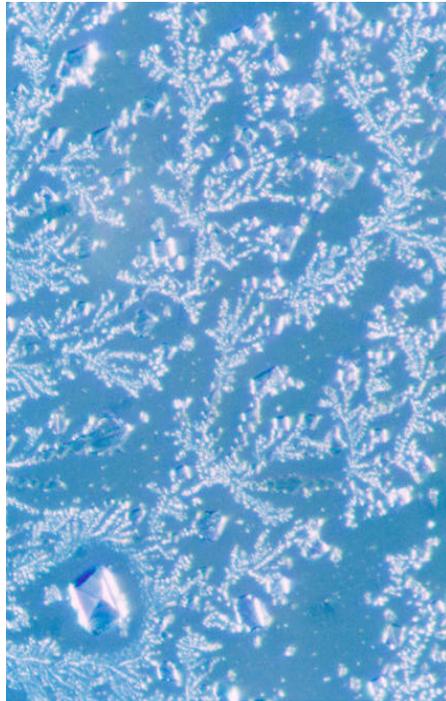


Crystallization



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With so many belief systems to choose from, how do we know which one to choose, or which one to stick with, or which one to further explore? Is it wise for us to hold onto the systems that our families, cultures, schools, and religious institutions have laid out for us to adhere to? Are we really knowing and discovering ourselves through these beliefs, or are we passively biding our time within these systems, zealously hoping that the idea of a religious heaven is the ends for this condition of life we must endure? The question has been posed again and again: Why are we here? And we continuously delve for answers within our own realms of existence, hoping to find meaning through wealth, status, children, or love in the process. And this is acceptable. Understand that at this moment you are where you should be. It really couldn't be any other way. The past is gone, unchangeable; the future is full of possibilities. The enigma of life is open for your own interpretation. Recognizing your place in the world is the first step towards freedom. I, like many others before me, will codify my belief system in the hopes that the progression of human consciousness may evolve into realms that are new for this generation, though not in the span of humanity. My ideas are not necessarily original; my beliefs and system come from all facets of life. I have only seen the connectedness in our existing ideas, and I have integrated them into a system that works for me.

Envision humanity as a crystal. Envision our ideas, sciences, and religions as part of that whole crystal. Envision yourself as an individual crystal, a sparkling entity in a sea of vibrational energy.

Our individuality is comparable to a crystal. Each crystal is unique in its structure through the composition of atoms, elements, and minerals. The final beautiful product is a culmination of various factors: pressurization, radiation, earth and solar emissions, erosion, and the layering or dripping of sediment over vast expanses of time (Hall 14-15). The forces of life and of change have churned out a unique and beautiful specimen, just as we can consider ourselves today. Whether by religious institutions, cultures, schools, or families, we have all been influenced to become who we are today. And that is perfectly fine. What else are we supposed to do but just be? So admire and love yourself for your uniqueness, for we

all have our defining characteristics that are a formalization of various processes we have been subjected to.

Closely examining a crystal will reveal imperfections. Whether it is a fissure, broken pieces, discolorations, or asymmetry, it is still admired for its wholeness. Extend that to yourself. Imperfections are a part of your being; they give you uniqueness and flavor. They are part of your integral whole, and they serve your needs for growth and realization. It is wise to recognize your imperfections in this way. Work with them for realization of your potential. When we focus on our imperfections or “sins” we miss capturing the essence of our beautiful wholeness. We become mired in depression, anxiety, guilt, fear, and social disorders. However, our imperfections can become doorways to our greatest strengths. Inner contemplation and outward implementation can relieve us from our imperfections.

Now imagine yourself as a crystal growing from and solidifying in a matrix or base. We all have established foundations from which growth can be possible, as seen in the crystal clusters rising from a stony rock. The potential for growth is always there; the right pressure, temperature, or fire is only needed to initiate the necessary change. Be who you have been, but strive to be more than that. Focus your mind on small transformations; as growth occurs and illumination transpires, larger structures form from the clusters of foundational achievements.

Have you ever examined a crystal and noticed that when light hits a certain angle there is a sparkling flash that wasn't noticeable before? Let this be understood as inspiration or intuition. The sparkle has always been there as part of the whole, yet illumination through light makes its presence known. Plato speculated that we are born with innate ideas that are lost in the human material condition, yet can be realized through dialogue or inner contemplation. When we make that connection and understand the illuminating inspiration, we realize the truths that have been within us all along. We can understand these radiant flashes of light that compose our integral and beautiful whole.

The realms of human experience can be situated to this crystal concept. In fact, I think it can simplify our understanding of the whole of our existence if we can envision human

experience, thought, behavior, culture, biology, religion, and philosophy as a beautiful faceted quartz crystal. Humanity should be considered from a whole and integrated perspective if we are to fully experience the beauty that is available for us to see, experience, and enjoy. All facets of life offer us something, but if we integrate them all for our own system, we can achieve far greater happiness and contentment than if we approach life from just one particular angle.

