

God, the Universe, and Everything

Bruce R. Linnell, PhD

God

At some point, Tao (God, universal mind, Buddha nature, Christ consciousness, etc.) existed, but was not manifest (“was without form, and void”). “Eventually”, Tao discovered how to become manifest, and exploded into an infinite number of consciousnesses and realities/universes. God is everything, and everything is made of God. Our minds and bodies are made of god-stuff, and we are all connected in some way with everything else by being a part of this common source.

Self & Soul

Your “self” is the consciousness that is reading this. Yes, you! ☺

The “soul” exists independently of the physical body, and does not experience time the way the self does (see “The Soul's Point of View”, below).

The soul is that which experiences all the self's lifetimes at once. The self is a part of the soul, but the soul is more than the sum of its lifetimes.

For each lifetime, the soul picks its body's traits, the family it will be born into, and major life trends (personality, poverty/wealth, health/sickness, etc.). This is all experience to the soul; it is our conscious self which labels them “good” (pleasant) or “bad” (unpleasant). How the self deals with the life experiences chosen by the soul is up to the self : crumble under adversity, versus rise above it, versus run away from it, etc.

The small random events in our lives are often just that – random events, a consequence of living in a physical universe. Life-changing events are chosen to be experienced by the soul – pay attention to them!

The soul can send messages to the self, especially in times of quiet or in dreams, but also as “hunches” or “flashes of insight”. But the messages are not always heard, and the self that does hear still has free will to ignore them, or to interpret them in numerous different ways based on its beliefs. And dreams are sometimes just brain farts.

As shown all thru the histories of all cultures, it is possible for the self to make direct connection with the soul and Tao thru meditation, prayer, etc.

The Physical Universe

The physical universe is one of an infinite number of continually forming universes, and the big bang was the creation of our physical universe within whatever other universe spawned it. There are an infinite number of universes, each spawning an infinite number of universes, each spawning an infinite number of universes, each spawning...etc. This concept is one description of the “meta-reality” beyond our observable universe being considered by modern-day physics, and is gaining more and more support.

In many of these universes, physical conditions are not appropriate for life as we know it (wrong number of dimensions, wrong values for the physical constants which define the operation of the physics of the universe, etc.). But with an infinity of infinities of infinities of...of universes being created, that still leaves an infinite number of recognizable universes (4-dimensional space/time with matter and energy, from here on called “4-D STME”) to choose from, in which consciousness can interact (that is, they can have lives there). There are also infinities of realities with different physics which we cannot even comprehend, in which our souls can have experiences.

There are also an infinite number of probable realities of just this universe, each one resulting from the choices people make and the ways in which major historical events turn out. Each choice or event creates at least two realities. Obviously, many of them are different in trivial ways, like whether you had that chocolate sundae yesterday or not, but big choices create major differences in world history. Yes, it's the TV series "Sliders". It's also one way to interpret quantum mechanics ("many worlds").

Death & Reincarnation

Upon death, the self experiences exactly what it expects to happen (heaven, hell, Tibetan Book of the Dead, nothingness, etc.). But eventually, the self realizes what happened, ruminates on the lifetime it just finished, and then starts to consider what experiences to explore next.

The self can choose to live its next life on this planet in the future or in the past (relative to the life it just finished), or on a different planet somewhere in this physical universe, or in a different universe, and so forth.

When a soul has learned what it wants to learn from 4-D STME lifetimes, it will naturally stop choosing to experience them. The soul does not "evolve beyond" 4-D STME experiences, since it is experiencing other lifetimes in other realities concurrently. Some souls even choose not to experience 4-D STME lifetimes at all – it's just not in their range of interests. Just as not everyone who goes to college takes the exact same courses, no "higher power" forces every soul to experience 4-D STME.

Souls often arrange to share lifetimes together (or at least to have a high probability of meeting). What happens after that is up to the selves involved.

Karma

There is no judgment imposed from a "higher power" as to how "good" or "bad" your last life was, and no penalty to be paid (purgatory, hell, karma). Having a "good" life is not a "reward", nor is a "bad" life "punishment". To Tao and the soul, all is experience, nothing is good or bad. Or, to paraphrase Penn and Teller, "Karma is probability taken personally".

"Hitler went to heaven", a thought-provoking statement from "Conversations with God" by Neale Walsch, makes a valid point from one perspective, but is still describing things in terms of reward and punishment for "good" or "bad" things done.

Major life-changing events (and overall life-trends) are orchestrated by the soul, and are due to either the self's or soul's willing choice to correct an imbalance to another soul, or the result of the soul's desire for experience. In this search, the soul experiences many "good" and "bad" things (as perceived by its selves) across many lifetimes, so in this sense they naturally even out.

For every *extreme* "major life trend" in this life (poverty vs. wealth, health vs. sickness, intelligence vs. the belief that wrestling is real, extroversion vs. introversion, etc.), the soul always has the option to live another life in which it can explore the opposite quality, if it so chooses. Over many lifetimes, all these extremes also balance out.

With the "enforced by a higher power" aspect removed, "karma" becomes a choice made by the self or soul to either give retribution (good or bad) or to get retribution. The self that was Hitler could choose to have a lifetime in which it discovers a cure for cancer or AIDS, thus saving as many lives as it was responsible for killing as Hitler. Or not.

However, once we let go of the desire to receive retribution (that is, we can forgive those who have wronged us, and cease wanting to be rewarded for our good deeds), we are halfway to enlightenment.

The Soul's Point of View

Imagine a daffodil bulb – its entire lifetime can be thought of as a stack of slides, with images showing it going from bulb to planting, sprouting, growing, flowering, and dying. The soul holds a lifetime within itself as a “unit”, just as we can hold the stack of slides in our hand all at once.

Now imagine other sequences of slides – one for each major event which had an alternate outcome : never bought from the store; never planted; too dry, too wet; being run over by the lawn mower. A rough analogy would be to think of these alternate realities as “branching off” from the first stack whenever a decision point is reached.

The soul also experiences all the alternate probabilities of a lifetime, as if all the sequences were shuffled together to make one stack, with every possible outcome at a given instant in time (bulb, flowering, died of draught, mowed over, etc.) co-existing simultaneously.

The soul perceives a lifetime, with all possible alternate events (each image on the slide) happening “at once”, just as we can hold a stack of slides in our hands “at once”. But in order to experience what the daffodil experiences, we have to view each slide in order, and wherever there is a choice, take only one of the branches. In a similar manner, the soul also “enters into” the lifetime to experience it first-hand, and your own particular lifetime is one particular path thru the entire set of the lifetime's possible paths, based on your choices. Time as experienced by the self is just one particular way of experiencing the events in a certain order (“time is nature's way to keep everything from happening all at once” – Professor John Wheeler).

Postscript (written much later)

But still, the picture described so far assumes that some part of the soul (the “self”) experiences one lifetime after another. If time truly does not exist to the soul, how can this be? I used to think of lifetimes as sweaters in a closet to the soul – the sweaters were all there, but the soul would have to “try one on” (live it) to experience it. But that image makes the lifetimes something “compartmented away” within the soul.

Now I've come to think of the soul as the sweater, with each thread that makes it up being a lifetime. All the lifetimes of the soul are being lived at once, each one contributing different experiences and understandings to the soul.

So I no longer think in terms of “past lives” or even “next lives”, but of “other lives” that I am living.