



Excerpts from

Personal Freedom

On finding your way to the real world

Book by Arthur J, Deikman, M.D

PERSONAL FREEDOM

ON FINDING YOUR WAY TO THE REAL WORLD

In *Personal Freedom* Dr. Arthur Deikman shows us a key to unlocking the door of this invisible prison of ideas that has enclosed us since birth. We deceive ourselves, he demonstrates, by taking our identities from the people around us instead of looking closely at what we actually are. With a lyrical yet scientific approach he enables us to see the possibility of freedom and to take steps to make that freedom our own.

“You are the lever you can use that no one else possesses”. Dr. Deikman writes, “And your place is occupied by you alone. What place is yours? Where and how will your energy flow when you set it free? Your real life is there awaiting you”.

Below is the extract from the book that we would like to share with you.

WHO ARE THE REALISTS?

Something is wrong. I've noticed it for a long time, as if there is something odd or unreal about the world. Most of the time I'm busy with what I'm doing and don't notice, but, sooner or later, that persistent nagging awareness emerges again, telling me that something is peculiar about my view of things, and everyone else's, too.

I don't mean that the world seems to be collapsing — starvation, atomic bombs, pollution — it isn't just those things, drastic as they may be. There is something still more basically wrong. It's as if you went to the movies and there was something odd about the projector or something strange about the camera that was used to take the movies in the first place. The images themselves seem normal, but the way it is put together is out of sequence, or taken at different speeds or the perspective keeps changing. That's what I mean. There is something basically wrong with the structure of the world — as we have been taught to see it — but you might not notice it for a long while. It's not until you really examine your experience that you catch sight of the peculiarities. It just isn't the way you've been told. Let me give you an example:

Time makes no sense. It really doesn't apply to me; it doesn't fit. My hair gets thin and I can't stay up all night the way I used to. But I don't change. At my center I'm transparent; I am looking out a window at everything that passes by. Time passes (I observe) and I will die (I am told), but these things don't fit that clear place where I am. Isn't that your experience, too? You get older and everyone around you gets older and you see your birthdays clicking away like numbers on a gasoline pump, but I'll bet there is something inside of you that doesn't feel it is changing at all; inside you're like some kind of mirror, reflecting everything without absorbing it. The mirror doesn't change. You watch time pass, and perhaps believe it when people tell you that you'll die — but it really doesn't fit that clear place inside. Time fits my body and the world I see, but it doesn't fit me.



Or consider it from another angle: Time flows like a river, it would seem. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow seem like a road stretching far behind and far ahead. Yet outside my window is an actual road, and on that road any place seems the same as ten feet ahead or ten feet behind — but it's not that way with Time. Ten seconds past and ten seconds ahead is nothingness, just smoke, whereas, *Now*; this moment, where I am, is clear and bright. On either side in Time, there's nothing similar to *Now*, only memories (the past) or imaginings (the future). The place you were ten seconds ago has vanished, and what is the place ten seconds ahead? There is nothing there. It's very odd. Doesn't it strike you, now that you notice that something is wrong? The "road of Time" is a thought — and the thought doesn't fit.

You have been told that you are fundamentally alone. "We enter the world alone and we exit alone," and so forth. It is just you, confronting the universe. And what is the nature of the universe? Our scientific "realists" tell us it is a fascinating, orderly biochemical machine composed of electrical charges, but meaningless, purposeless, and indifferent. So — you are alone in an indifferent world. You are a highly sophisticated "bio-computer" in a highly sophisticated "hyperspace." Congratulations!

But is that your actual experience? Remember those times you were touched by something impalpable emanating from that "outside" realm of people and things. Music, nature, sports, prayer, sex, insight, drugs, encounter, friendship, or love — a moment when you felt connected, merging, exalted. I'm talking about those special times when you felt a joyous reverence and gratitude and mystery and recognition, at finding yourself, once again, at that place. Of course, you can "explain" it and nothing need change. The mechanical puppet called the cosmos can clank along forever: just tell yourself that those experiences, "mystical" or otherwise, are the infantile derivatives of wishes, fears, and early memories. It's simple. But is that what they feel like? Talk to children and see if they experience such things. Consider carefully whether those special moments really fit the vapid formula: "Infantile derivatives." Isn't that explanation something you have swallowed, force-fed, like an infant, indeed, but have never been able to digest? It's indigestible because it doesn't fit, that's why. It's another swindle, like Time.

You are told you are basically alone — in empty space. Yet, when you love, are you alone? When you look, unguarded, into another's eyes, clear place to clear place, are you alone? When you wholeheartedly engage in work or play, are you alone? There is only one way to be alone: by *thinking* about it. The thought creates the aloneness; the concept is the problem. "Aloneness" does not fit experience.

When mathematics and chemistry define your world, it has no meaning; the world dries up. But, for *you*, as you walk the streets, engage others, live your life, your world is charged with meaning, filled with purposes, conflicted or aligned at every level. Do the words "random" and "meaningless" really fit what you *feel*, what you experience, moment by moment — or are they something you have been told, something you now *think*?

LET'S GO A STEP FURTHER: WHO OR WHAT ARE YOU?