By far the most prominent facet that operates and hence divides us in this world is that of religion. Whether we abide by one or not, its influence is always there in our daily lives through war, political agendas, and personal relationships. Every individual operates within the realms of religion, though we may not choose it for ourselves. America appears to be the epitome of this seemingly inescapable force. We have imposed our system throughout the world through wars, missionaries, and diplomatic ventures. We have convinced ourselves that we hold the key to the kingdom of God, and those who do not accept our view shall spend eternity in a lake of sulfuric fire. Instead of further attacking this idea a billion or more hold, I would rather resort to that which I laid out in the beginning: we have been shaped and solidified within our own realms of existence. Does that mean we have to accept religion completely for what it is? I believe that we can use it as a foundation for further insights, truths, and gems of wisdom. Religion is a uniting factor in our existence; it fosters community, instills the virtues of hope, faith, and compassion. It has been beneficial to humanity in these virtuous pursuits, but it has also fostered greed, power, and the submission of people to its tenets by capitalizing on the fear of the unknown and death. Religion can offer an answer to our inquiry of the afterlife. But it comes with a price: submission to the ideas of the powerful, feeling guilty for our sins, suppression of individuality, ridicule and heresy for opposing existing beliefs, sexual abominations by those in power, and perpetual conflicts based on opposing views. Am I deluded in thinking that the institutions that exist for the exaltation of God have missed the mark completely when considering all this suffering? Moral judgment of religious institutions, though risky, is necessary in this system because of the evident hypocrisy. We may trust the powerful Church for our means to salvation, but when those with the power commit deviant acts, it puts a shame to the whole system it advocates. Many do not live by that which they preach, and for me, this highlights the problem with religious institutions. The problem is the power, the

ego, and the audacity to invoke judgment, though it was written in James 4:12: “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you- who are you to judge your neighbor?”. This one verse, for me, conveys the immensity of the problems that are found in the churches, for the institution is passing judgment and paying no attention to the plank in their own eyes (Matthew 7:3). Furthermore, consider the people of other religions who are doomed to hell by Christian standards. Is there not goodness in the Buddhist monks or the Hindus who are only furthering their spiritual quests through the cultural institutions laid out for them? When considering these immense issues of rightness, wrongness and spirituality, I have concluded that I don’t need a religion to tell me how to think or live. I will look for the answers myself, and I invite you to do the same.

The redemption of religion can be found in many of the guiding principles that have been utilized for ages. While I shun the institution of religion, I accept many of the teachings that instill goodness, morality, compassion, and a map for a peaceful existence. While I am aware of my spiritual destiny, I am still required to function in the current realms of reality.

Religious teachings, in their purest intent, provide the surest way to a life of godly expression. The tenets of religion continue because they have worked for those who have wanted them to work. There must be validity, or else there wouldn’t be followers at this stage of religious evolution. So what I have done, and what I propose to you, is to seek out those core values that are found within any given religion, those truths that work for the people who work for them, and incorporate those in your own life. Be open to the facets of religion; put them all together and you may find and understand the whole of the Cosmic Divinity- that we are all a part of God- though this concept may be unfathomable and elusive for most of us.

In this realm of religion, it is easier for me to comprehend truth when I envision religion as a crystal. There are numerous religions, or angles, to approach life from. Your family and cultural position determine your possible adherence to one religion or another. But keep in mind that it is one angle, one facet, which allows you to glimpse part of the whole. Most religions solidified from the epiphanies or inspirations of people attuned to the will of God, the One, or the Cosmic Consciousness. I do believe in the Divine inspiration through chosen messengers, such as Jesus, the Buddha, and the Catholic Saints; they illuminate the

truths necessary for the time and place. The danger of this, however, is our complacency with what has been given. We are comfortable with what we have, though the times continue to change. Religions arose out of this desire for transforming the human condition, and the time has come again for a new way of thinking. We are losing our spirituality, though gaining religiousness. Opening up to all religions may open you up to newer truths that may not be found in your religion alone.

The following are the 'religious' gems of wisdom I try to integrate into my life. I do recommend further study of these religious ideals for a deeper understanding of the foundations and beliefs of the institution. I have chosen the religious teachings that resonate within me; once the idea was revealed, it made sense. Call it divine inspiration or innate ideas. Whatever it is, my life has been profoundly affected by my realizations and acceptance of such teachings. It is my hope that this grace will be bestowed upon you.

The Facet of Christianity: The virtues espoused in the religion of Christianity should be the virtues that we operate our lives by. Compassion, humility, love, forgiveness, joy, peace, kindness, patience, self-control, gentleness, and goodness are the ideal virtues found in the New Testament. The proverbs are wisdom, sources for inner contemplation. The importance of community is upheld so that strength is found in numbers; the power in your belief is actualized when in the presence of like-minded individuals. The compassion for suffering allows Christians to have an impact on the community by providing for the weak and the poor.

The Facet of Catholicism: Catholicism is similar to Christianity in virtuosity, but there is a greater emphasis on sacrament and ritual, though both religions emphasize the importance of communion in order to attain connection with God. The ends of this function also allow the religious community to flourish under an identity. A sense of belonging is so important for people, and Catholicism embodies this ideal. The important lesson here is to seek out like-minded individuals in your quest for truth or meaning. The power of community, rituals, or sacraments allows a fuller realization of the powerful potential of belief. When you are not alone in your quest, you are more encouraged to continue.

