

CHAPTER 4

There Is More to Life Than Meets the Eye

There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

In studying a subject at school, we usually concentrate on a particular aspect of the world. In chemistry we investigate the principles that govern the interaction of different chemicals; in biology we study the principles of organization of living organisms; and in history we try to understand the pivotal events that led to the modern world. We seldom take the time to think about whether there are more general principles at the base of existence itself. What is the cause of the extraordinary harmony and order that we see all around us in the natural world? These questions usually fall into the area of philosophy. Here we will investigate what these principles might be.

As we mature, our view of the world is influenced by the family, society and culture that nurtured us. Our worldview acts both as a sieve and a window through which we experience and interpret the world. Some people believe that everything is in conflict and that progress comes through struggle. Others believe that everything is in harmony and that progress comes through cooperation. Some believe that there is no life after death and all that exists is the physical reality that can be comprehended through their five senses. Others believe that the physical world is an illusion and only the spiritual dimension is real. Each of these perspectives brings implications for the path of life that we follow as well as for our moral decisions and understanding.

Central to understanding the principles that lie behind the harmony of nature is a more fundamental question: What is life, and what is the essence of reality? Is it matter or spirit? If both, then how do they relate to each other?

Inner nature and outer form

If we think about it, we will realize that every being has two aspects or dimensions that correspond to one another. One we may call the "inner nature," the other the "outer form." Here are some examples:

	Inner nature	Outer form
Human Being	Mind	Body
Animal	Instinct	Body
Plant	"Plant Mind"	Cells, Tissues
Mineral	Inherent Nature	Matter/Energy

It is important to understand how these two aspects are related to each other. We will examine this principle in more detail below.

Invisible and visible



A driver with engine trouble is standing at the edge of the road. A repairman arrives, opens the hood, and investigates the trouble. Then he seizes a hammer and gives the engine a strong blow and the engine starts running again. The driver is amazed. But he is even more amazed when the man asks \$100 for the repairs. On the bill he reads:

1 hammer blow	\$ 5.00
"Know how"	\$95.00
TOTAL:	\$100.00

You might think that this is an example of exploitation, but it shows that knowledge, though intangible, is valuable. Some people say, "I only believe in things that are real and verifiable." But if we think about it, there are many things that are

real which we cannot touch, such as love, beauty, X-rays and knowledge. Can we see knowledge or put it in a bag? No, it is invisible. Often it can be communicated by words or symbols, as in arithmetic. Often it cannot. For example, what does it mean to learn to drive a car? Suppose you memorize a driving manual. Would you then know how to drive? No. Knowledge has to become grounded in experience. It has to become part of yourself. A soccer player doesn't master his sport by sitting in an armchair reading but by practicing the techniques he has read or been shown. Although they are invisible, knowledge and skills are very valuable.

Another way to understand this is to examine language. Words themselves are bearers of meaning. While one can see a word if it is written down, or hear it if it is spoken, meanings are invisible and intangible. Yet the whole purpose of language is to convey meaning. Words are arranged in a sentence in a particular order so as to convey meaning. When we read a novel by Tolstoy, we can analyze his use of language, grammar and literary form, but if we stop there we miss an important dimension of the book. Likewise, artists struggle to use the medium in which they work to convey their deepest thoughts. So it is the invisible aspect of a thing that determines its value.

The same principle applies to human character. A woman may be physically beautiful but also vain, dishonest, manipulative and selfish. Another woman may be rather plain or even unattractive but also modest, honest, sincere and unselfish. Many people are not good judges of character and do not know how to assess and



value a person. They judge superficially and inappropriately, looking only at the outer form (the body), and fail to realize the critical role that the inner character (the mind) plays in deciding how the outer form will behave. In Shakespeare's words: "All that glitters is not gold."

