

Chapter 14

Describing Nine Aspects of the “I Am”

Giving rational names to aspects of the “I Am” is daring, since by definition the “I Am” is nameless. Even if the names I use are pretty good poetry (good descriptions of something directly experienced), they only fragmentarily describe the experience. So, I admit that my fragments of poetry are a flawed lenses through which I am asking you to look.

Furthermore, there are an infinite number of aspects of the “I Am,” so grouping these aspects into nine categories is somewhat arbitrary. Therefore, I don’t mean for my nine categories to discredit other ways of grouping these experiences. At the same time, I am attempting to draw a comprehensive portrait, one that includes the whole of the “I Am.” My descriptions will be brief: each of these nine aspects might have a whole library of books written about it.

Further, I am assuming that all nine of these aspects of the “I Am” can be noticed in each of our lives – that each of us can access these aspects of profound humanness as our very own being. Such sameness can be a shock, for with regard to temporal aspects of our lives, we are each unique, significantly different in almost every characteristic. So, in describing profound humanness, I am asking you to notice that temporality is not the whole story of your life, and that beneath all our differences we are the same in our Eternal relatedness.

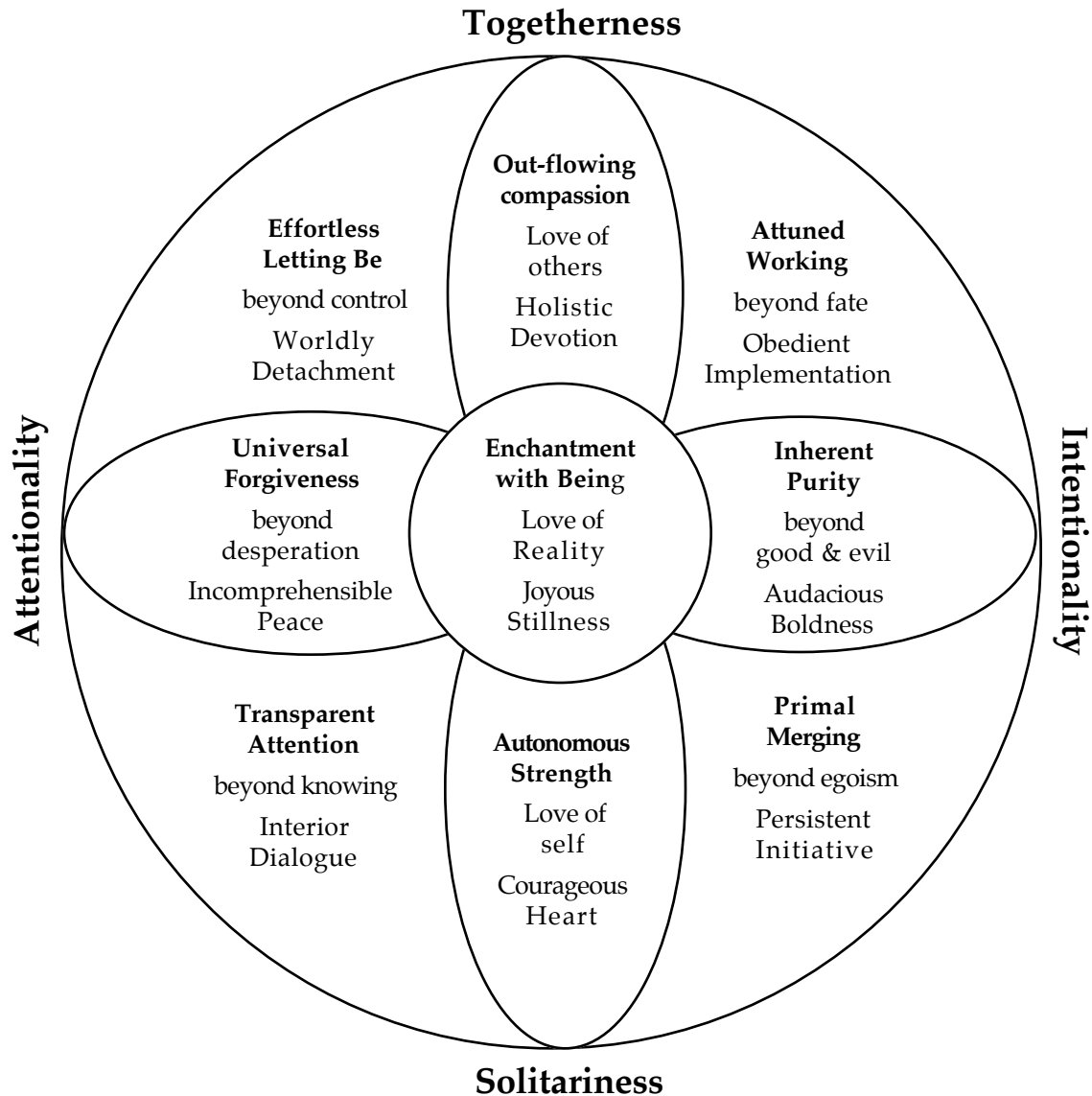
The following chart is meant for ongoing contemplation. This chart is a map, a map made from a wide range of experiences found from following many other maps of experiences of the “I Am.” Making a good map requires careful attention to what previous maps pointed to and failed to point to, and then making corrections. Humanity has been mapping their most noteworthy and mysterious experiences for thousands of years. I am submitting to you my most recent map for exploring our common profound humanness. On the basis of your own explorations, you may want to make your own map, your own corrections of my map, or at least describe missing elements in each of the areas I visit. Indeed, I have written more extensively about these nine aspects in other books. See especially Chapters 7, 8, and 9 of *Jacob’s Dream*.