The Facet of Buddhism: The Four Noble Truths of the Buddha can offer to us a view of life that is not as easily articulated in Western religions. 1) Life is suffering, 2) Desire is the cause of suffering, 3) We can ease suffering by easing desire, and 4) the Eightfold Path can lead to the cessation of suffering. The virtues of the Eightfold Path are: Right Belief, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Means of Livelihood, Right Endeavor, Right Mindfulness, and Right Meditation. The locus of control of the human condition is placed on the individual. It is within ourselves that we must find the answers or the way. We can study and learn from the books what the right virtues are, but until we allow ourselves the freedom to feel them and express them, then we haven't really found them or understood them. Buddhism embraces the acceptance of emptiness as a means to fulfill life. When we do not desire, we do not suffer. Think about the objects or people we desire in our life, and how we feel when we don't get them. This can be alleviated if we just let go and be. Trust that your needs will be fulfilled. There is power in no-power. By surrendering to life and relinquishing our need to control, we gain peace and acceptance. Buddhism also advocates meditation, which further promotes peacefulness and insight. While the constant meditation of the monks is likely impossible for Westerners to do, some practice will surely be better than none.

The Facet of Hinduism: Hinduism espouses the belief in reincarnation. I think we would be wise to consider this possibility of our existence. First, the concept is more comforting than the Western tradition of 'one lifetime to prove yourself'. Though reincarnation is a reflection on your unperfected being, it instills the hope that you have a divine purpose to seek perfection, and you can take as long as you want or need to get there. Reincarnation is refinement. We get to experience all walks of life and its various lessons that we can't do in one lifetime. This idea can ease the question of human suffering and why some people have wonderful lives and others don't. There are always lessons being learned. Those who have it hard now may have it better the next time around. As we are all like a unique crystal, we all have a different journey to fully realize ourselves. Our destination is the Oneness, God. In order to exist in that perfect state, we must perfect ourselves in this material plane first. Unity with God is the reward. Reincarnation allows us the means to perfect ourselves as gods. Karma is also a tenet that the Hindus live by. It is the universal principle of cause and effect, and this teaching can even be found in the Bible through the practice of "reaping

what you sow”. This principle should be a guiding force in life in that the rewards for good behavior will come if you do good. It is like attracting like, one becoming virtuous by acting virtuous, or one becoming evil by acting evil. Choosing to do that which is good makes sense when considering the principle of karma.

The Facet of Judaism: The rigorous study, prayer, and observation of tradition are compelling components of Judaism. While I think it’s wise to not become mired in the past, the lesson here is dedication to and faith in what you believe. The Jewish community is often unwavering in their roots, and steadfastness in the face of adversity is shown to be a virtue. The various texts of Judaism also espouse values that can be integrated into a non-religious people. Judaism preaches the Ten Commandments, which most of us may remember from Sunday school, and which are essential for a moral life. The concept of dualism is especially relevant: there is a never-ending battle between the body and mind, or the spirit and flesh. The body is material and subjected to desires and the mind or spirit must overcome these temptations in order to be virtuous. We can see this battle playing out in addictions of all sorts. Victory can only be had in the mind, in the will. If we can keep this idea alive within ourselves, we can hopefully overcome the temptations that are rampant in society today.

The Facet of Islam: This religion has assumed a position of ‘submission to God’. In the purest form this idea can be comparable to other dominant religions, though practice of this concept is hard to see in any of the religions. But the idea- pure and untainted by man’s interpretation- is a noble one. It is the surrendering or yielding of control to God. If this were actually done, I think the world would be a better place. However, perceiving Islam as we do, we see the consequences through the perversion of man’s understanding of God. This in itself provides a valuable lesson to all religions. How are we to truly know God’s will? I think Islam shows that we can’t. This is not an opportunity to assert that one has the God-given truth specifically handed to him. This just shows man’s weakness in our understanding of God. It shows the harmful effects of the desire to control, to be right, and to give name and ideas to the infinite Creator, when we don’t even have the capacity to grasp that which is so beyond us mortals. Radical Islam and its perversion of God’s will should be a lesson for us in this way. But also know that not all Muslims practice their religion in this form. There must be facets of truth in Islam. There is a belief in angels and cosmic messengers, which I

like to connect to the idea of spirit guides or those higher forces that are guiding us throughout life. How can we discount the thousands of stories of people being saved from death or injury by ‘guardian angels’, or the words of wisdom channeled through mediums or seers? I think of the stories of the World Trade Center, and how many people were saved because some higher force prevented them from going to work that day. There must be some higher resource of knowledge being accessed, and Islam’s concept can make that connection. There is also an emphasis on alms-giving, which is a virtuous practice that we should all partake in. Support a cause or donate to your community if you have the money or time. There will always be a reward in doing so.

The Facet of Sufism: A branch of Islam that delves into the mystical realms of God and the self, and provides a means to achieve ecstasy through ritualistic dance. *The Alchemy of Happiness* is a concise sacred text of this faith, and it enables us to ponder the truths they offer. Here I found an appealing account of God and the soul, if we are to be mystical:

Not only are man’s attributes a reflection of God’s attributes, but the mode of existence of man’s soul affords some insight into God’s mode of existence. That is to say, both God and the soul are invisible, indivisible, unconfined by space and time, and outside the categories of quantity or quality; nor can the ideas of shape, color, or size attach to them...These are thought-concepts, and cannot be cognized by the senses; whereas quality, quantity, etc. are sense-concepts (Al-Ghazzali 13).

Here we can find a refutation to our habit of conceptualizing God. Therefore I say avoid doing that because it can be harmful to our perceptions. The best we can do is accept the existence and wonderful beauty of God, and then live our lives according to that which is our unique plan. This text also reveals a beautiful truth that our souls are our connection to God. This is a familiar and comforting element in religion. The rituals of music and dance as a means to experience God are also practiced by the Sufis, and a group ecstatic experience is vital for maintaining that connection.