Thinking generally about life, we should remember that there is an invisible aspect to everything that cannot be fully explained in terms of the visible aspect. In fact, it is this invisible aspect that guides and gives meaning to the visible actions that are verified by our senses. In a similar way, it is the invisible mind that guides an author in the way he uses language and enables us to decipher the black marks on the white paper to understand the author's meaning.

Order and chaos



Suppose that you have done exceptionally well at school and are to graduate with honors. Your parents promise to buy you a watch for doing so well. How would you feel if they gave you a small bag of gray powder? Hurt? Perplexed? "But," your parents tell you, "it is the finest watch powder." It is a mixture of steel powder, gold powder, and ruby powder all in the necessary proportions for a watch.

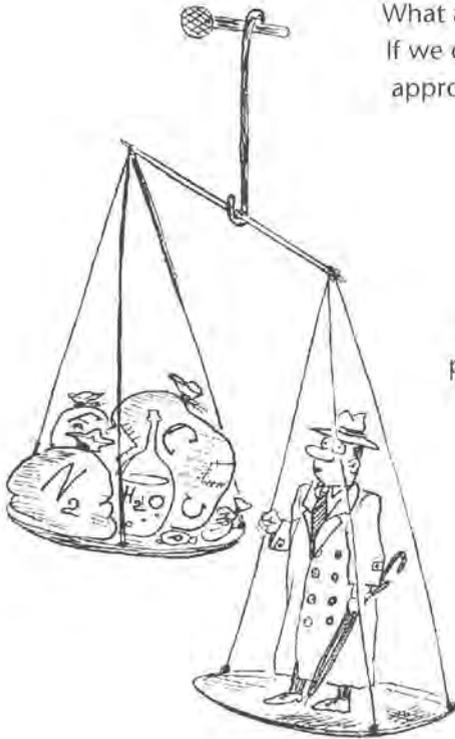
If your parents gave you such a present, you would quickly realize that they had a worldview very different from yours. So what is the difference between the watch and the watch powder? Materially they are the same. The difference is qualitative: the method and manner in which this matter is arranged, the function of the watch, its ability to tell time, and the creative investment of energy by the watchmaker. A specific purpose guided the making of the watch that began

with a design concept in the creator's mind. This design concept determined the shape and structure of the watch. It is the design that adds value. Compare the value of a well-designed car and a badly designed car. They may both be made up of the same raw materials, but they are different, and it is the quality of design that makes the difference.

Another example could be taken from the world of minerals. The element carbon can exist in several quite different forms such as coal, graphite, and diamond. The carbon atoms in a lump of coal and a diamond are identical. Yet the first is very soft, black, dull, plentiful, and cheap, while the second is very hard, clear, dazzling, rare, and expensive. Imagine what would happen if a man gave his wife a lump of coal instead of a diamond on their fiftieth wedding anniversary! It is not the atoms themselves that determine its value, but the way in which the atoms are arranged. The visible external structure is a reflection of the invisible internal structure.

The invisible inner aspect is the organizing principle that allows the visible outer form to resemble its expression. Thus, the emotions we feel are expressed on our faces: When we are happy, we smile; when we are sorrowful, we cry. Our attitudes are clearly revealed through our "body language." Since this is the case, we can learn and understand a lot about a person's character by studying his behavior and mannerisms. In much the same way, scientists try to uncover the hidden laws that govern nature by studying the phenomena they encounter.

Nothing but . . .



What are human beings made of? Let's assume you weigh around 70 kg. If we could separate you out into your constituent elements, this is approximately what you would find:

45.4 kg oxygen
12.7 kg carbon
6.8 kg hydrogen
2 kg nitrogen
1 kg calcium
700 g phosphorus

plus a few grams of potassium, sulfur, sodium, chlorine, magnesium, iron and zinc; with traces of copper, manganese, molybdenum, cobalt, selenium and other elements.

If one calculated the value of the chemicals that make up a human being, it would come to about \$2. Is that how much you are worth? If not, why not? What is it that determines the value of a human being? What is it that animates these chemicals? Are we “nothing but” a collection of chemicals? Are our thoughts nothing more than a series of neural discharges wholly explicable by physiology?

