

Article

The Liberation of Consciousness from Identification with Form through Non-reactivity (Part III)

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ABSTRACT

Although what human Beings ultimately are is formless Consciousness, or That by which all form is known, what the vast majority of human Beings presently know themselves to be is some set of experiential forms that are being both created and known by the formless Consciousness that they actually are. And once Consciousness believes itself to be form, that belief tends to persist, because once Consciousness identifies with experiential form that misidentification is perpetuated through the way in which form-identified Consciousness then tends to deal with the universe of experiential forms while knowing itself as one of those forms. Specifically, while knowing itself as form, Consciousness tends to react to all other forms of which it subsequently becomes aware, and such reactions, or reactive Movements, because they are always a continuation of the movement of Consciousness into identification with form, perpetuate the identification of Consciousness with form, and therefore keep Consciousness trapped in a state of delusion, where it remains both conscious of itself as it is not, as well as unable to become conscious of That which it truly Is. And since it is primarily through these reactive Movements that Consciousness both binds Itself to this delusion regarding its nature, and also blinds Itself to its true Nature, it is only by beginning to become involved instead in the opposite Movement, i.e., in non-reactivity, which is a movement of Consciousness that does not have as its basis the identification of Consciousness with form, that Consciousness can begin to both free Itself from this delusion, as well as become conscious of That which it truly Is.

Part III of this four-part article includes: 7. Reactivity as compulsive conceptualization; 8. The trap of seeking; and 9. Effective non-reactivity.

Keywords: Consciousness, Being, liberation, identification, form, formless, non-reactivity.

7. Reactivity as compulsive conceptualization

But there is another way, and that way is, as Eckhart Tolle puts it, to rise above thinking. And the surest way to rise above thinking is to stop thinking, but only while still awake, and while not on drugs, because those methods only take one below thinking. And the only way to stop thinking in this way, i.e., to step out of the compulsion to think without falling asleep or taking drugs, is by ceasing to react to the experiential forms of which one is, in this moment, aware. Because as long as there is reactivity, the compulsion to think will remain, because the compulsion to think is itself nothing more than a reactive Movement that is the continuation of the Movement by which

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Consciousness conceptualizes Itself, i.e., by which Consciousness identifies with form. And because reactive Movements are a continuation of the Movement by which Consciousness conceptualizes Itself, those reactive Movements themselves consist primarily of Consciousness using the mind to compulsively conceptualize, i.e., to attach a name or thought-form to every experiential form of which it subsequently becomes aware, with reference primarily to its form-identity, i.e., with reference primarily to the way in which those forms are seen to affect its conceptualization of Itself.

Thus, in the final analysis all reactivity actually originates in conceptualization, and specifically, originates in conceptualization that derives from the conceptualization of Consciousness, which is to say, the identification of Consciousness with form. What we call thinking is the process of conceptualization. That is, the word thinking and the word conceptualization point toward the same process of mind. And that process, as mentioned before, is the relatively simple process whereby one thought-form is linked to another thought-form to create a higher order thought-form, or concept, which higher order thought-form can then be linked to another thought-form to create an even higher order thought-form, and so on. And also as mentioned before, this process is reflected most directly in language, where very simple forms are linked to make letters, which are then linked to make words, and so on. However, the process of conceptualization is also the process whereby thought-form can be linked to the other two types of experiential forms, i.e., physical and emotional. And it is also the process whereby thought-form becomes linked to Consciousness, i.e., becomes linked to the "I Am" awareness, thereby creating Consciousness' identification with form, which identification is expressed as the idea "I am this" or "I am that."

There is nothing inherently problematic about the process of thinking, i.e., conceptualization. The problem, such as it is, only arises when that process operates as a direct continuation of the conceptualization of Consciousness, to add or link some additional thought-form or concept to the, in-the-moment, otherwise pure perception of experiential form; physical, mental, or emotional. For example, an event occurs and we then attach the conceptual label of good or bad to that event, based upon whether that event is seen to enhance or diminish the form-identity, i.e., is seen to make it more or less. The Formlessness that we actually are is ultimately unaffected by events. It is only the form that we think we are that is affected by events, and so it is our form-identification that leads to the process of reactive conceptualization, or compulsive thinking. In this way, reactive conceptualization is always a movement of Consciousness that is a continuation of the movement of Consciousness into mind by which Consciousness conceptualizes Itself, i.e., links Itself to some thought-form.

Now the problem with compulsive thinking, or reactive conceptualization, i.e., thinking or conceptualization that derives from the identification of Consciousness with form, lies in the fact that, because such thinking is always a continuation of the process whereby Consciousness conceptualizes Itself, or links Itself to form, such thinking obligates Consciousness to continue to conceptualize Itself, i.e., to link Itself to, and so identify with, some thought-form. And because the process by which Consciousness conceptualizes Itself is a process of mind, and so is a process that requires the movement of Consciousness within mind, thinking that obligates Consciousness to continue to conceptualize Itself also obligates Consciousness to continue its Movement within mind.