The Facet of Daoism: A long-held Chinese tradition of ‘religion’, or way of life, Daoism holds that the Dao, or the Source, is manifested through deities in order to provide insight and self-disclosure. Emphasis is placed on a reverence for the Way and a relationship with the sacred, as well as a go-with-the-flow attitude. Such can be summarized in the philosophy of the *Dao De Jing*, which “...accepts unquestioningly the theory that when things are allowed to take their natural course, they move with a wonderful perfection and harmony. This is

because, in such a case, the Dao (the eternal way of the universe) is not hindered in its smooth operation” (Noss 264). This can relate to the Buddhist concept of power in no-power. If we just *are*, then all is how it should be and then all is good. We can see this idea alive in nature, which is the underlying connector in Daoism. The functioning ecosystem is the manifestation of this truth. There is a desire to be at one with nature, and yet recognize ourselves within its cycle. Rise and fall, growth and decay, and being to non-being are lessons imparted to us from the sacredness of nature (266). Another truth that has relevance for us is the incorporation of the yin and yang (female and male) energies. “A wise human being of either sex will internalize both” (264). Within this balance of emotions and characteristics, a unity of both imparts an empathy that is commonly lacking today. If each individual strived to achieve this balance of male and female characteristics, I believe that societal relationship problems would decrease, including the skyrocketing divorce rate and domestic violence. Instead of approaching life from the strictly male or female angle, incorporate the various qualities from each into an essential unification of both. The wisdom of the ancients should not be forgotten in this way.

The Facet of Confucianism: This religion approaches life from an optimistic humanism stance. There is much emphasis on ethics and social harmony. There are five “Shared Values” that are employed in order to achieve harmony. I think Americans would be wise to consider the ethics being espoused here: 1) nation before community and society before self, 2) family as the basic unit of society, 3) respect and community support for the individual, 4) consensus instead of conflict, and 5) racial and religious harmony (Noss 320). For some reason, Americans seem to thrive on conflict and competition. If we could simplify our stance to this mutual support and understanding of others, we could change the landscape of our culture to one that is harmonious and beneficial to all. The results could be immensely felt, especially through increased quality of life.

The Facet of Zoroastrianism: This religion finds sacred meaning in fire as a symbolic representation of God. Elaborate ceremonies and cleansing rituals are performed in the presence of pure flame as a means to share in God’s eternal life. The importance of symbolism is expressed through this religion. Though we should not conceptualize God, we can use the elements we have access to in order to realize the greatness of God. Another

practice that should be considered is that of the dakhmas, or towers of silence. Here the bodies of the deceased are laid inside the open tower so that the vultures may consume the flesh, thereby allowing non-contamination of the Earth. Though this practice may seem repulsive to some, the idea of provision and land conservation has its appeal.

The Facet of Shinto: The native religion of Japan espouses the virtues, or attitudes, of loyalty, gratitude, courage, justice, truthfulness, politeness, reserve, and honor. There is a reverent alliance for realities encountered in life: nature, home, society, and land. We can model an ethic of co-existence based upon these teachings. There is a tremendous love and respect for ancestors. Shinto arose from mythology, which has helped shape the unique identity of the land.

The Facet of Animism: The spirit of life flows throughout the Earth, even unto inanimate objects and insentient beings. This view calls for a reverence for nature and an acknowledgment of the Spirit that flows through all things. Mountains, rivers, rocks, and creatures of all sorts are home to the universal spiritual energies, and we should acknowledge that presence and make an effort to not desecrate or destroy these essential beings that are of the life force of the Earth.

The Facet of Shamanism: The nature of shamanism is most noticeable in the Native American traditions that recognize the spirit and sacredness of all of life. Ceremonies are performed to the beat of the drum and are accompanied by rattles, flutes and singing. Story telling and mythology teach lessons and give identity. A shaman is *One Who Knows*, and they are able to access the spiritual realms and transmit that knowledge and healing to the community. This mystical realm should allow us to embrace the power of the shamans or enlightened ones so that we may access the deeper recesses of our existence.

While these teachings are but a fraction of the wealth of information out there, I find that the simplicity of the wisdom can provide a steady foundation for a mystical sense of God and our own unique realizations. There are countless truths to be found, but perhaps understanding and implementing those that fit into your current life position is the preferred method for continued growth. And while a mystical approach to life may seem to call for

one to be reflective of God at all moments, we know that practice is unreachable in 21st century living (unless you renounce society). Furthermore, I don't believe there is a God sitting on a throne judging our thoughts and actions. I believe we are all gods, sent here to experience life and gain understanding and create our own models of existence. After our karmic lessons are learned throughout our continuous cycles of reincarnation, we will merge into the Supreme Oneness once again. As for myself, I accept these beliefs and I live the life I must in this present incarnation. I use them as a foundation for my behavior, thoughts, and outlook on life. I get down some days, but I know I must get back up. I look to these truths for meaning in my spiritual life, and then I am calm from my inner turmoil. Everything appears so trivial when you approach life with such ideals in mind. Upon understanding such truths I do feel enlightened, though not in the nirvana sense. I feel enlightened because I know life is good, though bad things happen, but these bad things only open me up to new realizations and truths I may have otherwise not known. Once I reached this state of understanding, those inevitable hardships didn't feel so hard. In the end it's all a matter of focusing your perspective on the bigger picture, the condition and reason of suffering, the goodness in life, the people you know, and accepting it for what it is, which is the perfect whole of experiences that we get to experience. With that in mind, I will offer some non-religious facets for which we should approach life by so that the whole of human experience is represented here. We live in a material world and things of this nature cannot be ignored if we are to realize ourselves as well as our place in this world. By pondering these facets, we can gain insight and hopefully converge science and spirituality for the ultimate mystical experience.