Likewise, consider the fact that many languages consist of sentences that are merely collections of letters of the alphabet. Compare the two collections of letters below:

heter si a oopinoss kneas dbenih ovv
and,
there is a poisonous snake behind you

What is the difference? There is the same set of letters in both cases. The order in which the second set of letters is arranged results in the second sentence conveying a meaning that can be understood by the reader. A new property has emerged — the meaning of the sentence. Likewise, if the two gases hydrogen and oxygen are combined, they form water, which has the property of “wetness” not possessed by the gases. We can see that sometimes the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Thus, while it is true that we are composed of chemicals, we are much more than “the sum of our parts.” The same individual can be “explained” at different levels:

- ✗ the level of protons, electrons and neutrons (physics)
- ✗ the level of atoms and molecules (chemistry)
- ✗ the level of cells (biology)
- ✗ the level of organs (physiology)
- ✗ the level of persons (psychology, the social sciences and the humanities)

No single level of explanation is complete. To completely understand an individual, one has to take into consideration all these levels and others, too. The first two levels are explained in terms of the laws of physics and chemistry. When it comes to the following stages, we find that there are biological and physiological phenomena that cannot be explained by physics and chemistry alone. And, of course, to understand a human being, we have to study such things as psychology, the social sciences and the humanities.

Steps of life

We have arrived at the conclusion that every being has two dimensions. The first is invisible and intangible and determines the shape of the second, which is visible and tangible. But this is not all. Knowledge cannot develop when there is no medium to carry it. The value of the design concept emerges as its being comes to its full realization.

There is yet another invisible dimension to consider: the essence of “life” itself.

Autonomy is a distinctive feature of life. The word “autonomy” comes from the Greek words *autos*, meaning “self,” and *nomos*, meaning “law.” So, “autonomy” means “self-governing.” For example, if we consider a rock in the desert, we will see that its temperature varies. During the day it is very hot. At night it becomes very cold. A desert plant, by contrast, is able to maintain approximately the same temperature day and night. Thus, plants are alive in a way that minerals are not. They can adapt to a changing environment and maintain their integrity. They can, within a limited range, control and regulate what goes on within their organism, maintaining a kind of barrier against the changes in the environment. Autonomy in plants can be seen in their more sophisticated level of organization, possessing cells and tissues of a complex structure and form. This enables them to perform the functions of consumption, growth, and reproduction in which all living organisms engage.

Of course, autonomy is not an absolute principle. When environmental conditions become too extreme, living organisms die. As we examine species higher up the evolutionary ladder, we can see greater degrees of autonomy. Mammals and birds, being warm-blooded, are able to live in conditions of significant temperature changes, whereas insects need warmth for active movement. That is why in winter you may see a sparrow, but you will never see a butterfly flitting over the snowdrifts.

Looking at animals, we see that they function on a more complex level than plants. They have highly developed sensory organs and nervous systems that allow them to behave in an instinctually purposeful and interactive manner, enabling them to perform certain activities without forethought or training in specific skills. For example, a bird is able to build a nest without ever being taught. Also, scientists remain puzzled over the extraordinary navigational ability of migrating birds and fish.

Returning to ourselves, we recognize that human beings contain all the levels of organization seen in less developed forms of life. However, humans have an additional, higher level of organization that makes us qualitatively different from animals. Although animal instinct is remarkable, it is not free, which is why, despite their extraordinary navigational ability, birds always migrate to and from the same places. Birds do not decide to “take a holiday” in a new place! The human mind, though, is able to freely consider options and make decisions. People decide whether they will go on holiday or not, and whether, if they can afford it, to go abroad or travel close to home. The human mind is also extraordinarily creative. While birds’ nests and beehives exhibit a high level of organization, they are always the same. They are simply functional with little aesthetic input in their construction. By contrast, people use individual creativity to design and construct their homes, from mud huts to palaces. Whereas most organisms are restricted to a particular environment, humans can be found

A little black boy was watching the balloon man at a county fair. The man was evidently a good salesman, because he allowed a red balloon to break loose and soar high up in the air, thereby attracting a crowd of prospective young customers.