The pattern of my map incorporates the insight that the “I Am” is a combination of conscious knowing and conscious doing. I will use these next two words to stand for that polarity: **Attentionality** and **Intentionality**. Forget whatever other meanings those two words may have had in our culture. For me these two words are pointers to two inseparable aspects of the nature of consciousness and of the nature of profound consciousness. We pay attention to our surroundings, and we initiate actions within those surroundings. We know, and we do. We take in reality, and we shape reality with our choices. “Attentionality” is our direct awareness of our awareness in its temporal setting and “Intentionality” is our action that flows from this awareness into the wide world. As a quality of the “I Am,” attentionality is related to memory of the past. As a quality of the “I Am,” intentionality is related to anticipation of the future. In my mapping, the three aspects of the “I Am” I have placed on the left side of my chart are related to attentionality. The three aspects of the “I Am” on the right side of my chart are related to intentionality.

The bottom three aspects relate to solitude and the top three aspects relate to being with others. The “I Am” is both boundlessly solitary and boundlessly related to all things. In *The Courage To Be* Paul Tillich spoke of the solitariness and togetherness dimensions as (1) the courage to be “apart” and (2) the courage to be “a part.”

Finally, the circle in the center of the chart indicates a core aspect of the “I Am” that enriches the other eight aspects. This completes my map – nine inseparable aspects of

the "I Am." I will describe them in terms of my experience and perhaps yours:



I begin my description on the attentionality side – the left side of the chart. I will start with the solitary aspect of **Transparent Attention** and move upward through **Universal Forgiveness** to the more communal aspect of **Effortless Letting-Be**.

Transparent Attention

Curiosity is a type of trust in Reality; curiosity is a willingness to be open to an ever deeper vision of Reality. *Transparent Attention* is a phrase that indicates a very profound curiosity, a curiosity that begins when we are infants and can remain throughout our lives. Our awareness makes discriminations before our mind begins its work. Before an infant's mind has a name for toe, infant consciousness begins to be aware that its toe is *me* in a way that the crib slat is not. Awareness makes a differentiation between *my* being and *my* mother's being before *my* mind has a name for mother or for self. As the mind learns names and learns to use them, consciousness has a capacity to remain clear that all the named things remain connected in an all encompassing Reality that is more than the named things. As adults we typically confuse our naming process with the

process of Reality, but it is still possible for us to experience the Reality beyond the naming. This is *Transparent Attention*. We can find ourselves in a state somewhat like what an infant must experience before the symbol-using mind goes to work naming things and building sentences. Imagine consciousness noticing consciousness without a word for consciousness. When we as adults rest in such raw consciousness, we can watch the mind do its work of distinguishing things with names and relating those named things. Such differentiation of things may be relatively true, yet the naming is quite arbitrary. *Transparent Attention* pays attention to the fact that the names are not the realities named. Furthermore, we can see that the names only imperfectly reflect the realities named.

This raw awareness of *Transparent Attention* can differentiate specific things from the enduring Every-Thing-Ness without losing the awareness that all things participate in an overarching Every-Thing-Ness. As we pay attention to our named things we can also notice that all these things come into being, stay a while, and go out of being. This is true even of our ways of naming things. All things and all perspectives upon those things come out of an enduring No-Thing-Ness and return to that No-Thing-Ness. This No-Thing-Ness can also be seen as an Every-Thing-Ness in which all things cohere. This awareness is a deep adult experience of *Transparent Attention*. If, however, our awareness focuses only on our mental representations, we can forget that these separately named things are also connected in an all-encompassing expanse of Reality. Forgetting this connectedness is most serious when we assume that the "I" who rationally knows things is separate from the things we know. It is a delusion for us to assume that "I am "over here" and the things known by "me" are "over there." I the knower and the things I know are interlaced. So, "here and there," "them and me," are mental discriminations within an overall inclusiveness. In Reality, each of us is an inseparable, ongoing, flowing part of an All-encompassing Every-Thing-Ness. This awareness we can have, not by mental effort, but simply by paying attention.