The Facet of Science: Science has unfortunately made numerous attempts to dismiss the existence of God or mystical experiences based on numerous logical presuppositions that categorize all such claims in the realm of arguments of fallacy. Believers in God and mysticism are hard-pressed to provide objective proof, as the experiences are always subjective. Many realms of human experience cannot be validated through scientific proof, and we need to accept that but not give up on it. The technology or methods for validating such experiences are in the works, if such experiences really need concrete proof. I'll concur that proof would be nice just for shutting up critics of any mystical system, but it's all a matter of choosing the life you want to live, though a thorough exploration and explanation

of your view is necessary to be taken seriously. Society works like this today; it may behoove you to have some sort of logical argument for consideration. But in the end, your happiness should trump whatever science tells you how you ought to be. I realize this is a harsh assessment of science, but I must get my frustrations out in this way. After that, I can praise science for the many insights and truths it has offered to our human experience.

The facet of science is huge and I will discuss the importance of each in its most basic attributes at this time. Consider it alongside religion in the complete crystal of our human experiences. For the following categorizations, I'll be faceting the facet of science, but consider the further facets as part of the whole of the facet of science. While I am not an expert in these fields, I have grasped enough knowledge so that I may incorporate the basics into this system.

The Facet of Biology: Our most basic levels of being start first and foremost with the atoms- the scientifically accepted foundations of the universe. For this realm, I stress the consideration of the atom in that it is the material manifestation of primal energy. All is composed of these vibrating particles of mass, from the stars to the mountains to ourselves. The importance of pondering this infinitesimally small unit of composition is to understand the energy emitted. The simplest conclusion I can grasp from this is this is that, in this form, we are all one. Unity takes on a whole new meaning if we are to truly consider this basic substance of being.

The Facet of Psychology: Our early experiences shape who we are; they establish that foundation which will affect us throughout our life. Our coping skills and thinking habits that we develop at an early age will be an influential component of our lives. Exposure to misinformed or ignorant habits take their root as we develop, and by the time we are teens we project that ingrained image onto the world. Education and realization of the mind and its peculiarities are necessary if we are to break free of our earliest perceptions of the world. It is wrong to assume that our way is the right way, yet so many of us fall victim to this trap and we continue to project our ideas and habits in ways that are harmful to others and ourselves. If we can only recognize our misguidance and be adaptable to new ideas and ways

of thinking about ourselves, we can slowly start the process of recognition and the overcoming of the thought processes that often do more harm than good.

The Facet of Sociology: In order to understand our core beliefs and values, we must consider the nature of our society, social institutions, and social relationships. Here lies the difficulty in practicing a system or advocating beliefs that are outside societal norms. The label of non-conformist, though not a bad label for us non-conformists, implies ignorance regarding the acceptance of established beliefs. There is a tendency for mockery or unacceptance towards those who defy the system. Unfair labels and unfounded proclamations of so-called “superior” belief systems advocates may cause one to question their unusual beliefs. While America prides itself on freedom of religion, there is still a propensity to disregard those systems that don’t agree with the established Christian religion. There is an element of fear that provides the basis of attack. The ideals of the accepted religions have been transmitted through generations and have become ingrained in our national identity. Any opposition appears to threaten the fabric that holds the country together. If practitioners of unusual systems can understand the underlying basis for such attacks, the guilt of non-conformity can be washed away.

The Facet of Neuroscience: This branch studies our behavior and learning capacities based on the neural connections within the body. The most fascinating angle is that of the neural networking of the brain. When a thought or behavior pattern becomes habitual for us, it is because the neural networks of the brain have formed an identity composed of numerous concepts that give meaning to our experience. Positive or negative associative memories of life experiences are reinforced over and over in our brain. Emotions stem from these neural pathways, and that’s why it’s so hard to break free from our emotional states. But have hope that we can break free from this pattern! Retraining the mind to think in new ways will cause these neural associations to split for good. Then the task is to build up positive associations in the brain; here an optimistic approach to life seems physiologically possible. So how to retrain your brain? If you believe in a new idea and seek out experiences that will allow that belief to be physically observable and physiologically established, and you get results, you are more encouraged to believe that it is real. It may not happen overnight, but over time, as you continue to believe and see the results, the neural networks will form a

new identity and reactions will be instinctual after that. The best way to realize this concept is through synchronicity, which I will address shortly. This science also gives credence to religious experiences and how belief can bring subjective proof. This may be why it's so hard for many religious conservatives to concede their existing beliefs. The power of thought has brought the proof they needed to confirm their beliefs, and that internal confirmation makes new beliefs hard to fathom. Opening up to the possibilities of life is the only way to realize the many truths available to us.