This obligatory movement of Consciousness within mind, as a result of compulsive thinking, or reactive conceptualization, is what traps Consciousness within mind, or to Movement solely within the mind. This is the essence of the bondage that arises from the identification of Consciousness with form. And as long as Consciousness is bound to Movement only within the mind, whatever it knows it knows only as seen through a veil of conceptual forms or thought-forms. Thus, while trapped within the mind, not only is Consciousness unable know Itself directly, i.e., as the Formlessness that it Is, but owing to the veil of conceptual forms through which it must view all else that it can know, it is also unable to know physical and emotional experiential forms directly as well, because they too can only be known as seen through a veil of conceptual forms or thought-forms. Consciousness being trapped in the mind, and so having conceptual form superimposed upon all else that it can know, is like putting on glasses that have a red tint, but then, for some reason, becoming unable to remove them, so that afterwards nothing is seen as it actually is, i.e., as a pure perception, but is only seen as it is with a red tint added. And so it is that *a significant portion of human suffering has nothing to do with what happens*, but has far more to do with the veil of conceptual forms that we ourselves create through compulsive thinking, and through which we are then forced to view what happens, while trapped within the mind through our continuous involvement in the reactive Movement that is compulsive thinking.

And so, while trapped in the mind—not through identification with form, but through the compulsive thinking that naturally follows—anything of which Consciousness becomes conscious or aware, either form or Itself, is apprehended only as it appears through the lens of the mind, and so with some conceptual form superimposed upon the pure perception. This is why the compulsive movement of Consciousness within mind, through reactive thinking, makes it impossible for Consciousness to become conscious of Itself directly, as it Is, which is to say, as the Formlessness that it Is. That is, while trapped in the mind, Consciousness can only become conscious of itself as it is with some conceptual form added or superimposed, and so can only become conscious of itself as form, and not truly conscious of Itself as the Formlessness that it actually Is. It is this inability of Consciousness to become conscious of Itself directly, while trapped within the mind through compulsive thinking, that is the essence of why or how Consciousness becomes blind to Itself, or obscures Itself, through compulsive thinking, which is to say, through continuous reactivity.

It is only once Consciousness is no longer obligated to continue to conceptualize Itself that it is also then no longer obligated to continue its Movement solely within mind. And it is only once or while Consciousness is not continuing the process of conceptualizing Itself through compulsive thinking or reactive conceptualization, i.e., linking thought-forms to other experiential forms based on its form-identity, that it then becomes possible for Consciousness to perform the now effortless task of becoming conscious of both Itself and experiential form without the superimposition of any needless and extraneous conceptual form. This is what Tolle calls rising above thinking. Rising above thinking means that Consciousness is able to move through the mind without becoming trapped within mind. This is like light passing cleanly through a prism instead of becoming caught up in endless internal reflection within the prism. As long as compulsive thinking continues, Consciousness remains trapped in the prism of the mind, and the mind becomes a prison. Consciousness can't get free of the mind, can't get out of the prism, or out of the prison, as long as reactive thinking continues, because that sort of thinking

obligates Consciousness to continue to conceptualize Itself, and so obligates Consciousness to remain within the prism of the mind where that process takes place.

There is nothing reactive about the pure perception of experiential form; physical, mental, or emotional. Nor is there anything essentially reactive, binding, or blinding about conceptualization itself, i.e., about adding or linking a thought-form to some other experiential form. It is only when we add or link a thought-form to some other experiential form, as a continuation of our identification with form, that such thinking is reactive thinking that then traps us within mind and blinds us to our true and formless Nature. For example, an emotion arises, i.e., Consciousness becomes conscious of some emotional form. Now absent the addition or linkage of some thought-form to that emotional form, that emotion is just what-is. But link a thought-form to that emotion, and so conceptualize it, by attaching to it the label of bad or good, depending upon your conditioning, i.e., based up the particular way in which you identify with form, and through the process of conceptualizing that emotion, you then become trapped within the mind, because conceptualizing that emotion, by labeling it good or bad relative to the form-identity, is a continuation of the process whereby you conceptualize your Self, and so obligates you to continue to be involved in that process, and so obligates you to remain within the mind, since that is where that process takes place.

And the same is true of physical perception. For example an event occurs, i.e., Consciousness becomes conscious of some physical form. Now absent the addition or linkage of some thought-form to that physical form, that physical form is just what-is. But link a thought-form to that perception, and so conceptualize it, by attaching to it the label of bad or good, depending upon your conditioning, i.e., based up the particular way in which you identify with form, and through the process of conceptualizing that perception, you then become trapped within the mind, for the reasons just stated. And the same can be said for mental experience. That is, a thought arises, and even if it is a reactive thought, if it is left alone, if it is not reacted to, i.e., if some additional thought-form is not linked to it on the basis of one's form-identity, then it too remains just what-is. But link another thought-form to that thought-form, based upon your form-identity, and you just continue the chain of reactive thinking that obligates your Consciousness, so to speak, to remain within mind, because you are, through that reactive thinking, obligating your Consciousness to continue to conceptualize Itself, and so to know itself as form, which it can only do from within the mind.