Here is another clue for describing *Transparent Attention*: If we read or write perceptive poetry, we can notice that the mind can be used to assist consciousness to see past the mind into something deeper. An accomplished poet works with the realization that the reader of the poet's most accurate poems must see for himself or herself the vision that has inspired the poems. Through creating poems, the poet can make contact with the "I Am" of the hearer or reader of the poems. The poems themselves are imperfect vessels of truth, but the "I Am" to "I Am" connection reveals a *brilliancy* of seeing that is beyond knowing in the ordinary sense of acquired knowledge stored in the mind.

The phrase "*interior dialogue*" is useful for indicating the communal quality of *Transparent Attention*. Many voices speak to us. Many writers and personally known persons grab us with vision into our own lives. This inward community of voices have a life of their own speaking to us constantly. And yet this is a solitary experience. These are our community of voices and we have some power to choose who to listen to and who to "cast back into the abyss." Further, in our present solitude, we speak back to these persons. And we can talk with them about what they know about experiencing and living the "I Am" of profound humanness. Though this sea of voices come to us without our consent, we are not their victim. As the facilitator of my inner council of voices, I have considerable power to choose who to talk with and how to talk back to them. I live with a surprisingly large inward company of companions who travel with me into the realization of the "I Am" that we all Are.

This dialogue of *Transparent Attention* sees both the qualities of the "I Am" and our many escapes from those qualities. We can come to be aware of our own unconsciousness and of our resistance to being conscious of being the being that we are. In *Transparent Attention* we can also notice the trustworthiness of Reality and the

futility of our despairing flight from or fight with Reality. Both trust and despair are core topics of Transparent Attention.

Transparent Attention can break through the habits of our personality-controlled mind and manifest as a *state of being* that happens to us from time to time. We can also journey into an enjoyment of *Transparent Attention* as a permanent *station* of the "I Am" that we never need to leave.

Universal Forgiveness

Universal Forgiveness is central to the "I Am" in its relations with memory of the past. Universal Forgiveness is the dawning that the past is past and that everything that happened before is now gone forever as far as the "I Am" is concerned. The "I Am" appears in our conscious lives as a perpetual *fresh start* in which there is no guilt, no shame, no *despair* over the past. Despair is the result of our unwillingness to be the "I Am." Despair is most often a clinging to some aspect of the past, whether pleasant or horrific. Since the "I Am" is an inescapable presence in the living Now, all clinging to the past is doomed to defeat.

When our despair is consciously experienced, it becomes a *doorway*: it is through our specific doorways of despair that we find the *Incomprehensible Peace* of *Universal Forgiveness*. We can allow ourselves to pass through the doorway of despair into a fresh start of living the "I Am" in the Eternal Now. Or we can go on resisting the dawning in our lives of the abiding Truth of Universal Forgiveness. The dawning of Forgiveness is not merely an idea in our heads. It is not just a belief that we have chosen to bet our lives on. It is an experience of Truth. It is the experience that we are being posited in being by an Eternal Power that holds no grudges for our many failures to be our true selves.

We typically power our actions with some supposed truth with which we seek to control the world. Reality defeats us, shows us the limitations of our truth and thereby returns us to a place of forgiveness and potential openness to new truth. This is a return to innocence, a return to a fresh start at being ourselves. The consequences of our wayward living may continue on in history, but our inner being is purified. As the father in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son symbolizes, we, the offspring of Being, are always welcome home to authentic communion within the "I Am" family. Our being away was the only penalty, the only hell, the only despair. Having come home, new clothing is issued, a hug and a kiss is given, a ring is placed on our finger, and a feast is prepared to celebrate our return. This is *Universal Forgiveness*.

Universal Forgiveness is a deep challenge, for to embrace it means embracing it for everyone else as well as ourselves. This ends all blaming and judging of others as a means of rendering ourselves innocent. Innocence ceases to be an accomplishment of our behavior or our thinking. By any criteria we can consider we may be guilty, but in the Eternal Now of fresh start we are innocent as a complete gift from the Way It Is.

