

# Existence-Consciousness-Bliss

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by  
Charles Frode

“In principle, the future is completely determined by the past; but in practice small uncertainties, much like minute errors of measurement which enter into calculations, are amplified, with the effect that even though the behavior is predictable in the short term, it is unpredictable over the long run.”

Peitgen, Jürgens, Saupe  
*Chaos and Fractals New Frontiers of Science*

Many esteemed physicists posit the idea that there are parallel universes functioning under differing sets of laws. All you have to do is look at the news, or better yet, check out a downtown street corner, to verify that. Nevertheless, most educated people would affirm that the principles by which this universe exists have to be consistent everywhere. Chemistry, physics, arithmetic, mathematics, entropy, cause and effect, logic, geometry are just a few examples of fields or subsets of reality that must be constant and predictable if “Reality” is the same everywhere. People tend to arrive at that conclusion through either a wide or a deep formal education or through common sense developed through life experience and reflection.

And yet when it comes to aspects of reality beyond our intellectual ken, human beings historically have the natural tendency to satisfy their mental curiosity to know and understand by positing anthropomorphic explanations based on what we already know from our experience as human beings. There is no other experiential perspective for us. The wondrously handy ability (perhaps “predilection” is a better word) of the mind to create all manner of solutions to problems, challenges, and questions does not mean

necessarily though that any of those solutions are sound or even valid. It merely demonstrates the mind's ability to analyze individual and group experience and then synthesize new *mental* constructions. We call those mental constructs *ideas*.

When it comes to the mysteries of ultimate reality, we tend to use that same mental tool: we create ever new and better *ideas* about reality based on individual and group experiences. Yet questions such as “What happened before the beginning of time?” or “Are there other universes?” or the blockbuster, “Is there a God?” and the spin-offs, “Is there anything after life and death, and if so, what and where is it, and can I influence it by what I do while I am alive, or is it all out of my hands?” cannot be answered with absolute and verifiable certainty. That is because must have a perspective outside of those realities to validate them, and yet we live within those boundaries of experience and knowledge. We only have those basic unchangeable principles I mentioned in the first paragraph to use as tools—particularly logic—to extrapolate new understanding from experience and facts. That is the power of the scientific method: gather evidence; come to conclusions based on the evidence. Yet we human beings walk directly into rush hour traffic when we abandon logic in our determination to understand the God mystery by inventing religion. Religions are essentially ideas synthesized from a distinctive time and a place by a charismatic, prophetic, and/or inspired individual and developed over time by believers and followers of that person and those ideas.

Now mathematical physicist, Mitchell Feigenbaum's constant, <sup>i</sup> which describes how and when natural systems develop through a predictable process of bifurcation or division, relieves us of the burden of wondering why there are so many religions. It's clear through the lens of history that the evolution of religion from sympathetic animal cave art to contemporary monotheism follows a similar lineage of offshoots from one religion to a related branch to related branches and so on. The different related—and usually conflicting—branches of

Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam demonstrate that fact very powerfully.

Of the three basic schools of Buddhism—Theravada, in South Asia and Southeast Asia, Mahāyāna, in East Asia, and Vajrayāna, in Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia and the Russian republic of Kalmykia—there are over 24 divisions of those three basic interpretations of Siddhārtha Gautama’s original teachings that flowered in eastern India around the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>ii</sup>

Jewish denominations or branches also proliferated from ancient times into the modern era. Of the Ashkenazi Jews there are Orthodox and Reform Jews. Historically there were Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots. From the Pharisees most modern Judaism developed, in particular, Rabbinic and Karaite Judaism. Today the three main groups are the Ashkenazi, the Sephardic, and the Mizrahi. All evolved and branched off based on how Jews considered their sacred texts—the *Tanakh*, *Talmud*, and the *Torah*— and in what ways they shared common values.<sup>iii</sup>

The original message of Jesus, the Christ, was disseminated by several different schools of thought in the Gospels and letters written for and to new Christians. By the 5<sup>th</sup> century matters such as which writings to include in the New Testament, the divinity of Jesus, and the nature of the Trinity were decided by church fathers. Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity coexisted until the Protestant Reformation that birthed Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Anglicans, Pietists and Methodists, Evangelicals, Adventists, Modernists and Liberalists, Pentecostals, and Fundamentalists.<sup>iv</sup>