However, when experiential form arises in a given moment, and there is always some experiential form arising in every moment, if we can not react to whatever forms of which we are aware, if we can cease to compulsively conceptualize those forms, and just be with them, without acting on the seeming and apparent need to label them—which seeming and apparent need only arises owing to our identification with form—then in that moment of non-reactivity, in that moment in which one is not compulsively thinking, i.e., not conceptualizing as a continuation of the conceptualization of Consciousness, one is no longer obligated to continue to create their form-identity, and so one is no longer locked or knotted into the relation by which that form-identity is being created. And once one is no longer locked into that relation, it then become possible, and quite easy, to become involved in the opposite relation instead, in the same way that one can easily face north once one is no longer bound in way that keeps one facing south. And because that opposite relation is the relation that allows Consciousness to become conscious

of Itself directly, it is only in moments of non-reactivity, and so only in moments that we are not compulsively thinking, i.e., reactively conceptualizing, that we can once again become conscious of the Formlessness that is our true Nature.

It is for this reason that Tolle places so much emphasis upon developing the ability to step out of thinking, because compulsive thinking is the primary mechanism, and really the sole mechanism, underlying both the entrapment of our Self, and the obscuring of our Self. The mechanism of our entrapment may begin with our identification with form, but that identification is only ever perpetuated and sustained by the compulsive thinking, by the reactive conceptualization, which always seems necessary, and which only seems necessary, from the point of view of the form-identity. And while this mental reactivity may manifest externally through some sort of physical action that creates external conflict, and/or may manifest internally as a negative or very negative emotional state, these external and internal manifestations of reactivity through physical and emotional form always begin within the mind, and so always have their origin within the mind, because they always begin at the level of thought, at the level of thinking, as some sort of reactive conceptualization, which is to say, as the linkage of some thought-form to another experiential form as the continuation of the process whereby Consciousness used the mind to conceptualize Itself, i.e., to link a thought-form to Itself. Put another way, because the identification of Consciousness with form is fundamentally a process of conceptualization, *the way in which the form-identity must ultimately be sustained is through the continuation of that process*, and so through further conceptualization that has that primary conceptualization as its basis.

Here it should be noted that conceptualization or thinking that is not based upon one's identification with form also requires that one use the mind, and so be in the mind, where that process takes place, but such non-reactive conceptualization or thinking does not trap one within the mind, because it does not obligate Consciousness to remain within the mind, as reactive thinking does. The difference between these two types of thinking, i.e., non-reactive and reactive, is like the difference between having the ability to use a tool in a way that allows you to put the tool down once you are done with it, and using a tool in a way that prevents you from ever putting the tool down once you have used it. Non-reactive thinking or conceptualization, i.e., thinking that is not a continuation of the identification of Consciousness with form, is like picking up a hammer, pounding in a nail, and then putting the hammer down. On the other hand, reactive thinking or conceptualization, i.e., thinking that is a continuation of the identification of Consciousness with form, is like finding yourself with a hammer already in your hand and then using that hammer to pound on everything, i.e., to conceptualize everything, that crosses your path. In this analogy, one finds themselves with hammer already in hand, while reactive, because in order to be reactive one has to have already used that tool, i.e., the mind, to identify with form.

Again, this is why Tolle regards the development of the ability to choose to step out of compulsive thinking as so vitally important, if one is to ever develop the ability to become directly conscious of Consciousness. Because if one is never able to stop thinking compulsively, then one is never able to step out of reactivity, and if one is never able to step out of reactivity, then one is never able to know anything beyond form. Thinking alone does not blind one to the Formless, any more than any other activity or doing blinds one to the Formless. The important thing is not whether one is thinking or what one is doing, what is important is the nature of the

doing, i.e., is it reactive or non-reactive, is it a continuation of the movement of Consciousness into identification with form, or is it the opposite Movement. If it is reactive then it is both binding and blinding, and if it is non-reactive then it is neither binding nor blinding, and is ultimately liberating. Thus, Tolle is not anti-thought; rather, he is only anti-compulsive thought, so to speak, because compulsive thought is reactive thought. And reactive thought, because it is always a movement of Consciousness that derives from the identification of Consciousness with form, precludes the Consciousness that you are from becoming conscious of Itself directly, and so prevents the Consciousness that you are from knowing Itself directly. And until you can know your Self directly, all you can know is form, leaving you with no option other than to continue to identify with form, and so leaving you with no option other than to continue to suffer.

Here it must be noted that once Consciousness is able to become conscious of Itself directly, it does not identify with the Formlessness of which it is then conscious through a mental process of conceptualization, as is the case when it identifies with form. Once Consciousness is able to become conscious of Itself directly, through some degree of disidentification from form, owing to some degree of non-reactivity, there is simply a recognition that the non-conceptual Formlessness of which it is now conscious is its Self, because there is now intrinsic to that awareness of its Self also the hard won recognition that form is not Itself. And the recognition that form is not Itself is said to be hard won, because the recognition of form as not Itself simply is not possible either prior to or absent the movement of Consciousness first into, and then out of, identification with form. And so, without the recognition of form as not Itself, Consciousness could not truly know as its Self the Formlessness of which it is once again able to become conscious, once it is no longer trapped in the mind through continuous reactivity. And this Self-recognition or Self-identification requires no conceptualization, no process of mind, because it does not involve Consciousness using the mind to link some thought-form to its "I Am" awareness, i.e., to its innate sense of "I Am-ness." To the contrary, this Self-recognition or Self-identification involves the uncoupling of all form from its pure awareness of Itself. And because this direct realization and recognition of Itself is not a mental process, such Self-identification, unlike the identification of Consciousness with form, does not limit Consciousness to movement only within the mind.