The experience of *Universal Forgiveness* can break through our personality habits as a *state of being* that happens to us from time to time. And we can also come to recognize *Universal Forgiveness* as a permanent *station* of the "I Am" that we never need to leave. As a specific *state of being* *Universal Forgiveness* has an "event" quality that includes these three aspects: (1) realizing how forgiveness is needed, (2) seeing the presence of forgiveness, and (3) accepting forgiveness for our particular lives. To live in the continuing *station* of *Universal Forgiveness* means resting in the realization that the quality of the ongoing Now is a continuing fresh start. Such a realization means being open to the future with the certainty that my next deeds, even before they are enacted, are forgiven, however tragically those deeds may work out.

Effortless Letting-Be

Our homecoming to Reality requires nothing of us. It is an *Effortless Letting-Be*. *Effortless Letting-Be* is first of all a surrender to our forgiveness, to our fresh start in the living Now. Accepting such forgiveness entails accepting this same *Universal Forgiveness* for all other humans, however flawed they have become. These companion humans may or may not accept *Universal Forgiveness* for themselves. But if we accept *Universal Forgiveness* for ourselves, we accept it for all other humans. So *Effortless Letting-Be* entails a surrender to the complex human situation in which we live. It entails surrender to being our true being within what is going on in the whole round of our lives. It means a radical honesty in all our relationships with others and with Reality as a whole.

This surrender is a solitary action, and this action includes joining the community of those who are in tune with Reality and are detached from the estranged world. Most of humanity are clinging to the world of temporal things. Those who *Effortlessly Let-Be* are thereby detached from the temporal world. They need not be ascetics; they may be in love with the birds and the rabbits and the wolves and the tigers and the grasses and the trees and sex and children and the blue sky and the even the hurricanes and volcanos. Yes, death and destruction are part of THAT to which *Effortless Letting-Be* is surrendering. Most of humanity are not letting be both the coming to be and the coming not to be. Most of humanity are clinging to something that is being taken away from them, or insisting on something that is not being given to them. Most of humanity are consumed with becoming more secure in wealth, possessions, knowledge, doctrine, love, friends, children, anything that can seem to promote security. Such absolute security does not exist. *Effortless Letting-Be* lets insecurity be.

As all our securities are shaken, we tend to ask, "Who am I?" We can learn that I am not my body, my reputation in society, my parent's child, my accomplishments, my place of residence, my culture, my race, my gender. And I am not my personality, my set of well-established and well-rehearsed pattern of habits. I am not my ego, my self-constructed image of who I think I am. I am a mystery even to myself. I am the enigmatic "I Am" that I am describing in the core chapters of this book. I may experience this mysterious "I Am" as a dreadful challenge or as a fascinating release or as both. If I have been a person habituated to being helpful to others, I may sense some dread in having to give that up. I might be able to assist others to see their choices to be or not to be themselves, but I cannot make those choices for them. In that sense, I am not actually needed by others. I cannot help them be themselves. I am not in *control* in that regard. They are on their own where it matters most. And they cannot help me. I am on my own where it matters most. This may be scary. This may be releasing. It may be both. When I enter into the quality of surrender I am calling "*Effortless Letting-Be*," I am surrendering to being my "I Am" (my True Self). And I am accepting forgiveness for having not been my true "I Am." And since accepting forgiveness for myself means accepting forgiveness for everyone, accepting forgiveness means choosing to live among people many of whom are choosing to continue their despairing attempts to be other than they are. Passionately obsessing in my judging of others has to go, even though judging is a useful tool for living my life.

From time to time "*Effortless Letting-Be*" may break through my busy, striving, helpful, judging, overactive, over-controlling personality and be present as a *state of being* that I enjoy for a while. And I can also come to recognize "*Effortless Letting-Be*" as a permanent *station* of the "I Am" that I never need to leave.

The above three sections have briefly described the three aspects of the "I Am" on the left side of the chart. These are the aspects most related to the past and to memory.

I turn next to the three aspects of the “I Am” on the right side of the chart. These are the aspects most related to the future and to anticipation. I have named them: **Primal Merging, Inherent Purity, and Attuned Working,**

Primal Merging

When we view the “I Am” in its relation to the future, we discover our intentionality, our initiative, our freedom to act *beyond the boundaries of the ego or self image* that we have constructed to tell ourselves who we are and what we can and cannot do. If I am by habit a shy person, I may discover my freedom to risk intruding myself into contact with others. If I am by habit a boisterous person, I may discover my freedom to calm down into being sensitive to others. “*Primal Merging*” is the name I am giving to this intensely solitary aspect of what we often call “freedom.” By “*Primal Merging*” I mean giving up the ego limitations and merging with the larger, more capable, more true-to-reality “I.” The emptiness left by our departure from self-image or ego can naturally fill with a quality we can call “*persistent initiative*” or *Freedom*.

