior to the arrival of the European and *The Pintubi*, a series about the last remaining tribe of Aborigines who roamed the outback of Australia up until 1935.

David and Paul plan to begin shooting in the spring of 2014 and the film will consist of narration, interviews, dramatic reconstructions, animation and will feature experiments based on Bohm’s theories. Location shots will include Birkbeck College, as well as Bohm’s home and his favourite walks in north London. In the US they will film his hometown of Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania; Berkeley, California, Princeton, including Einstein’s home on Mercer Street (Bohm had a room in the house next door) and the Bailey Farms Institute where Bohm would spend a month each year during the 1980s.

While dealing with the history of Bohm’s life it will also stress the current high level of interest in Bohm’s ideas and the film makers hope to shoot some scenes at scientific meetings, showing discussions of Bohm’s work and the interest in Bohm amongst a younger generation of physicists.

The film will explore Bohm’s childhood, his feeling of discontent at the society around him and his fantasies of visiting distant worlds where the inhabitants would have attained perfection. It was also a time of boyhood experiments and a growing interest in science. Following his PhD, Bohm joined Oppenheimer’s group at Berkeley where he made his reputation with his theory of plasmas in metals. From Berkeley he moved to Princeton and developed a friendship

with Einstein who came to look on Bohm as his “spiritual son”. At Princeton he wrote the book *Quantum Theory* in an effort to express Bohr’s interpretation in as clear a way as possible.

After the book was published Bohm began to have doubts, feeling that Bohr had been guilty of a degree of mystification. He believed that what was called for was a “realistic” or “causal” interpretation of the quantum world and so began work on his Hidden Variable theory which he felt would create a great stir within the physics world.

The film will also explore the growing anti-communist feelings of that era to set the context in which Bohm was brought before the McCarthy committee but refused to answer specific questions. As a result he was arrested and sent for trial for contempt of Congress. Although he was acquitted Bohm was now labelled a fellow-traveller and was unable to obtain any university position in the US.

Bohm now faced exile in Brazil. His Hidden Variable paper appeared and to his great surprise it did not generate the controversy he had hoped for. Unknown to him Oppenheimer had called a meeting of leading physicists to discuss Bohm’s theory. At the end of the meeting Oppenheimer announced “If we can’t disprove Bohm we must all agree to ignore him.”

From Brazil Bohm moved first to Israel and then Bristol University where he struggled to create a “new order” to physics, one he hoped would enable him to unify quantum theory and relativity. That new order turned out to be the Implicate and Explicate orders. Bohm also met Jiddu Krishnamurti, an encounter which was to have a great effect on his life. He became a trustee at Krishnamurti’s school at Brockwood Park and engaged in a series of dialogues which were recorded, several of which were later published in book form.

From Bristol Bohm moved to Birkbeck College, London where he revived his Hidden Variable approach, this time modifying the Schrödinger Equation by introducing a new term, the Quantum Potential. Unlike other potentials whose effect depends on their strength, the Quantum Potential’s effect depends on its shape or form. In short it expresses the experimental arrangement that surrounds an electron. In turn the electron has the ability to “read” this form and so has what Bohm termed “proto-mind”.