And so, because the movement of Consciousness into identification with form, and the reactive Movements that follow, are the opposite of, and so mutually exclusive of, the movement of Consciousness by which Consciousness is able to become conscious of both Itself and form directly, i.e., without an overlay of extraneous conceptual form, the extent to which Consciousness is participating in reactive conceptualization is the extent to which it is unable to participate directly in the movement of Consciousness into either the pure awareness of form, or into the direct awareness of Itself. Now here it should be noted that, at some level, even form-identified and reactive Consciousness must be participating in the movement of Consciousness into the pure awareness of form, else it would not be aware or conscious of any form to either identify with, or react toward. But once Consciousness reacts toward form, it is no longer actively conscious at that level, i.e., at the level of its pure awareness of form, because it is then actively conscious at the level of reactivity, which is to say, at the level where form appears only as it appears as seen through the conceptualizing mind. And because the movement of Consciousness that allows Consciousness to become conscious of Itself directly is the same movement as that by which Consciousness creates its pure awareness of form—i.e., form

apprehended absent any thought-form superimposed upon it—the extent to which Consciousness is unable to participate consciously in the movement of Consciousness into the pure awareness of form, owing to its reactivity, is exactly the degree to which Consciousness is unable to participate consciously in the movement of Consciousness that allows Consciousness to become conscious of Itself directly.

The relation between these opposite Movements, i.e., trapped in mind and not trapped in mind, and their mutual exclusivity, explains why the continuous reactivity in which most human Beings are involved, owing to their complete identification with form, also makes it impossible for those same Beings to become conscious of Consciousness directly, for as long as they remain continuously reactive. Not impossible because they do not possess the innate ability to become conscious of Consciousness directly, which ability they possess by their nature as Consciousness, but impossible only because, through continuous reactivity, they remain bound to a relation and Movement that simply does not allow them to become consciously involved in, or consciously participate in, the opposite and so mutually exclusive relation and Movement in which they must become involved, and in which they must participate, if they are to become conscious of Consciousness directly, and so become conscious directly of their true Nature.

Again, at some level all human Beings are already involved in that Movement, and so at that level are already conscious of Consciousness directly. But while reactive, and so while bound to identification with form, that is not the level at which they are operating, and so that is not the level of which they are actively conscious or aware. The level at which they are operating is at the level of form-identification, and so the level at which they are operating is at the level of the conceptual reality that is created as Consciousness moves or flows compulsively, and so reactively, through the conceptualizing mind, sustaining its form-identity through compulsive thinking. In fact, it is the obscuring of this level of reality, i.e., the level at which Consciousness is conscious of Itself directly, once Consciousness identifies with form and then reacts toward form, that leaves form-identified Consciousness continuously seeking fulfillment, satisfaction, and happiness through this or that form. When Consciousness is conscious of Itself directly, it is truly fulfilled, satisfied, and happy. Therefore, when Consciousness is obscured from Itself, owing to reactivity, true fulfillment, satisfaction, and happiness are also lost. What then remains are what pale reflections of that true fulfillment, satisfaction, and happiness as can be found occasionally, and very fleetingly, through form. But even these fleeting and pale reflections of fulfillment, satisfaction, and happiness, as can be found occasionally through form, are not truly found through form, but usually only arise when some form has been either acquired or done away with, such that there is then a temporary cessation or diminishment of the normal state of continuous reactivity—i.e., a temporary cessation or diminishment of the reactive judgments, or of the Movement into attachment and aversion—in which case Consciousness is then no longer completely obscured from Itself, even if its Presence is not recognized owing to continued identification with form. But fulfillment, satisfaction, and happiness found in this way rarely last long, because sooner or later, and usually sooner rather than later, some other form arises that one first reactively judges as good or bad, or some variant thereof, depending upon one's conditioning, and then reacts to with either attachment or aversion, depending upon the judgment rendered, thereby once again completely obscuring Consciousness from Itself, and so once again leaving form-identified Consciousness looking this way and that for the fulfillment, satisfaction, and happiness that seem to have somehow, once again, slipped through its fingers.

If form-identified Consciousness was not in some way conscious that something was missing, that something had been lost, it would not spend its entire form-identified life trying to find what it is that is missing or lost, would not spend its entire form-identified life trying to find happiness, or to fulfill itself, through some form. And the reason that form-identified Consciousness feels that something is missing is because something is missing, something has been lost, something has been obscured. And what is missing, lost, and obscured through its identification with form, and the resultant reactivity that naturally follows, is its direct consciousness or awareness of its Self. If that awareness did not already exist, so to speak, prior to the identification of Consciousness with form, then there would be no sense that something was missing once Consciousness identified with form, in the same way that one would not miss a lost watch one never knew they had. Our endless search for the fulfillment, satisfaction, and happiness that seem to be missing, once we have identified with form, is as if we know we once had something on our arm, but we can't remember what, and so we go about looking for things to put on our arm to see if we can get past the sense that something is missing. But unlike losing a watch, we have not lost some form, and so what we have lost can never actually be replaced by any form, because to the contrary, what we have lost, through our identification with form and the reactivity that naturally follows, is direct awareness of the Formlessness that is our true Nature. And for this reason, it is only by regaining that direct awareness of our true Nature that we can once again know *true* and *lasting* fulfillment, satisfaction, and happiness; true because these things, so to speak, would then be coming directly from their actual source, rather than secondarily through some relation to form, and lasting because these things would then no longer be dependent upon form, which, by its very nature, is ever-changing.