In some religious circles we call this initiative “prayer,” but I am not yet talking about prayer as a religious practice. I am simply describing the appearance in our deep solitude of the *initiative aspect* of the “I Am.” By “initiative” I mean the capacity of the “I Am” to influence the future. Though the “I Am” does not control the future (the future comes to us as a surprise), our profound initiatives do make a difference in what the future turns out to be. It is as if our initiatives mingle with the massive forces beyond our control to form a future that is both a surprise to us and a result of our initiatives. These initiatives can be categorized as many types – four types have dominated the Christian devotions of prayer: (1) confessing our unrealism, (2) giving thanks for life, possibility, and forgiveness, (3) making requests of Reality for our own temporal being and for further realization of being the “I Am,” (4) making requests of Reality for specific others and for the general social conditions that care for whole groups of people. Such initiatives involve more than thoughts in the mind; they are acts of inner choice, and they are proposals for body movement and action in the world. The deep interior acts of *Primal Merging* are intentions to engage. They are internal initiatives that change the course of history.

Such initiatives access the power of the “I Am” – a power that is not an achievement or a possession of the ego or of the personality. The power of initiative is a gift from the Power that posits us in being. Our access of this power is not an accomplishment but a merging, an allowing of our awareness and action to merge with the essential capacity of *Freedom* that characterizes our deep being. This deep initiative is a capacity to create “out of nothing” responses that have no cause except our own initiative. It remains true that many of our responses are automatic actions that derive from our genetics or our social conditioning or personality habits. And we can be frequently surprised about the extent to which some old childhood-developed habit applies itself inappropriately to our present living. But along with all this past-determined behavior something more exists in our living Now: an uncaused initiative that no psychological theory can explain.

Our experience of this profound initiative can break through our personality habits as a *state of being* that happens to us from time to time. And we can also come to recognize this “*Primal Merging*” with our inherent *Freedom* as a permanent *station* of the “I Am” that we never need to leave.

Inherent Purity

Central to the “I Am” in its relations with anticipations of the future is an aspect of the “I Am” that I am calling “*Inherent Purity*.” *Inherent Purity* means the action of the “I

Am" that originates in the clear space of *Freedom*. This aspect of the "I Am" entails living *beyond good and evil* – beyond the stories of the superego that hold all our oughts, duties, customs, and morals; beyond the approval of our parents, offspring, friends and other social peers; beyond all the libraries of ethical thought; beyond all the preferences of our own bodies, minds, and habits. *Inherent Purity* is the pure freedom to act out of the spacious emptiness of the "I Am" with uncaused, unauthorized, unprecedented options of creative response.

This confident purity of action is an *audacious boldness*, a *Freedom* so primordially rooted in our deep being that it shocks our personality habits into a sideline share of our living. This *audacious boldness* uses our personality gifts when appropriate, but will also contradict all personality habits and values without qualms. All impulses to be righteous in terms of superego conditioning are bypassed; a new form of righteousness reigns: *Freedom* itself. That we spend most of our lives squeezing our inherent *Freedom* into some narrow box of morality or social acceptability does not contradict that fact that the deep *audacious boldness* is our true being. That we insist upon being guilty before our social norms rather than alive in an innocent liberty does not contradict the fact that "*beyond good and evil*" characterizes the real "me." In spite of the fact that our parents, our community, our friends, our enemies teach us good and evil, we are each an *audacious boldness* that uses these teachings or leaps beyond these teachings about good and evil. In this context of understanding our deep selves, we can recognize that eating with Adam and Eve from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a fall from authenticity, not a step upward.

Engaging our essential *Freedom* in temporal action is engaging our *Inherent Purity*. Engaging this *Freedom* is the liberation of the true me. But because we cling so tightly to our moral certainties and ethical principles, *Freedom* may seem dreadful. In fact our dread of *Freedom* recurs whenever we wish to feel certain about a particular decision. In the real world all our choices are ambiguous. There are many ways to view each choice. There are many values to consider, and some of them will have to be negated in each specific choice. The boldness of such living is truly audacious. Nevertheless, fear of this *Freedom* can turn to glory in it when we realize that *Freedom* is our *Inherent Purity*, our Righteousness, our Authenticity, our true "me," our "I Am" of profound humanness.

This awesome initiative of *Inherent Purity* can break through our personality habits as a *state of being* that happens to us from time to time. And we can also come to recognize that *Inherent Purity* is a permanent *station* of the "I Am" that we never need to leave.