When Muhammad transcribed the angel Gabriel’s revelations in 612, he probably had no way of knowing that the two division—Sunni and Shi'a (which differ in who they accept as religious authority besides the *Qur'an*)—would birth so many other divisions in Islam. Among Sunnis there are 6 schools of jurisprudence, 6 schools of textual interpretation, and 4 movements. Among the Shi’a there are The Twelvers who believe in the 12 Imams, 2 schools of jurisprudence, and

several schools of theology. There are also 14 forms of Sufism, the mystical-ascetic branch of Islam. There are also other prophetic or messianic schools of Islam.<sup>v</sup>

These short and admittedly simplistic, conventional, and incomplete summaries of the historical development of 4 of the worlds' great religions are presented to demonstrate *the natural development and splintering of belief and practice in all religions*. It is a manifestation of how people and their beliefs develop over time and leave a fractal<sup>vi</sup> legacy of scriptures, dogma, rituals, liturgies, communities of belief, institutes of debate and argumentation, and unfortunately, intolerance, slaughter, war, and conquest in the name of *someone's idea* of who or what God is. So often each religion boils down to crude, naïve dualism: God is this but not that. We have Him and you don't.

It appears from looking outside in that in the short term religion has been predominantly a unifying phenomenon, while in the long run religion has proven itself to be a divisive phenomenon. Yet today's world is increasingly in constant conflict between local and national control, national and global power, and state versus federal authority. With the ascendancy of the Internet, homogeneous communities in the world are now connected virtually and actually into one heterogeneous community. Therefore, it seems that the most valuable outlook for understanding global challenges and marshaling solutions is not a partitioned, myopic perspective but rather a cohesive, open-minded viewpoint. Because religions continue to splinter and repel not only members who are "left behind" but also believers from other religions, I suggest that religion is no longer an effective tool to utilize in making decisions on a local or a global level, particularly regarding morally based action.

Just as scientists are looking for a unified field theory— a relatively straight forward way of understanding everything and how everything works—so too human beings are looking for a unified God theory, a clear perspective on ultimate-God-heaven-hell-sin-morality reality. It can't be "It's this but not that" because that excludes a whole

world of reality. It has to include *everything*. It has to be logical even though it will reference aspects of reality outside our ken, what we call mysteries. It has to be consistent with the past including prehistoric cave people before the invention of word-based religion and with the future including the possible existential realities unfolding currently. Finally, it has to connect and unite people and living things if it is to address the actual experiential process of living rather than be merely an intriguing intellectual construct.

If reality is indeed infinite, then God is either the ultimate infinite without the limits of “this but not this,” or “He” is merely just another power broker—one of many benign or malicious—in the universe. So if the development of reality is a constant unfolding process of bifurcation, then what is the constant that combines and incorporates the limitations of the “this but not that” perspective that religion exemplifies? I suggest that the simplest, most logical, and intellectually reassuring touchstone for action and behavior in the world is summed up in the two Sanskrit words, *Tat Sat*.<sup>vii</sup> *Tat* denotes the ultimate reality, the ground of being, unmanifested essence. *Sat* refers to manifested reality, reality as we experience it, life that surges around us. Both *Tat* and *Sat* are the two sides of the whole: unmanifested reality gives birth to manifested reality which in turn returns to unmanifested reality. It is ironically the ultimate dualism: everything is either unmanifested or manifested. Simple isn’t it? It is all-encompassing.

Everything around us mirrors this cyclic process of ultimate reality: thoughts arise and disappear; feelings surface and dissolve; we select pieces of information from the library of knowledge and yet all that knowledge remains intact; every season merges with the flow of time; friends appear, disappear, and reappear; love flowers, fades, yet somehow doesn’t disappear; the food we eat or don’t eat decomposes and returns to the soil from which more food is grown; matter changes from solid to liquid to gas and never loses its atomic integrity; individual creatures are part of a biological family, part of the family *homo sapiens*, part of all animal species, part of the entire biosphere on

Earth, part of this solar system, part of the Milky Way, part of the Universe, and this remains true even after we die; the Universe emerged from something we are not sure of, and the ancient Hindu cosmological texts jibe closely with modern scientific understanding of age and origin of the present universe, and the cyclic emergence of previous universes from...*Tat!*<sup>viii</sup>