8. The trap of seeking

What traps so many spiritual seekers is that the very act of seeking is itself usually a reactive Movement that obscures Consciousness from Itself, and so keeps hidden That which one is actually seeking. That is, the trap into which so many spiritual seekers fall—which trap keeps them forever seeking, and so never finding That which they truly seek, i.e., the formless Consciousness or Beingness that is their true Self or No-self—is a trap that is both constructed and maintained by the act of seeking, because the act of seeking is most often a reaction, which is to say, an action that is a continuation of one's Movement into identification with form, since the way in which one seeks is usually dictated by the way in which reality appears as a result of one's identification with form. Specifically, when one seeks something, even the Formless, the act of seeking carries with it an implication that what one seeks is not in one's immediate vicinity, else it would not need to be sought, but would instead already be found. But the Formless is always right here, right now, and nowhere else, and is not other than That which seeks. However, the dissatisfaction, lack of fulfillment, and unhappiness that lie at the heart of all such seeking, also *appear* to be right here and right now. The appearance of these things here and now then lead one to believe that their opposites must be found elsewhere, somewhere other than here and now. And the appearance of these unwanted things here and now cause form-identified Consciousness to continuously propel itself into a conceptual past and future, anywhere but the immediate here and now, in order to find what seems to be missing, but which is actually only hidden, and which can only ever be found in the immediacy of here and now, and not in the conceptuality of past and future.

If one can realize that what they seek is not some form, but is actually the Formlessness by which all form is known, then one can realize that even though the dissatisfaction, lack of fulfillment, and unhappiness that lie at the heart of their seeking may *appear* to be right here and right now, that the opposite of these things, so to speak, must also be right here and right now, in order for these things to be known, and in order for anything to be known. And if one can realize this, then it becomes easier to turn one's attention to the here and now, rather than having one's attention continuously pulled, through reactive Movement, into past and future, which are only ever conceptual, and in which can only ever be found more forms, and in which is never found the Formlessness that is only ever here and now, because that Formlessness is ultimately both the Here and the Now, since that Formlessness is ultimately both the divine Space and Moment in which all forms arise and reside. And it is by That, and That alone, that any form is ever known.

The form-identity, the person, the “me,” only seems to be that by which form is known, because while Consciousness is actively identifying with form, and so knowing itself as a person, as a “me,” it cannot be conscious of Itself directly, and so cannot be conscious of That by which all form is actually being known, thereby creating the illusion that it is the form-identity, the person, the “me,” that is the knower, as well as the doer. However, in actuality, the form-identity, the person, the “me,” is just another form that is being both created and known by the Formlessness, the Consciousness, the divine Space and Moment, that is one's actual and essential Nature. And it is that essential Nature that is always and ultimately the actual and only Knower and Doer, even while that Nature is actively identifying with form and so completely blind to Itself. As an analogy, consider that a river becomes unable to know or be aware of water once it knows itself to be but a swirl or form that arises within, or upon the surface of, what is actually itself. The water would still be there, and would still flow, and in flowing would cause things to happen. But to the river those things could not be seen to be caused by the water that is actually itself, because it has become blind to what is actually itself as a result of mistakenly knowing itself to be but a swirl or form that arises within, or upon the surface of, what is actually itself. Instead, whatever happens would seem to be caused either by the swirl or form it considers to be itself, or by some other swirl or form it considers to be other, in the same way that what happens in the Universe must seem to be caused either by the form that we believe our self to be, or by some form that we believe to be other, for as long as we remain fully identified with form, and so completely blind to our true Nature, and so completely blind to That which is only and actually ever there where all experiential forms only ever appear to be. In the above analogy there is only water, and in actuality there is only Consciousness, there is only what you actually Are; everything else, i.e., all experiential form, is just an appearance, just a swirl, just a form, that arises within, and so is known by, the formless river of Life that is your true and essential Nature.

When Consciousness, owing to its identification with form and the reactivity that naturally follows, finds Itself experiencing dissatisfaction, a lack of fulfillment, and unhappiness, owing to the Self-obscuring that accompanies that Movement, it naturally seeks to find their opposites. However, because it seeks their opposites while identified with form, it naturally believes that their opposites will also be found in some form, and specifically believes that their opposites will be found in some form that it can then add to itself to complete itself, to complete the form it knows itself to be, thereby fulfilling itself, and so bringing satisfaction and happiness to itself. And so form-identified Consciousness seeks itself not in the Formless, but instead seeks itself in

and through form. And because in the immediacy of here and now it usually finds only dissatisfaction, a lack of fulfillment, and unhappiness, it continuously seeks the forms it feels will complete itself in the purely conceptual realities that are past and future, because they must be there, because they are clearly not here and now, because all that appears to be here and now are dissatisfaction, a lack of fulfillment, and unhappiness. And so in every moment form-identified Consciousness is trying to get to the next moment, or ruminating over some past moment, which means in every moment the attention of form-identified Consciousness is being directed anywhere but here and now, and so is, by the act of seeking, being directed away from the one place, so to speak, where That which it is seeking can truly be found.