The Facet of the Quantum: The quantum field is expanding and exploring realms of science and being that are now only possible with the advent of advanced technology. The consideration of atoms and their protons and electrons are the focal point of consideration. Science is finding that these particles are not what we expected. They can take on qualities of their other particles, they can be observed in two places at once, and they can also disappear, though where they go is still a mystery (one theory is a parallel universe). They conform to the methodology of scientific observation, though with various patterns and behaviors for each method of inquiry (Redfield 52). The theory of superposition states that particles exist in infinite states until there is direct observation; then we see the solid form, as we've always known it to be. The quantum experiments are sweeping aside the materialistic notion of the universe and are opening us up to the possibility that our thoughts and intentions do create change in the fabric of spacetime. This can possibly be the science that can merge our spiritual experiences with physical observation and proof.

The Facet of Ecology: This branch studies the relationships between living organisms. In the realm of the ecosystem, we can realize the necessity of balance through the observation of natural processes that allow the systems and functions to operate as a whole. If there is unbalance, we can see the domino effect of things falling out of order. The consequences of distorted systems will continue to pile up until it collapses. We see the evidence of this in desert regions that were once forests, or dry lake and riverbeds where water was once diverted so that man could simplify his existence. Ecology should be considered in a religious or mystical system because our very survival depends upon the smooth functioning of our ecological systems. Man cannot claim superiority over nature; we need to accept our role as steward and companion to nature. Development and greed continue to deplete our

resources and we are dooming ourselves in these practices. The return to an integrated and symbiotic existence with nature is necessary for our future generations and our own spiritual well being. We need the reflective beauty of nature to realize ourselves.

The Facet of Technology: Here is a branch of science that is made available through our intelligent ideas and creative innovations. It has proven to be a curse for humanity in some realms (nuclear proliferation), and a savior in other (relative ease and luxuries of 21st century life). Since it is here, we must embrace it. Our task now is to continue to develop technologies that are conducive to environmentally friendly methods of production. We have and continue to get the technology that is necessary for a greener standard of living. We must support such technologies in order to achieve the highest ethical approach to consumerism that we can. Technology has also graced us with the Internet and its cultural and global appeal. This is the time when the concept of a global community is truly at our fingertips.

The Facet of Mathematics: Pythagoras highlighted the extreme importance of mathematics in the deciphering of the universe. The Harmony of the Spheres was his methodology for interpreting the universe in a mathematical light. Mathematics provides us one more way to access the deeper truths of the universe by formulating equations and deciphering the numerical connections of existence. Mathematics offers an answer to so many realms of our existence, and while I have a hard time comprehending this realm, I accept its power in our universe.

As you can see, I have only integrated some basic ideas of science that I find to be enlightening in my own quest. There are too many realms and ideas to be discussed in this forum. So once again I must implore that you continue to seek answers and build on these ideas for yourself. Incorporating science into your worldview is essential for greater understanding of the underlying forces at work in our world.

I will now offer a few more facets for your consideration. I will have to touch upon the basics for now, which I do regret since I have so much to say. I hope my ideas are enough to

satisfy the connection that I hope you can make in this extensive proclamation of my mystical system.

The Facet of Philosophical Thought: Starting with Socrates in ancient Greek, the methodology of self-examination started with his “know thyself” mantra. Plato succeeded his teacher by delving into the sphere of ideas and form. Aristotle presented the world with an ethical guide, as well as a method for scientific and logical inquiry. From these masters of ancient thought, philosophy as we know it took root, and it continues to grow today in ever-expansive fields of knowledge that oftentimes become hard to decipher. I will offer a few of my favorite philosophical thoughts, starting with knowing yourself. Self-inquiry begins the path to enlightenment. Asking yourself the deeper questions will allow yourself the deeper answers. Consider Plato’s ‘Allegory of the Cave’. We are essentially forced to believe the ideas of the times, but if we can break through the desired conformity, we can realize the greater truths that are withheld from us because submission and ignorance makes it easier for rulers to rule. Plato’s successor, Aristotle, delved into the physical components of human existence and concluded that every action we take is for our pursuit of happiness. Happiness can be found in two conditions: a life of contemplation and the pursuit of virtuous living. Aristotle provided a guide to virtuous living in his Doctrine of Moderation and the cultivation of four main virtues, whereby perfecting these will allow the full realization of all other virtues. It is important to understand that virtues and vices are essentially habits that we have developed for dealing with society. The four virtues that Aristotle favored above all were fortitude, temperance, justice, and prudence. But these, as well as all virtues, are to be practiced with moderation. Any excess or deficiency in any virtue will throw you off balance and contaminate your existence. Temperance is a good example of this- the virtue of self-control. If you control yourself too much, you won’t be able to enjoy yourself; you won’t be open to the opportunities of life. If you lack self-control, you will be controlled by the pursuit of pleasure and stability will slip away. In order to realize your fullest potential, you must know your limits and stick to them. Realize this philosophy is a life long practice, and you’ll know you can always do better. Another significant philosophical movement is existentialism (I know that’s a great leap in centuries): we become who we choose to become. Don’t place blame on anyone other than yourself. It’s all a matter of freeing yourself from your preconceived notions of who you are, and actually getting out there in

the world and becoming who you were meant to be. Again, these are but a few of the great ideas out there that can offer us the means to make sense of our purpose.

The Facet of Symbol Systems: There are many interpretive devices we can access today so that we might find meaning or relevance in our existence. While their validity is often debatable in the scientific realm, such practices and phenomenon nonetheless succeed in mesmerizing people with the unknown and mysterious realms. Astrology, tarot cards, the I Ching, runes, and psychics offer the receiver a map for transformation through the art of interpretation. Crop circles, déjàvu, ley lines, sacred sites, UFO's, prehistoric creatures, the pyramids, Atlantis, and other countless unexplained and mystifying phenomena color our existence and inspire our imaginations. Instead of disregarding such beliefs, consider them as part of the whole of the mystery of our existence.