Next he released a blue balloon, then a yellow one, and a white one. They all went soaring up into the sky until they disappeared. The little black boy stood looking at the black balloon for a long time, and then asked, “Sir, if you sent the black one up, would it go as high as the others?”

The balloon man gave the boy an understanding smile. He snapped the string that held the black balloon in place and, as it soared upward, said, “It isn’t the color, son. It’s what’s inside that makes it rise.”

living in every kind of environment, from the tundra to the desert, from the ocean to outer space.

It is this ability to freely choose and realize unique interpretations of our desires that makes a human a moral being. Because we can choose, we are responsible for the consequences of our choices. For this reason, we sometimes have regrets. We know we could have acted differently. We are able to consider our thoughts and actions as being either good or bad. Animals are not judged with the ethical yardstick by which we judge one another. We recognize that animals are not moral agents and are not responsible for what they do in the same way that people are. A vicious dog may be put to death, but it is the owner who is held responsible for its behavior and for the harm it has inflicted on others.

Let us remember that neither the internal nor the external aspect can exist without the other. For every event that has an explanation in natural terms, there is also an invisible dimension underlying the reason why it happened. This is what gives rise to the possibility of meaning. The inner dimension of motivation, for example, guides and influences one's response to the environment. This internal dimension is recognized as the primary force for existence as it determines the quality and meaning of life.

For Your Journal



My inner and outer self

Ask yourself this question: *What do my inner and outer selves look and feel like at this time in my life?* Think of your inner self as your internal, private world of emotional feelings, fantasies, memories, wishes, and thoughts.

Your outer self is the part of you that you show to the outside world, the ways in which you express yourself for others to see: your interests and activities, behavior, accomplishments, appearance, environment. Close your eyes and reflect on your inner and outer selves.

Some images may have come to you that reflect the quality of your inner and outer aspects at this time. They may be contrasting. For instance, you may feel very active inside, with many thoughts and feelings buzzing around. Your external world, on the other hand, may seem quiet, calm, or even dull.

Draw an expression of your inner and outer selves. Use any style that feels right for you: doodles, images, symbols, and pictures. You may express your inner and outer aspects in one drawing, or it may seem more appropriate to use two separate pages.

Afterwards, look at what you have drawn. On your next journal page, write your impressions, thoughts, and feelings about what your graphic expression "says" to you.

Visions and Ideals

From As a Man Thinketh, by James Allen

The dreamers are the saviors of the world. As the visible world is sustained by the invisible, so men, through all their trials and sins and sordid vocations, are nourished by the beautiful visions of their solitary dreamers. Humanity cannot forget its dreamers; it cannot let their ideals fade and die; it lives in them; it knows them as the realities which it shall one day see and know.

Composer, sculptor, painter, poet, prophet, sage, these are the makers of the afterworld. the architects of heaven. The world is beautiful because they have lived; without them, laboring humanity would perish.