This almost continuous projection of the attention of form-identified Consciousness away from here and now, and into some conceptual past or future, where it hopes to find and complete itself through some form, is a reactive Movement, because it is a Movement that has as its basis Consciousness' idea of itself as form. If Consciousness did not believe itself to be form it would not seek itself in form, and so would not feel compelled to continuously search past and future for the form or forms it feels it can use to complete itself, which completion it assumes and believes will bring with it the satisfaction, fulfillment, and happiness that seem to be missing in the here and now. And this reactive Movement, through which Consciousness continuously and unknowingly runs from Itself, and so unknowingly runs from That which it is actually seeking, as it seemingly projects Itself away from the here and now into a conceptual past and future, is the very Movement that both creates the dissatisfaction, lack of fulfillment, and unhappiness from which Consciousness is running, and also simultaneously obscures or hides Consciousness from Itself. Put another way, the reactive Movements, by obscuring Consciousness from Itself, both create the impetus to run from the here and now, by hiding the satisfaction, fulfillment, and happiness that accompany Self-awareness, thereby leaving Consciousness primarily aware, in the here and now, of dissatisfaction, a lack of fulfillment, and unhappiness, and simultaneously also make it impossible for Consciousness to find the actual source of the satisfaction, fulfillment, and happiness it seeks, because those can only ever be truly found in the now obscured Here and Now.

It is a perfect trap, since the reactive Movements, in which Consciousness naturally becomes involved once it identifies with form, serve only to maintain the very cage from which it seeks escape through its reactive Movements. Put another way, while identified with form, the way in which Consciousness seeks to free itself, or to find itself, is through the very action, i.e., reactive Movement, that itself makes both escape and finding itself seem necessary. And so the only way out of this trap, the only way to break the cycle of form-identification-reactivity-form-identification, is to, at some point, cease to take part in the reactive Movements, and in that way cease to both create the very cage from which it seems that one needs to escape, as well as cease to create the situation in which it appears that one needs to find one's self. Because in actuality, there is no one that needs to escape, and nothing that is missing. There is only Consciousness, which has, through its reactive Movements, bound Itself to continuous awareness of a reality in which it appears that someone is trapped, and that something is missing. And it is those appearances that leave Consciousness continuously both looking for a way out, and looking for what is missing, i.e., seeking, which seeking is itself a reactive Movement based on an appearance, and which reactive Movement then continues to create and bind Consciousness to the appearance that leads to the reactivity, and on and on and on it goes....

In essence then, the most immediate problem, as it were, the most immediate challenge that must be overcome, is not one's identification with form; rather, the most immediate challenge is in ceasing to remain continuously involved in the reactive Movements that follow and flow naturally from one's identification with form. Because as long as one remains continuously involved in those reactive Movements, not only must one remain identified with form, but one also remains locked into the Movement that is mutually exclusive of the Movement that allows one to become conscious of Consciousness directly, and so remains locked into the Movement that keeps hidden from one the only thing, so to speak, that can truly put an end to the otherwise endless and counterproductive seeking; endless because the very action of seeking can only perpetuate the appearance that someone is trapped or that something is missing, and counterproductive because the very action of seeking is always a reactive Movement that has as its basis an appearance that derives from the identification of Consciousness with form, and as such is a Movement that keeps Consciousness bound to its identification with form, and so keeps Consciousness bound to continuous awareness of a reality composed only of form, in which reality That which seems to be missing, but is only obscured, can never be found.

For what is seeking but the continuous attempt to escape the cage that this moment seems to be, or the continuous attempt to find what this moment seems to be missing or lacking. But it is not this moment that is the cage, nor is this moment actually lacking in anything. Rather, the appearance of this moment as a cage, or the appearance that this moment lacks something, are appearances composed only of the limiting ideas that naturally arise and crystallize around the limiting idea that is form-identification. And those appearances are sustained and perpetuated by nothing other than the reactive Movements through which one is attempting, in one way or another, to either escape from this moment, i.e., to escape from the here and now, to escape from the seeming cage the reactive Movements themselves create, or to find some form to fill in for That which the reactive Movements themselves keep hidden. Acting upon delusion as if it were actual only ever perpetuates the delusion, and so must keep hidden the actual. And so, as long as one seeks to escape the moment, the moment must appear to be something from which one needs to escape, not because it actually is, but only because that is how it must appear, for as long as one is involved in the reactive Movements that invariably underlie any such effort and attempt at escape. And also, as long as one seeks to find what is missing, something must appear to be missing, not because anything actually is missing—because the Consciousness that you actually are is always Here and Now—but only because that is how it must appear, for as long as one is involved in the reactive Movements that invariably underlie any such effort to find what seems to be missing. Form-identification is just the bait, but what springs the trap shut, and what keeps it shut, barring our escape from our identification with form, are the reactive Movements in which we naturally become involved once we have identified with form.