The Facet of Relationships: Family and friendships should be nourished and not taken for granted. Accept those in your life for who they are, but offer them an example of a life of goodness and contentment. Be a light to those around you, and hopefully you can combat ignorance and inspire change. You can also more fully discover yourself through your interactions with people. Make connections, make people laugh and feel good about themselves, and you will feel more alive and happier as well.

The Facet of Human Suffering: While it is so easy to ask God "Why?" when bad things happen, we must consider suffering as a virtue. It can lead to new realizations, it may foster compassion, it may allow one to recognize personal responsibility in actions, and it may shatter our conceptions of who we are, only to see them rebuilt stronger. The emotions of suffering- confusion, doubt, and incomprehension- are a sign that learning is taking place. Suffering can help us appreciate the better days. Suffering may bring us closer to God since we must look for strength somewhere. When we are eased of suffering we can realize, in hindsight, our inner transformations brought on by the experience. We cannot dwell on what has happened though. Let suffering be a path to enlightenment. Suffering becomes a powerful source for insight.

The Facet of New Age Spirituality: At this point, I like to believe that human consciousness is evolving into a new era of thought, and this is the goal of most New Age thinkers. Just as evolution happens on a physical scale, so too can the ideas of humanity evolve in this way. There is a continual building upon of the previous notions and theories; science and spirituality are now working together in the quantum fields and providing us an integral unification of both fields. This would be an actualization of Jung's dream of a bricklayer, in which he saw a man laying brick upon brick, each one representing a new truth or discovery. Only through the progression of time can the clarity of human evolution in science and spirituality be revealed. It's as if the truths come to us when we need them. Humans construct systems/religions that allow them to make sense of the current world, and most of what we have today is the culmination of Western thought over the past 1500 years. This is a marvel to consider, but it also brings out fear when our paradigms are confronted with new realities, such as those that are being expounded upon in the New Age Spirituality today. There is a focus on intuition, inspiration, innate ideas, and an integral unity in all of humanity and even the universe. Consciousness and primal energy are the areas to explore. It is interesting to consider that great civilizations of long ago had access to this knowledge through their close relationship with nature and lack of material comforts that would keep them from exploring their potential. The sixth sense phenomena that are dismissed today- clairvoyance, telepathy, psychokinesis, and astral travel- were second nature to these ancient civilizations. They were not told that they couldn't do it- they needed that sixth sense in order to survive. Materialism and religion changed that for us; these basic attributes of our humanity were dismissed in favor of logic and reason. The New Age hope is for another paradigm shift that will once again return humanity to these available attributes of existence, though we now have such vast technologies so our capacities for greatness are limitless, if we choose to use it wisely. I'll end this facet with a prediction that is being circulated within the New Age movement: according to the ancient Mayan calendars, the year 2012 is a year of great significance for humanity. There may be a cataclysmic occurrence, or humans may take great leaps in consciousness (that is the hope). I'm starting to believe it will be both. December 21st, 2012 marks the day that a cosmic cross will be aligned in the sun, the ecliptic plane, and the Milky Way. The hope is that this alignment will open a channel of cosmic energy that will cleanse and rejuvenate the Earth, and raise the vibrational levels of this plane. Let us hope that the New Age thinkers have it right and a

paradigm shift is just five years away. If not, the fate of our world surely lays in the hands of the powerful few.

The Facet of Synchronicity: This is the last facet to discuss, but I also believe it is the most important. This is the idea that allows subjective experience to realize its fullest potential and yet provide the confirmation needed, especially within the neural networks of the brain, so that subjective proof begets belief, and the optimistic cycle flows on from there. Carl Jung coined the term to give structure to the whole of human experience and the meaningful interactions in our lives, especially through his models of archetypes and the collective unconscious. This in itself is a fascinating concept in that there is a reservoir of available knowledge to humanity, which some have called the Ashkaic records. All that has been and all that will be exists as potential energy in a cosmic dynamic field. This may explain why new ideas emerge at opposite ends of the world because humans have spiritually evolved enough to tap into the new concepts. Synchronicity is also rooted in the responsive universe, which is rooted in the quantum fields. The power of thought and the law of attraction (like attracts like) come into play with synchronicity. The scientific elements can even be traced back to Einstein, who believed in an intelligent universe. Synchronicity is meaningful coincidences. It is this idea that brings to us that which we need right when we need it. This concept can move human beings toward greater growth in consciousness (Redfield 14). Recognize that things happen for us in order to realize our greatest potential. However, we must let go of our desire to control if we are to realize synchronicity. By just being, flowing and living life, and taking those chances or opportunities that are offered to you through meaningful coincidences, you can realize your potential and truly get the life that was destined for you to live.

My Prescription for Life: The philosophy of life that I choose to live by is spirituality. The facets of religion and science I have covered offer me a map for virtuous living, meditation and self-contemplation, as well as a basic understanding of science so that I can solidify my beliefs into a valid system for me. While there are realms of mysticism that science can't prove, I won't let that be a deterrent for understanding my own spiritual experiences. Perhaps it is wise for me to convey to you an encompassing definition of spirituality, which is rooted in the Latin word *spiritus*, or "breath":

It involves opening our hearts and cultivating our capacity to experience awe, reverence and gratitude. It is the ability to see the sacred in the ordinary, to feel the poignancy of life, to know the passion of existence and to give ourselves over to that which is greater than ourselves (Elkins 3).