Attuned Working

When our enigmatic attentionality pays attention to the "I Am" in its relation to the future, we also discover something about the Overall Reality in which the "I Am" is embedded. Reality is not a fixed fate automatically working itself out like a piece of recorded music. Rather, Reality is an "open-to-options" fluidity that can turn out in a large number of different ways, many of which can seem impossible or miraculous to our self-contained personality and ego establishment. It is in this sense that "*Attuned Working*" means living *beyond fate*. It means giving up all fatalism. This does not mean that we create our own reality, as so many false teachers claim. We do indeed create the worlds that our minds believe to be true, but these creations are all human made and therefore illusory in some or all of their components. The effects of these self-created mind-worlds on the actual course of history are unpredictable and typically tragic in some way or another. These self-created mind-worlds always involve some sort of neglect of Reality and thereby yield disappointments so extreme that despair eventually overwhelms the so-called "reality creator." So I am calling this aspect of the

"I Am" not "creating reality" but "*Attuned Working*." The Jesus in John's Gospel says, "My Father is working still, and I am working."¹ I read that to mean *Attuned Working* – working in the context of "what-is-doing" in the overall course of things. *Attuned Working* pays attention to what is going on and then is obedient to that "working," not in some robotic fashion, but as a free being attuned to the real options. Such living can be very powerful; our tiny little actions can instigate an echo from the whole of Reality.

When out of his deep awareness and honesty, Martin Luther nailed some discussion topics on a cathedral door, he could not have imagined the echo Reality would give to his action. It was as if the whole of European history turned on the pivot of this man's persistent working. Some of Luther's responses may not have been well tuned, but he nevertheless rang a bell of *Freedom* that enabled nobles and peasants to break with the stodgy traditions and the oppressive familiarity of that place and era of history. Many of the consequences of Luther's actions were unintended and some may be judged tragic. Nevertheless, his attunement to what was so in his time joined with the existing trends and potentials created an avalanche of historical change. Luther's *Attuned Working* combined with the *Attuned Working* of others set in motion a new era of human living that was less estranged from the deep Truth of our human existing.

In the lives of most of us, *Attuned Working* may not be Luther-level dramatic, but each of us has in our essential being this same potential for *Attuned Working* within the times of our lives. We are manifesting *Attuned Working* when we act out of our sense of how the cultural, political, and economic liberation of women is relevant for all of us in today's world. We are manifesting *Attuned Working* when we act out of our sense the relevance for all of us of the care of the Earth – its climate, its soils, its water ways, its diversity of species, and so forth. Our *Freedom* can manifest as *Attuned Working*, as creative living within the actual challenges of our times. Flight from these challenges is not *Freedom*; it is cowardly compulsion, or greedy obsession, or some other cop-out of estrangement from our real lives.

We may also call this aspect of our essential "I Am" "*Obedient Implementation*," for it involves the application of our intentional power to the historical circumstances within which that intentional power is to be manifest. By "*Implementation*," I am talking about getting things done – a quiet adding of something useful or a march of protest on some sick Jerusalem that may result in a noticeable uproar. Such placements of our bodies may not result in torture or death, but scorn of some sort can be expected as part of the overall drama of any persistent action that is attuned to the actual course of Reality. Illusions are so firmly established in the lives of the multitudes, and especially the lives of most current leaders, that we can expect scorn and surprisingly angry persecution from some members of our well-established "Liars Kingdom."

Attuned Working can break through our personality habits as a *state of being* that happens to us from time to time. And we can also come to realize *Attuned Working* as a permanent *station* of the "I Am" that we never need to leave.

Three more aspects of the "I Am" remain to be described. All three have to do with what many call "Spirit Love," where that term means compassion, loving kindness, and the fire for justice and deep respect for all people. **Autonomous Strength** has to do with the Spirit Love of self. **Out-flowing Compassion** has to do with the Spirit Love of others. And **Enchantment with Being** has to do with Spirit Love for the power that posits us – a love for the Ground of our existence, for Reality, for Being. We can appropriately call this Ground "God" only when the word "God" indicates a state of devotion or love for this Final Ground of all Being.

¹ John 5:17 Revised Standard Version

Autonomous Strength

Autonomous Strength is the exceedingly deep, solitary aspect of the “I Am” that stands between the quality of solitude described as Transparent Attention and the quality of solitude described as Primal Merging. *Autonomous Strength* is the core aspect of solitude. By “*Autonomous*” we mean that we are realizing the solitary dimension of the “I Am,” that we are moving beyond the need for other-directedness of any sort. We see that we have no need for approval from or status among other people. Further, we have no need to be judged in terms of our outward achievements, physical qualities, or mental capabilities. By the term “*Strength*” in this formula, we mean an inward quality of personal invincibility that no outward events can shake.