Everything is a “subset”<sup>ix</sup> of *Tat-Sat*—Universe(s), The Big Bang, God(s), solar systems and planets, all forms of life, consciousness and all forms of awareness, ignorance and knowledge, wisdom and stupidity, compassion and violence. *Everything*. Knowing that, groking it, and understanding the logical simplicity and all-inclusive intellectual satisfaction of *Tat-Sat* opens the door for the last supplementary Sanskrit concept that brings this admittedly austere existential conceptualization down to the welcome focus of the individual person. I am referring to the wonderfully fertile and nourishing concept of *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, crudely but conveniently translated as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

Authors become rich on best-sellers that offer answers to the question, “What is the purpose of life,” or “What is *my* purpose in life?” Of course, answers like “serving others,” or “making a bunch of money,” or “finding the unique me,” “being famous,” or “following my karma” are valid answers that satisfy the questioner who has ears to hear that. *Sat-Chit-Ananda* says that all life that exists moves towards awareness and then consciousness. It is that consciousness that allows human beings (and other conscious creatures) to experience life as a blissful event. Allow me to quote from someone many consider to be the authority on bliss, Ramana Maharshi,<sup>x</sup> so that you, the reader, can bask in the intellectual clarity and power of what bliss is.

Freedom from thoughts is one’s true nature—Bliss.<sup>xi</sup>

The mind is sometimes present, at other times absent. There is no change in the Reality. Reality is always Bliss—*Ananda*.<sup>xii</sup>

One has only to remove the transitory happenings in order to realize the ever-present beatitude of the Self. Your nature is Bliss. Find that on which all the rest is superimposed and you then remain as the pure Self.<sup>xiii</sup>

Soul, mind, or ego are mere words. There are no entities of the kind. Consciousness is the only truth...Its very nature is Bliss. Bliss alone it is. There is no enjoyer to enjoy pleasure. Enjoyer and joy—both merge in it.<sup>xiv</sup>

That which is eternal is not known, because of ignorance. Ignorance is the obstruction. Get over this ignorance and all will be well. The ignorance is identical with the “I”-thought. Find its source and it will vanish...Bliss is concurrent with Being-Consciousness. All the arguments relating to the eternal Being of that Bliss apply to Bliss, also. Your nature is Bliss. Ignorance is now hiding that Bliss. Remove the ignorance for Bliss to be freed.<sup>xv</sup>

Your very being is Bliss. Therefore, everyone says, ‘I was blissfully asleep.’ That means one remains in the primal uncontaminated state in sleep. As for sorrow, there is none. Where is it in order that you might speak of its absence in sleep? The present wrong identification of the Self with the body gives rise to all these misapprehensions...This is because the Self is now identified with the non-self. The non-self too is not apart from the Self. However, there is the wrong notion that the body is apart and the Self is confounded with the body. This wrong identification must end for happiness to manifest...Your true nature is happiness.<sup>xvi</sup>

The obstacles (to remaining steady in unbroken bliss) are: 1. Ignorance, which is forgetfulness of one’s pure being. 2. Doubt, which consists in wondering if the experience was of the Real or of the unreal. 3. Error, which consists in the “I-am-the-body” idea, and thinking that the world is real. These are overcome by hearing the truth, reflection, and concentration.<sup>xvii</sup>

Bliss is not something to be got. On the other hand, you always are bliss. This desire is born of the sense of incompleteness. To whom is this sense of incompleteness? Inquire. In deep sleep, you were blissful. Now you are not. What is interposed between that bliss and this non-bliss? It is the ego. Seek its source and find you are bliss. <sup>xviii</sup>

Bliss consists in not forgetting your being. How can you be otherwise than what you really are? It is also to be the seat of Love. Love is Bliss. Here the Seat is not different from Love. <sup>xix</sup>

*Visva*, *Taijasa*, and *Prajna* are the denominations of the experiencer in the waking, dream, and deep sleep states, respectively. The same individual underlies all of them. They do not, therefore, represent the True Self, which is pure *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. <sup>xx</sup>

What are you? You are not the body. You are Pure Consciousness. *Grihastha dharma* (the household) and the world are only phenomena appearing on that Pure Consciousness. It remains unaffected. What prevents you from being your own Self? ...The Self is always there. It is you. There is nothing but you. Nothing can be apart from you. <sup>xxi</sup>