Spirituality is the breath of life. It colors our experience and allows us to find and create meaning in our existence. If you find yourself pondering why you are here, consider this definition and then you might just understand.

I also believe that when you are ready, the teacher will appear. This can actually be a fulfillment of synchronicity, whereby opening yourself up to the possibilities of existence will allow the truths you need to hear come forth. I must consider this when I examine my own life experiences that have led me to this point in my life. If my system seems unattainable, please know that I would've felt the same way a few years ago. I was lost, angry, and spiritually empty. I had lost my religion (Christianity) and I was biding my time with addictions, including drugs, and a victimization complex with a diagnosis of manic depression- I admit I played with this diagnosis and let it be a guiding force in my thoughts and behaviors (remember the facet of neuroscience). Eventually I was worn out, on the verge of suicide, and I knew it was up to me to find my redemption. I first began to explore astrology and undertook a more specific analysis of my Pisces sign. I had bought this huge astrology book at a garage sale for a quarter a few years before (a synchronistic purchase, I now believe) , but I'd never even opened it. And once I did, I was able to make sense out of myself again. The fish that are swimming in opposite directions, symbolic of the struggle in life, first reeled me in. The compassionate disposition- that was me, somewhere in the darkness I had constructed around myself. Susceptibility to drug and alcohol abuse, check; falling prey to over-indulgence, check; intuitive and sensitive, check. So many of my good and bad qualities made sense, and even if my subjective interpretations or confirmation biases had come into play, I was beginning to finally understand myself and what I was capable of. I plunged forward into the mystical, which is a traditional outlet for Pisceans. I checked out books on astral travel, reincarnation, crystal healing, divining, and New Age philosophies. Within a few months, I had become well versed in these topics and I was engaging myself with these new visions of a reality I could choose. I quit taking my cocktail of psychotropic drugs and felt a sense of freedom that I'd never known. Clarity and meaning had found a way into my life again through my decision to examine myself and open up to

the possibilities in the world. I let go of the prescription for life my parents, church, and society had laid out for me, and in that act, I found my own destiny. I was finally crystallized.

Realization of spiritual destiny can be fleeting in materialistic America. Modern life is always there to try to suck you back in, make you feel like you've chosen the wrong belief system. I advocate the habitual use of the following methods to maintain your connection to the Divine and to continue to realize your spiritual essence. Meditation, relaxation and prayer will nurture and rejuvenate your spirit. Spend time in nature in order to realize the grandness of existence. When you experience nature, whether by wading in ocean or river waters, looking at the night sky, or walking through a lively forest, realize that it is only you experiencing it at that time. Nature offers us beauty, peace, and realization of our uniqueness in this universe. Read spiritual books or sacred texts so that you can challenge your beliefs and hopefully realize new truths. Listen to or make music, write stories or poetry, and dance. Be with your friends and family, but create an uplifting and happy atmosphere by living and acting virtuously. Be a shining example to those around you. Smile at people; let them know you care. Give back to your community through volunteering or making donations. Go to a park with a child. Play a sport. Exercise. Just be happy with who you are and the gifts that you have!

On a more personal and quirky level, I have employed the following strategies in my own life for well-being: I have placed crystals and hand-picked rocks throughout my house; they absorb and transmit energy, and yet they offer aesthetic beauty and serenity with their presence. I have three cats, a fish tank and a fish bowl, and a few plants that add an element of natural life; there is joy to be found within these life forms. I have landscaped my yard and have taken great measures to decorate my house to my own unique taste; my home is an extension of me and it hopefully reflects my loving nature to all who stop by. I have incorporated some Feng Shui into my dwelling so that I can access the universal energies, the Ch'i that is in constant motion in our world. I continue to study my birth chart and realize elements of my personality through my own interpretation of my astrological self. I try to interpret my dreams in case there is some issue I need to address that is coming from my subconscious. I let intuition be a guiding force in my life; if I have a hunch to do or not do something, I follow it. Most times I have realized the importance of following that

instinct. You might consider these to be low-hanging fruit: simple steps you can take to see if this system can work for you. If you see results, be encouraged. And don't forget the placebo effect or the power of thought- if you think it's going to work, it just might.

I believe that mystical systems have two roles for humanity. They bring you closer to God but, if practiced with an open attitude, they help you realize that God is in you. If you choose a mystical path, don't be so focused on the attainment of the mystical experience. Choose to change your beliefs, and once you start to realize the power that you actually have, things will fall into place. Life will make sense, goodness will surround you, and your daily interactions will make sense, even unto the grand scheme of everything in the Universe. We all have a purpose on the Earth, but material living often clouds that grand plan we know we have. Synchronicity can make it clear again. It will open the doors for you if you believe that it will. Believe in these higher truths, and you can be crystallized too.

“If we are awake, we know that everything around us is a mysterious vibrating pattern of energy, the stuff of light...Everything, including ourselves, is nothing more than a field of energy, of light, all interacting and influencing each other”.

James Redfield, The Celestine Vision

“There are many paths, the Truth is One”- The Vedas

Crystallization is the final product of fixed or definite ideas being realized. Once we integrate all aspects of truth into our being, we can realize the perfect form that makes us whole.

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