In the Hindu collection of goddesses, there is a deity named Kali. She is pictured with a two-edged sword and a belt of skulls. She is seen as a goddess of destruction, but when we access her meaning more fully, we understand her as the slayer of all falsehood. When we arrive at the deep places of our autonomous being, we experience the sword of Kali slicing away every self image, every habit of the personality, every identification with the temporal aspects of our being, every hope of avoiding the full impact of our finitude or escaping from it. As all these impediments are slain, we find our true strength. We are Kali. We are the invincible truth of our existence. Nothing whatsoever can touch us or oppose us. We are supported by the Ground of our Being: we are supported in being an unstoppable fire of destruction toward everything that is false, illusory, partial, incomplete, weak, silly, sentimental, or foolish. Swinging the sword of Kali is what it means to have the *courageous heart* of loving our True Selves.

Too often we interpret “love of self” as an indulgence of our present set of understandings, desires, or patterns of living. Such love is the love of a false self; it is a hatred of the true “I Am.” The true “I Am” is an enigma, a mystery, a vastness of potentialities that baffles us and challenges us and scalds us with the hot flames of overwhelming demand to be more than we are comfortable with being. We cannot claim to love ourselves if we flee from this inherent awesomeness of our being – if we flee to some comfortable self-construction of our own making.

This *Autonomous Strength* can break through our personality habits as a *state of being* that happens to us from time to time. And we can also come to realize this quality as a permanent *station* of the “I Am” that we never need to leave.

Enchantment with Being

Enchantment with Being is an aspect of the “I Am” that stands between our *Universal Forgiveness* and our *Inherent Purity*. *Enchantment with Being* also stands between *Autonomous Strength* and *Out-flowing Compassion* as the core quality of Spirit Love. *Enchantment with Being* is the core aspect of the “I Am”; it is an intensification or enrichment for all the other aspects of the “I Am.”

To grasp the poetry in the term “*Enchantment*,” we might recall our relation with our first love partner, a person who captivated our enduring attention day and night. Perhaps we have been enchanted with a community we belonged to, with some work we did, with some place we lived, or with some specific time in our lives. “*Enchantment*” means an intense, unusually intense, attention and intention toward some consuming focus. Our *Enchantment with Being* is the full intensification of enchantment. Being is the quintessence of intensity, so *Enchantment with Being* is also a quintessence of intensity. It is not quite accurate to call this intensification “ecstasy” if “ecstasy” means strong emotional qualities. Experiences of ecstasy may attend our *Enchantment with Being*, but *Enchantment with Being* is more subtle than ecstasy; it is a more enduring experience than moments of intense feeling. I am proposing the poetic phrase “*Joyous Stillness*.” *Enchantment with Being* is also a sort of *Rest*. “Our hearts are

restless until we rest in this Rest" (Augustine). It is the promised land where all is at rest, where abundance flows with milk and honey (or whatever else symbolizes the good fortune of experiencing such a radical completion). Though we may experience *Enchantment with Being as Still and Restful*, it is at the same time the presence of the full intensity of our experience of the "I Am."

It might seem that this intensity or completion is very rare, but this need not be true. *Enchantment with Being* most frequently manifests as a glow within one of the other aspects of the "I Am." Perhaps it is interior dialogue with a glow, forgiveness with a glow, detachment with a glow, initiative with a glow, boldness with a glow, implementation with a glow, courageous heart with a glow, out-flowing compassion with a glow. And by "glow" I mean nothing more than some sort of Awe being occasioned by the enduring Awesomeness of the Wholeness of Reality.

Enchantment with Being may be experienced as a breaking out of our personality habits into a *state of being* that happens to us from time to time. And we can also come to recognize this quality as a permanent *station* of the "I Am" that we never need to leave.

Out-flowing Compassion

Out-flowing Compassion is an aspect of the "I Am" that stands between the quality of other-relatedness I called "*Effortless Letting-Be*" and the quality of other-relatedness I called "*Attuned Working*." *Out-flowing Compassion* is Spirit Love in relation to the outward world of others, the Earth, and the cosmos. "*Out-flowing*" means attention and movement away from our preoccupation with inwardness toward whatever is occurring in our actual encounters with the surrounding processes of Reality. The Strength described as *Autonomous Strength* is now experienced as a power moving toward a boundless affirmation of others. "*Compassion*" means the power to be *with* others in all their joy, fun, pleasure, pain, horror, and despair.