Now sometimes I talk about the trap and cage as if they did not exist, as if they are only appearances, and at other times I speak of the trap as if there really is a trap. Or at times I talk about there only appearing to be something missing, and at other times I talk about something that is actually missing. Why is this? Because there are two perspectives upon our situation; one from within our identification with form, and one outside that identification with form. From within our identification with form it is all just an appearance, because what seems to be trapped, and what seems to be missing, are themselves just an appearance, because what seems to be trapped is our form-identity, and what seems to be missing is something that seems to be missing

from the form-identity. And so from that perspective, i.e., from within our identification with form, it is all just seeming, all just appearance. On the other hand, from a perspective that lies outside our identification with form, from which perspective there is only Consciousness, from that perspective I am talking about what actually Is, not what only appears to be, and so from that perspective what is happening to Consciousness, so to speak, is not just seeming, not just an appearance. From that perspective, the reactive movements of Consciousness are actual, and are not just an appearance, although they do arise based on what is only an appearance. And from that perspective, the reactive Movements, which are actual, do actually bind Consciousness to the Movement and relation with Itself that creates its identification with form. Likewise, from that perspective, the reactive Movements, which are actual, because they are movements of Consciousness in relation to Itself, do actually obscure or hide Consciousness from Itself, and so from that perspective there is actually something missing, or not able to be known.

Through its reactive Movements, Consciousness does bind Itself to its identification with form. However, the appearances which that identification gives rise to are not actual, but are only seeming, e.g., the appearance of a person, the appearance of a “me,” and the appearance that the person is trapped, or that the person is missing something that needs to be found. Put another way, because the person is only ever an appearance created by the identification of Consciousness with form, those things that have to do with the person, e.g., its entrapment, its lacking something, its potential enhancement or diminishment, can only themselves ever be an appearance, can themselves only ever just seem to be. On the other hand, through reaction to those appearances, through reaction to the rope that only appears as a snake, the Actuality that is reactively Moving does actually knot Itself, and so does actually bind Itself to the perspective and reality in which it can only know itself as it is not, i.e., as form.

And so, how does one break the cycle and begin to truly extricate what is truly their Self from the trap, as opposed to just inadvertently constructing and reinforcing it through more reactive efforts to liberate the form-identity, or through more reactive efforts to seek something for the form-identity? By dealing with the Actual and not with the seeming. By recognizing the delusion as delusion and ceasing to act upon it as if it were the Actual. While involved in reactive Movements you are only ever dealing with the seeming, with the appearance, and not the Actual. This is because whatever reality is created by the movement of Consciousness into identification with form is only ever an appearance, only ever the appearance of a snake where there is actually only a rope. And as form-identified Consciousness reacts to that apparent reality, as it reacts to the appearance of a snake where there is actually only a rope—and where ultimately there is only its Self—as a result of what then actually happens, which is to say, as a result of the knot in which Consciousness actually places Itself through its reactivity, whereby it becomes bound to its identification with form, and so becomes bound also to the appearances that identification creates, such a reactive Consciousness does actually become locked into or bound to knowledge that is limited to the apparent reality toward which it is reacting, thereby making that apparent reality its sole reality, for as long as the reactivity toward that reality persists. And for as long as Consciousness is bound to that apparent reality, in which apparent reality it is conscious only of form, it must remain completely unconscious of the both formless Actuality that is its own Nature and Self, as well as unconscious of the experiential actuality that is its untainted apprehension of experiential form, i.e., untainted by the concepts, untainted by the appearances,

that are invariably imposed upon those forms as they are apprehended through the conceptual lens that is its identification with form.

And so, no matter how the subject is approached, from either the perspective of the form-identity, or from the perspective that lies beyond our identification with form, we still end up at the point where the only way for the Actual to escape the conundrum in which it finds Itself, owing to its identification with form, is for the Actual to stop perpetuating that conundrum. And since the conundrum in which the Actual finds Itself is perpetuated by nothing other than its own reactive Movements, which is to say, by the continuation of the Movement that is its movement into identification with form, based upon how reality appears once it has identified with form, then it should be fairly easy to understand that the only way out of this conundrum lies in the Actual beginning to participate, in some way, in non-reactive Movement, rather than reactive Movement.

This is why every single spiritual practice that has ever been recommended as a way toward Liberation, and which has any utility whatsoever in accomplishing that goal, so to speak, in one way or another involves non-reactivity. Much of the Tao Te Ching is an essay on non-reactivity. The three paths toward liberation mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita: Karma Yoga, or the Path of Action, Bhakti Yoga, or the Path of Devotion, and Jnana Yoga, or the Path of Knowledge, also center around non-reactivity. Likewise, mindfulness practice, whether of the Buddhist or secular variety, is at its core the practice of non-reactivity. Jesus also taught non-reactivity, as in, turn the other cheek. And although Eckhart Tolle does not teach any specific technique or practice, every method that he describes for either becoming aware of the Actual, or of deepening that awareness, is non-reactive in nature, e.g., not opposing the forms that arise in this moment, not being in conflict with this moment, accepting what-is, and perceiving without labeling, to name but a few.

Again, it does not matter where in the cycle one withdraws from reactivity, all that matters is that one does withdraw at some point, or more accurately, at some moment, and that moment will always and only ever be the moment that is Now. That is, one cannot withdraw from reactivity in some future moment, and so such withdrawal can never occur in some future moment, because there actually is no such moment; rather, there is only the appearance of such a moment, which, when it arrives, so to speak, can only ever be Now. Failing to recognize this simple fact causes many spiritual seekers to become trapped in a conceptual future, in which future they see themselves as being liberated or enlightened, not knowing that the almost continuous projection of their Self, of their Consciousness, into the future they seek—which can only ever be conceptual in nature, and so composed only of form—is itself an action or Movement that keeps hidden the Formlessness which they must find or discover in this moment, Now—and which they can only ever find and discover Now—if they are ever to become truly Liberated and Enlightened.

