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Introduction

Everyone eventually asks the question, “Why am I here?” Many people have already discovered a wealth of material aimed at answering their most profound query. Unfortunately, religious theories, blind-faith belief systems, touchy-feely quasi-philosophical ranting, along with distorted scientific truths, unimaginative logical dogma, and fashionable hype fill the vacuum in the human-mind—not with truth, but confusion, conflict, and illusion. It is no surprise to discover the shelves of retail bookshops are filled with a proliferation of titles under the heading of 'Spiritual'. Closer inspection reveal books on every aspect of self-help and how to enrich our experiences. It appears many members of the human-race have reached a point where they desperately seek genuine purpose rather than remain, for the most part, unfulfilled. This phenomenon exists predominantly in western society, where giant super-markets fill cathedral corridors with the greatest hoard of material wealth ever assembled in one place; where each minute of every day, citizens are bombarded by billboards, television screens, emblazoned buses, banners, newspapers, magazines, and store windows to own this thing or that to improve their routine existence!

Outside the western world, two-thirds of the six billion people on the planet struggle to obtain their daily needs. Most are on the bread line wondering where the next meal is coming from. Their spiritual questions are answered by inappropriate religious indoctrination, designed only to convince them to come to terms with their misery in this life through the false promise of a happier existence in the next one, or by western propaganda infiltrating their societies and bringing, to them, the same deceptive material-promise we already know.

Apart from illness and human-intervention, most other animal species on the planet do not seem to experience the kind of unhappiness we do. A tiger appears to be fundamentally content with its lot. Predator and prey live

in better harmony than people do. One could argue this is because we are thinking bipeds and are 'aware', whereas other animals are not. We are able to think intelligently. We have the ability to deceive and lie. Such argument fails miserably in the light of the fact many animals, among them octopus, dolphin, monkey, elephant, dog, fox, and wolf, have proven intellects and mental capabilities equal to our very young infants. It is difficult to prove what 'self-awareness' and consciousness actually involve, but I believe a tiger is happy with his lot because he knows, inherently, he *is* a tiger. He behaves one hundred per cent to his role and purpose. All other creatures on the planet sufficiently aware to explore their environment, intellectually, know what they are, and have little need to question it. A fish enjoys being a fish, because it will never be anything else, and therefore does not worry about it. It *knows* what it is either because it lacks the imagination and capability to wonder, or because it is born with inherited traits to be only a fish.

People are unhappy for different reasons, but I believe that underlying all of them is a single cause: they have never discovered or understood their unique role in being alive, and do not understand what their function is. When we ask our academic peers or our moral leaders for intelligent advice, we are directed towards ancient soothsayers, unproven deities, gods, prophets, dusty-texts, and muddled books of wisdom for our answers. It's like asking grown-ups to believe in tooth fairies. People are given stories only suitable for the inexperienced minds of young children or, just as bad, unfathomable theories suitable only for the membership of MENSAs. Faced with myth and fable in answer to our questions, we remain in a state of ignorance about our role in the grand evolution of a universe. We are left to wander through short lives grasping at being all things, but never truly being the one, we were designed to be. It is as though we are tigers believing we are elephants, with all the pain and disappointment it brings in not being able to discover our true identities.

Human history is populated with emerging ideas regarding religious belief. Paganism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity are just a handful of repeated attempts at determining a shared universal purpose. Did we evolve or were we created by a supreme intellect? Are our lives just

proving grounds, testing our loyalties to this God or that one? More recently in the last four hundred years, an ancient ideology achieved sufficiently new prominence to gain worthy attention again: *science*! From its outset, this strand of human understanding has required repeatable, demonstrable evidence to be forthcoming for its arguments to be accepted as true. Religion, on the other hand, has never required repeatable proofs; instead, it asks only we believe, and many of us do exactly that—believe! We do so in defiance of the cold and ruthless light of reason. Why?