Out-flowing Compassion is the opposite of drawing back into our safe and familiar places of inner experience. *Out-flowing Compassion* means the capacity to be fully present to whomever enters our scope of engagement. This includes both our friends and the enemies of our deepest values and causes. It is as if we have no enemies except the temptation to withdraw into our own greed, contentment, and distraction. *Out-flowing Compassion* does not mean serving our own personality or someone else's personality. It means serving our own and other person's realization of the "I Am" essence of being our True Being. The state of compassion can include feelings of anger and sadness toward the corruption, depravity, and meanness of humanity as well as feelings of hope and joy over the restoration of the "I Am" qualities in others and toward the social manifestations of justice and well being. This state of compassion extends to all the living forms of our planet and to all the cosmic forces that support them. Compassion includes action to change the social structures that care for all humans, all life forms, all processes of the planet.

Out-flowing Compassion is expressed in action, but can also be expressed in inaction, in the mere presence of being compassionate. *Out-flowing Compassion* is a *singular devotion* rooted in our *Enchantment with Being*. It is not a scattered activism or a series of distractions: it is the unifying of our many tasks into one devotion. It is not other-directedness: it flows from our own being, not from the whims of others. But it flows toward others; it does not focus on our own inward qualities. In that sense it is self-forgetful. And this compassion is also an out-flowing attitude toward our own being as part of the whole of Being toward which we are flowing. *Out-flowing Compassion* is the fulfillment of the familiar commandment to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Out-flowing Compassion may be experienced as a breaking out of our personality habits into a *state of being* that happens to us from time to time. And we can also come to realize this quality as a permanent *station* of the "I Am" that we never need to leave.

The Implications of “I Am” Description for Interreligious Dialogue

The “I Am” is an inexhaustible actuality, describable in many different religious languages and perpetually filling libraries with books and talks on these many related topics. Dialogue among the adherents of the various long-standing religious traditions can enrich our “I Am” awareness. We have already indicated how Hindu antiquity explored the “I Am” with the Atman concept. Buddhism has used the concept “no self” to make clear that the “I Am” is an empty space beyond self image and personality habits. Christianity explores the “I Am” through the concept of “Holy Spirit” and its various subcategories – trust, love, freedom, the peace that is beyond understanding, the joy unspeakable, the hope that does not disappoint. Holy Spirit is sometime likened to the breath of Eternity, a wind that comes from we know not whence and carries us forth to we know not whither. Such Holy Spirit is a death into the Buddhist “no-self” as well as a resurrection into the Hindu Atman invincibility. However, we choose to make these comparisons, most, if not all, long-standing religions include explorations into the various aspects of the “I Am.”

All the long-standing religious heritages require fresh clarity on the “I Am” in order for the greatness of these traditions to be rediscovered and translated for our times. A focus on the enduring qualities of the “I Am” is key for fruitful interreligious dialogue. Interreligious dialogue will flourish if it is about the “I Am,” rather than about beliefs or moralities. As each heritage witnesses to its experience of the “I Am,” it can enrich the other heritages. Such dialogue can be conducted with interest, curiosity, and respect. When the emphasis is on beliefs or moralities, the result is most often some sort of misunderstanding, disrespect, or even warfare.

The phrase, “That is just your belief” is too often heard in conversations between religious persons or between religious and “secular” adherents. Such a phrase needs to be understood as a statement of disrespect. Interreligious dialogue is not about beliefs, it is about my witness to the “I Am” and your witness to the “I Am.” I respect your witness by simply hearing it and then by looking within my own “I Am” to see if your witness points to something that is also true for me. We may have some disagreements about the “I Am” and about how to best talk about it, but such disagreements need not mean disrespect. These disagreements can be received as challenges to each other to look deeper and think more clearly, and poeticize more powerfully about what we each see to be the reality of the “I Am” that we each experience from within our own unique journey.

Such interreligious dialogue leads us to understand that the social process we call “religion” has originated in every human society because religious practices are needed to help us access the “I Am” and give form to living the “I Am” life. Religions can be viewed in all their arbitrary, historical development as manifestations of a social process among all the other social processes: education, life style, economics, politics, etc. And at the same time, religion can be seen in its capacity to point beyond itself to the essential “I Am” which is true for every human being. It has been said that music is a language understood by all cultures. The same can be said of religion, if religion is rescued from its preoccupation with divisive beliefs and unbending moralities and restored to its true function, assisting us to access the “I Am.”

In Part Four I will explore further the nature and function of religion – how healthy religion is an expression of and an inquiry into the unfathomable “I Am” as well as an inquiry into useful methods for the full realization of the “I Am” in the living of our lives. But first, I will include two more chapters on the enigma of Wonder. I will describe in Chapter 15 nine habits of escape from the “I Am” that parallel the nine aspects of the “I Am” described in this chapter. Then in Chapter 16 I will describe how humans typically journey from these states of escape to their home base in this “I Am” of essential or profound humanness.