So now you, my dear reader, you know how things work on the short term and the long term. Life is manifested (or manifests) from what Ramana Maharshi calls The Self. <sup>xxii</sup> Life emerges and complexifies through bifurcation. Then life returns to the unmanifest again. It is this perspective that we must now adopt to replace the venerable but outdated and ineffectual perspective of religion. Many people use a mantra to clear their minds, to reduce stress, to relax, to reinvigorate themselves throughout a busy day in the modern world. By thinking or vocalizing throughout the day either *Sat-Chit-Ananda* or Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, you will come to the uplifting realization that



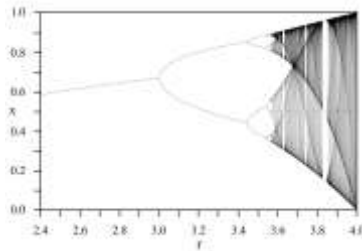
indeed, “The Self is always there. It is you. There is nothing but you.  
Nothing can be apart from you.”

Now go and live your life. It is everything.

(End notes follow on next page.)

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<sup>i</sup> Peitgen, Jürgens, Saupe. *Chaos and Fractals: New Frontiers of Science*. Springer-Verlag. New York. 1992. P. 585 ff. (The numerical constant is  $\delta = 4.6692$ , and the graphic image below shows a wonderful two-dimensional rendering of ongoing bifurcation according to that constant.)



Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bifurcation\\_diagram](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bifurcation_diagram)

<sup>ii</sup> Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schools\\_of\\_Buddhism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schools_of_Buddhism)

<sup>iii</sup> Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish\\_religious\\_movements](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_religious_movements)

<sup>iv</sup> Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Christian\\_denominations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominations)

<sup>v</sup> Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic\\_schools\\_and\\_branches](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_schools_and_branches)

<sup>vi</sup> Peitgen. P. viii. "When we examine the development of a process over a period of time, we speak in terms used in chaos theory. When we are more interested in the structural forms which a chaotic process leaves in its wake, then we use the terminology of fractal geometry, which is really the geometry whose structures are what give order to chaos."

<sup>vii</sup> Easwaran, Eknath. *The Bhagavad Gita*, Nilgiri Press. Tomales California. 1985. P. 194. "Tat, as mentioned earlier, is 'That,' the supreme reality beyond what language can describe or thought can think. And sat means both 'that which is' and 'that which is good'"

<sup>viii</sup> Sagan, Carl. *Cosmos*. Ballantine Books. 1985. P. 258. "The Hindu dharma is the only one of the world's great faiths dedicated to the idea that the Cosmos itself undergoes an immense, indeed an infinite, number of deaths and rebirths. It is the only dharma in which time scales correspond to those of modern scientific cosmology. Its cycles run from our ordinary day and night to a day and night of Brahma, 8.64 billion years long, longer than the age of the Earth or the Sun and about half the time since the Big Bang."

<sup>ix</sup> The English language lexicon fails in its ability to describe these Sanskrit concepts, concepts that are foreign for most modern people. So I am falling back on my intimate confidant, the metaphor, to do this important connotative work for me.

<sup>x</sup> Wilber, Ken. "The Sage of the Century" (Foreword). *Talks with Ramana Maharshi*. Inner Directions. Carlsbad California. P. IX. "...it is the living voice of the greatest sage of the twentieth century and, arguably, the greatest spiritual realization of this or any time."

<sup>xi</sup> Maharshi, Ramana. *Talks with Ramana Maharshi*. Inner Directions. Carlsbad California. P. 123.

<sup>xii</sup> Ibid. P. 208.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ibid. P. 123.

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid. P. 159.

<sup>xv</sup> Ibid. P. 130

<sup>xvi</sup> Ibid. P. 214.

<sup>xvii</sup> Ibid. P. 69.

<sup>xviii</sup> Ibid. P. 77.

<sup>xix</sup> Ibid. P. 376.

<sup>xx</sup> Ibid. P. 475.

<sup>xxi</sup> Ibid. P. 171.

<sup>xxii</sup> It doesn't matter what name one chooses to use to describe the ultimate reality. "The Self" seems to me to be the simplest and most inclusive.