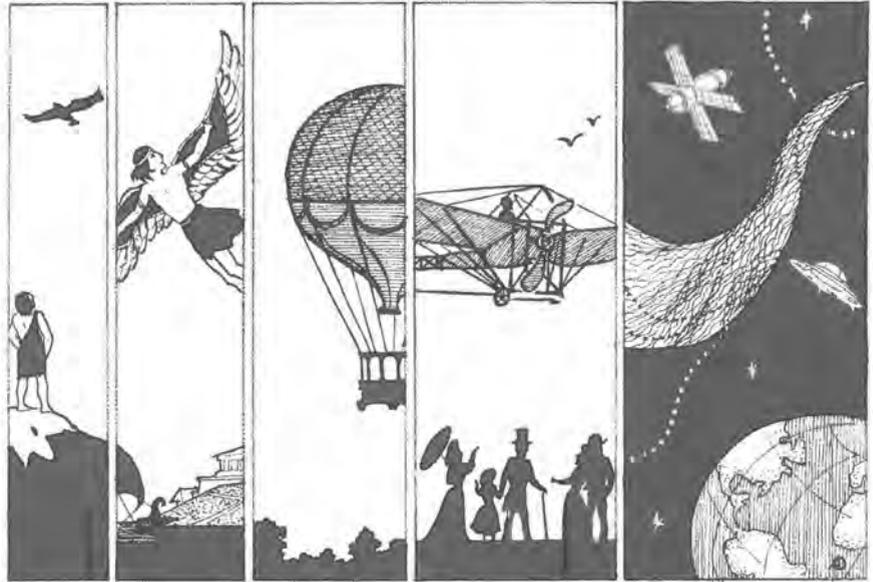
He who cherishes a beautiful vision, a lofty ideal in his heart, will one day realize it. Columbus cherished a vision of another world, and he discovered it; Copernicus fostered the vision of a multiplicity of worlds and a wider universe and he revealed it; Buddha beheld the vision of a spiritual world of stainless beauty and perfect peace, and he entered into it.

Cherish your visions; cherish your ideals; cherish the music that stirs in your heart, the beauty that forms in your mind, the loveliness that drapes your purest thoughts, for out of them will grow all delightful conditions, all heavenly environment; of these, if you but remain true to them, your world will at last be built.

To desire is to obtain; to aspire is to achieve. Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so shall you become. Your Vision is the promise of what you shall one day be; your Ideal is the prophecy of what you shall at last unveil

The greatest achievement was at first and for a time a dream. The oak sleeps in the acorn; the bird waits in the egg; and in the highest vision of the soul a waking angel stirs. Dreams are the seedlings of realities.

And you, too, youthful reader, will realize the Vision (not the idle wish) of your heart. Into your hands will be placed the exact results of your own thoughts; you will receive that which you earn; no more, no less. Whatever your present environment may be, you will fall, remain, or rise with your thoughts, your Vision, your Ideal. In the beautiful words of Stanton Kirkham Davis, "You may be keeping accounts, and presently you shall walk out of the door that for so long has seemed to you the barrier of your ideals, and shall find yourself before an audience – the pen still behind your ear, the ink stains on your fingers – and then and there shall pour out the torrent of your inspirations. You may be driving sheep and you shall wander to the city – bucolic and open-mouthed; shall wander under the intrepid guidance of the spirit into the studio of the master, and after a time he shall say, "I have nothing more to teach you". And now you have become the master, who did so recently dream of great things while driving sheep. You shall lay down the saw and the plane to take upon yourself the regeneration of the world".



The thoughtless, the ignorant, and the indolent, seeing only the apparent effects of things and not the things themselves, talk of luck, of fortune, and chance. Seeing a man grow rich, they say, "How lucky he is!" Observing another become intellectual, they exclaim, "How highly favored he is!" And noting the saintly character and wide influence of another, they remark, "How chance aids him at every turn!" They do not see the trials and failures and struggles which these men have voluntarily encountered in order to gain their experience; have no knowledge of the sacrifices they have made, of the undaunted efforts they have put forth, of the faith they have exercised, that they might overcome the apparently insurmountable, and realize the Vision of their heart. They do not know the darkness and the heartaches; they only see the light and joy, and call it "luck"; do not see the long and arduous journey, but only behold the pleasant goal, and call it "good fortune"; do not understand the process, but only perceive the result, and call it "chance".

In all human affairs there are efforts, and there are results, and the strength of the effort is the measure of the result. Chance is not. "Gifts", powers, material, intellectual, and spiritual possessions are the fruits of effort; they are thoughts completed, objects accomplished, visions realized.

The Vision that you glorify in your mind, the Ideal that you enthrone in your heart – this you will build your life by, this you will become.