That having been said, one cannot withdraw from reactivity unless one first becomes actively aware of one's in-the-moment involvement in reactivity, because absent that active awareness, all of one's Awareness or Consciousness, in that moment, remains caught up in the reactive Movement, leaving none left over to just be aware of the Movement, and so leaving none left over to become or be involved in the opposite Movement. In the same way, while caught up in

the torrent of a river, one cannot observe its flow, as one is part of that flow and so is just pulled along by that flow. It is only to the extent that one is able to step out of the torrent, to step out of the flow, and so is no longer part of the flow, that one then becomes able to observe that flow, and in so doing takes part in a different flow or movement.

And so trade in the seeking, which is always reactive, because it has as its basis the identification of Consciousness with form, for the simple act of just paying attention to whatever forms arise within one's Consciousness here and now, as such simple attention is never itself reactive, because such simple attention does not have as its basis the identification of Consciousness with form. Because if one can, even for a moment, cease to be caught up in the torrent of reactivity, and so step out of the reactivity, by instead just observing the reactive Movement, then in that moment becoming conscious of Consciousness becomes as easy as turning north after having been facing south, because in the absence of one's complete involvement in the reactive Movements, one is no longer completely locked into the primary Movement that creates one's identification with form, and so is no longer completely locked into the Movement that is mutually exclusive of the Movement by which Consciousness is able to become conscious of Itself directly. And just as importantly, by withdrawing to some degree from reactive Movement, one is already, to that same degree, withdrawing from Movement into identification with form, and so is already, to that same degree, engaged and involved in the opposite Movement by which Consciousness is able to become conscious of Itself directly. Thus, to continue the analogy, once one has withdrawn to some degree from reactive Movement, one has already begun to face north instead of south, after which it is then just a matter of simply *noticing* That which was always there, but which is no longer being completely obscured or hidden as a result of the complete attention that one is otherwise obligated to give to experiential form while engaged fully and completely in reactive Movement.

9. Effective non-reactivity

However, for non-reactivity to work, so to speak, to extricate one from the cycle of form-identification-reactivity-form-identification, it needs to become a way of life, a way of being, and not just a technique that one practices a half hour or hour a day, after which one then goes back to their normal pattern of reactivity. When something becomes a technique, even non-reactivity, it becomes an object in Consciousness, and as an object in Consciousness it becomes something to which the form-identity can cling, and so becomes something that can sustain, rather than dissolve, the form-identity. This is why Tolle does not teach any method or technique, and it is also why he says it is better to randomly intersperse one's day with many moments of non-reactivity, rather than to just have one or two set blocks of non-reactivity. And the reason it is better to randomly intersperse one's day with many moments of non-reactivity, rather than to just have set blocks of non-reactivity, is owing to the nature of the way in which reactivity functions to sustain the form-identity, or to keep one locked into form-identification, which is as the linchpin in a self-perpetuating cycle. Put another way, the way in which non-reactivity must actually be used to break the cycle of form-identification-reactivity-form-identification, cannot be separated from the fact that it is the opposite Movement, i.e., reactivity, that fuels that cycle.

If one spends a half hour or hour a day meditating, but spends the rest of the day in unconscious reactivity, then what is done during those times of non-reactivity to weaken the form-identity is completely undone during the periods of reactivity. And although one's life may improve in some ways owing to such practices, i.e., owing to those periods of non-reactivity, such improvements fall under the category of redecorating the cage rather than dismantling the cage. On the other hand, if one can break the cycle of form-identification-reactivity-form-identification somewhat randomly throughout the day, then in this way, by periodically breaking the cycle throughout the day, by periodically stepping out of the cycle throughout the day, much more is done to weaken the form-identity, much more is done to gradually dismantle the cage, than is accomplished by strict periods dedicated to non-reactivity sandwiched between far longer periods where there is no effort, so to speak, to be non-reactive. This is because during long periods of reactivity the cage of form-identification is fully reassembled and its deconstruction has to be started all over again. But if those long periods of reactivity and rebuilding of the form-identity can instead be broken up, or interrupted, through occasional and even short periods of non-reactivity, then the form-identity never has a chance to be fully reassembled, because any period of non-reactivity not only halts its construction, but is also a period during which it is being disassembled.

Additionally, when one intersperses one's day with periods of non-reactivity, those periods will naturally and gradually grow longer and more numerous, in which case then the periods of complete unconscious reactivity will also naturally and gradually grow shorter and become less frequent. On the other hand, when the pattern is one of non-reactivity for a set period and then reactivity for another set period, with little to no change in that pattern over time, there is then little to no actual movement toward Liberation, which is to say, little to no movement toward the disidentification from form that must go hand in hand with any actual movement toward Liberation, since what Consciousness must ultimately be liberated from if it is to truly be free, i.e., to move spontaneously as it Will rather than only according to its conditioning, is its belief in the idea that what it is, is some form, some experiential this or that.

(Continued in Part IV)