Faith and religion are often cited as having profound effects on people's lives, with many believers reporting dramatic life-changing moments as though these experiences were somehow fated to happen. Bad people have become good people. Good people have become amazing benefactors to other people, whose own lives are blighted with poverty and disease. There is no doubt that passion can drive human endeavour, and enhance the idea of being on a righteous path serving God. Yet, such behaviour offers no proof of any religion being true; people can perform similar acts, and feel overwhelming emotions, through passion and belief in their country, their team, or their own ideas. Believing in something, no matter how great it makes you feel, or how much it seemingly provides strength and purpose in a harsh and difficult world, does not offer evidence for any spiritual influences—it just illustrates the way emotional traits, within our makeup, can help us feel better, or drive us to make positive contributions in our lives. If we possessed a different mix of chemical stimuli from the norm (one questions what is normal), our feelings would be different to those we currently have. Our minds, emotions, and our body chemistry are woven together into an inseparable mix, which provide each of us with a *subjective* view of life. There is no objective view of anything. Humans seem unable to untangle themselves from their own, poorly constructed, version of universal truth. This is because we are all effectively deluded in one way or another by other people even more deluded than us.

A spate of books has been published setting faith-believer against pragmatist—religion against science. What appears lacking to me in most of these informed, and cleverly argued, works is recognition of the boundaries separating the diverse strands of human need. We seek

knowledge but also purpose; we comprehend mortality but still harbour hope. We are able to imagine fantastic and impractical scenarios on what we really expect to happen when we die, simply because we are unable to accept the finality of death. We secretly know much of what we dream and hope for can never possibly be.

People live for more than material security and the daily practicalities of getting by. Art, music, love, musing, daydreaming, fooling around, and humour are equally important to us as knowledge, wisdom, and morality. The theologian amplifies the importance of spirituality in fulfilling human abstract need, whereas the scientist offers a growing understanding of reality, but one devoid of any promise to fulfill our fundamental yearning for a greater purpose.

Religion and science, instead of being opposing forces, may in truth be parallel ones failing to recognise their own origins and the different methods they employ to aim at the same target. The problem with specialisation is that, when one becomes immersed in a thought discipline, most other ways of seeing a thing become obscured. Where scientific knowledge of the universe, and our place within it, is weakest and least proven, the champions of religion fill the void with mystique. Scientists fall victim to the same mistake as the theologians, and pick through the detail of biblical text trying to find fault, instead of considering how their own area of study might offer fantastic spiritual possibilities for human purpose. Both camps resort to exposing the gaps and weaknesses in their adversaries' arguments, when they should be accepting that we all have a long way to go, before we obtain absolute understanding of everything.

Science is the slow deliberation of acquiring knowledge and truth. We are only a small way along all the learning paths, and we still have so much yet to find out. Science may, one day, ultimately discover a divine awareness (God or gods) responsible for all creation, despite the fact there is no hard demonstrable evidence of this right now. Religion appears to satisfy the need for purpose—human purpose, something casually reduced by science to be a 'purpose-less' role: we are just a chemical reaction in the universe and have no pre-determined point in being. The problem is religion offers a promise of purpose within an absurd modern framework, and from

the shaky foundation of a chequered history; it is devoid of modern thinking, and attempts to sell an old idea beneath an atmosphere of well-deserved cynicism from science-enlightened people. Science offers only a cold and convincing knowledge of life, but adds nothing of value to help us accept the struggle, and the terror of death. Are these really the only two philosophies humankind has to make choices from after 4.5 million years of existence?

The questions we should be asking are not whether religion or science holds definitive answers to our human curiosity and emotional needs, but whether these divided camps can offer a convincing method for finding out. I think the best way to attempt to create a proper resolution to the meaning of everything, and the discover the purpose of life, is to explore how scientific truth can be wedded to the core values of spiritual ideologies, irrespective of whether the answers are acceptable to purist theologians, or unimaginative scientists. Hopefully, a large percentage of open-minded ambassadors for both of these disciplines will glimpse the seed of unification and glaring truth in this account.

I believe we have always been lost. Humanity gropes in the dark. After a few thousand years of stumbling around, a few small truths have been discovered to shed sufficient illumination on a unique and almost impossible existence. I think enough data has been gathered for each of us to find the real light switch, and the time has come to resolutely flick it on! This book will explore and expose exactly who we are and suggest what our true purpose is. It is not about belief at this stage; it is simply carefully deduced argument. We live in deceptive times where it has become far more difficult than in the past to prise out the truth from what we are told. I want to blow away the dust of religious fable and remove the vain mirror of human distortion from science. I want to tease out the facts from what is known, and present answers to the meaning of life clearly for everyone to understand and consider.

My book would be incomplete if I dealt only with what can be proved today. Knowledge is continuously being added to. What is imagined one second becomes the inspiration towards what is possible the next. '42' deals with evidential truths, those ideas that can be tested or deduced by

everyone. It is also about what is *not known*, but can be theorised and imagined as plausible. I have sometimes used passages of fiction to expand on conjecture and make imaginative models of our universe more vivid. You can wonder about these illustrations and bolt them on to your own views. So, if you would prefer to believe in ‘ifs’ and ‘maybes’, at least mine will offer something more reasonable and contemporary than the faded gospels, and blood-splattered science papers strewn across the pitted battleground of intellect at war with emotional need.

I think no one should accept the truth about anything until all truth has been wrestled from nature. My work is not asking anyone to close any doors on seeking alternative answers to their questions. We can all be wrong, or convey something inaccurate by mistake. I am not God, or his son, or the devout self-righteous sage who would say, "This is it... the truth... forever and ever, Amen!" *My truth* is extracted from what is understood about our universe today. Whatever may be constructed by discovering additional truths tomorrow, next year, or a million from now, I leave for others to consider and debate. I am hopeful this work may help to enlighten human thought, and bring about a greater degree of harmony between each struggling member of the human race. It would be a bonus if, after reading this, more people found a common direction through life instead of the diverse, and often conflicting, avenues we currently travel to make sense of it all.

What I have to offer here is a heuristic work! I am attempting to draw a series of pictures using fact and fiction in understanding a problem and exploring an answer. My methods are designed to expose the absurdities contained in resolutions offered by religious and scientific theories to the question of the meaning of life. My intention is to reveal my working out so that it stimulates further investigation by you, the reader. I believe no matter which course you choose other than mine to answer your own self-searching questions, my answers can be adapted to your own beliefs even if we differ slightly on the details and mechanism of how we derive a solution.

Some of this work examines the more local problems we experience in the days of our lives. How should we live a constructive and worthwhile

period on this planet? How do we advance happiness, both our own and that of our kindred? If I have done my job correctly, we should be able to explore some interesting insights together, and find sustainable answers to these questions. I have deliberately avoided writing scientific explanations in jargon, and instead I have tried to make many pioneering concepts understandable to everyone. People already versed in the state of knowledge at the various frontiers of scientific investigation will recognise my statements are true (as far as we know right now). Anyone else, less informed about science and the theories underpinning current trends of investigation, will need to put a little faith in me. I have annotated some of the more critical statements in the major sections of this work, and I have provided further clarification at the end, together with suggested published works by other authors, for anyone curious enough to read up and check my facts.

I wish to make two clarifications now; they are both important in understanding my references to consciousness and to the non-aware state of the universe. When I talk about being ‘aware’, I have often used the words—conscious, consciousness, self-aware, aware, sentient, thinking, and possibly one or two other terms as well. Each of these expressions has slightly different meanings to a perfectionist, but I have used all of them synonymously as a state equal or higher to human consciousness: the feeling we have of knowing we are conscious and aware.

When talking about the universe, sometimes I am really referring to everything in it apart from us and, at other times, everything including us. One should regard the universe as the totality of everything in it. I also infer it to be a mathematical universe although it is more accurately defined as a program-universe. My concern here is to distinguish it apart from something having any will, or human-like purpose, and to avoid inferring any direct intelligence, intent, mind, or perception to it. As far as science and I are concerned, the universe is not alive and does not possess a mind. All its activity, including the existence of living things, is a consequence of properties, traits, and processes inherently woven into its constitution. The cosmos behaves more like a few lines of recursive software code, bound by mathematics and rules, which—along with trial and error—blindly gives a

physical existence to the unknown abstracts driving it.

I would like to explain one final important point before you run out of patience with me. Most of us mere mortals find it difficult to come to terms with our individual ultimate deaths. Many readers will have strong belief systems. However erroneous and misinformed these may be from the truth of all truths, some kind of faith enables millions of people to come to terms with finality. A life without hope and magic is like a grey morning where the sun never breaks through for an instant. If you need to believe in magic to confront death, despair, and misery, then a beautiful message is already encapsulated within this work. What is important to me is that you find the message, think about it, and come to understand its astonishing implications. Afterwards, you may genuinely feel you are a worthy and important living entity because of it. The degree of belief required to do this is much smaller than any you currently apply to follow the particular faith you already have. This one is based on looking at what is here now in this life and this world, not on the promise of a non-evidential one in the hereafter. *Whether you know it or not, I want you to realise that you, and everyone around you, are critical to the survival of everything there is and will ever be.*