If I ask myself that question and take a look to see, it's very curious indeed. I thought that *I* was happy, that *I* was thinking, that *I* was seeing, but when I pause and look within me, it seems as if I've been looking out a window at "my" feelings, at "my" sensations, and at "my" thoughts — such as this one. If I'm looking at them, how can they be *me*? There is some kind of awareness, something basic that observes everything, and, although I usually don't notice because it is drowned out by all the noise, it's



always there. If I turn back to find myself, look forward to the deepest, the very heart of me where I actually live, that awareness is me. It seems to have been there always, just as it is, while everything else changes. Try an experiment, right now. Close your eyes and ask yourself if you have disappeared. What's your answer? Now, cover your ears so sounds are absent — have you disappeared?

No matter what part of the world or your thoughts or your feelings you make go away, *you* stay there. Now, what is that you? That's what I'm talking about — that place. And, in fact, it's not even a place, it's you. That's what you are and that's what I am. Until I ask that question, I'm a psychiatrist, a male, a husband, Arthur Deikman. But when I ask that question and look to see, I'm that window, that lookout, that awareness. It isn't just a theory; it's what my experience actually is and yours, too. It's really very obvious, but you were told nothing about it through all your years of school. The most basic factor of your existence, the one thing you experience indisputably, your own aware self, is never mentioned. Everything else is: the everything else, that is, not you.

Let's look at the wisdom you've been taught, your guidebook to the human condition:

Sample 1: Satisfaction doesn't last. We're used to that principle and accept it, but isn't that a strange arrangement? You work for a goal that evaporates when it's in your hand. "True, so true, that's the way life is . . ." What an odd life!

Sample 2: Nothing's perfect — particularly you. Everything's flawed, everything's a little off. How come? It's not so obvious that life must be defective. Would you have constructed it that way? No. So why would God? It doesn't make sense.

You see, you've been taught that that's the way everything is. You're even annoyed that I bother you about it. But stop; consider what you've been taught: time, aloneness, dissatisfaction, imperfection, identity; are they really logical? Are they facts? Are they "realistic" or have you been swindled, conned so well that it feels like home to you? It's almost funny! You thought you were being mature, adult, strong, looking life straight in the eye, hardly flinching. Maybe you've been duped. Maybe you've been living in a crazy house all this time.

Let's look around. (Perhaps there's a door.) Let's be curious and ask, "How did I learn about reality? Who are the realists?"

DEPENDENCY

IT is so often hidden and has so occupied our perception that we are not aware of how tyrannically it binds our lives. What we are told is dependency is a caricature: the man or woman still tied to the mother's apron strings or dominated by a spouse. Dependency is more subtle and disguised than that: it is just the wish to have parents.

Dependency is a fantasy. In that fantasy, parents know what you should do; they give you what you want and what you need. They are powerful. With their power, parents can control what you cannot: love, anger, and fear; sickness, age, and death. They give attention and esteem and love you no matter what you do. They make no demands—except submission. Parents will provide if you bend your knee. In



dependency, tyranny is sought, not overthrown; for the more tyranny, the more comfort in the parents' power.

Who are the parents of our adult years? Anyone will do. Husband, Wife, Son, Daughter, Boss, America, city hall, Neighbors, Policeman, The Company, The Bar, Doctor, Lawyer, Senator, Judge or The President of the United States of America. We all kneel.

Dependency is a disease, an insidious fantasy of protective power looking down, guarding you, judging you, rewarding you, punishing you. The disease has symptoms: helplessness, envy, vanity, jealousy, and admiration; blaming, exploitation, and reproach. "You're supposed to love me no matter what I do, for I've done my part [submission, feeling small and frightened], now you do yours!" Consider the justified anger, the sweet despair, the mournful longing, and the upward gaze, or the sullen pout that says, "I can't do it, I have no choice. You're supposed to do it, so give me what I need!" And when the fantasy seems true, when parents play their role just right, you're "blissed-out" with "God" or "life" or anything at all.

Perhaps you thought you left all that behind you when you left your home for college, job, or marriage. Not likely. Remember the moment when you said good-bye? You didn't really. Let me sketch the scene as, psychologically, it really was--and still may be, now.

The local band is playing outside, children, dogs and the ice-cream man, noisy in the street. The whole neighborhood is gathered, cheering with a banner: "Good luck to you! Come back and see us some time!"

Inside the house, the moment has come. Mother and Father are standing there, tearful and proud. The suitcases are packed and ready by the door. The rest of the family gathers around. You kiss them all and shake their hands, embrace Mom and Dad one last time. The band strikes up the final number, you pick up your bags, open the door, and then march--round and round the living room!

The band is gone, the street is quiet. Mom and Dad have gone to bed. But chances are, you are still there, marching around the living room or your childhood home.

It's very difficult to leave--and yet we must. Dependency is so commercial; it's nothing but transactions from morning to night; Security agreements, Barter, Bribes, Threats, Manipulation and Maneuvers of a hundred kinds. And all that accounting and the double set of books, the strong-arm squad collecting debts, for in dependency the parents can't say no, they must pay up, there is no dropping out of the parent game. Your own task is clear: bind the parent person and lock the door. Once you've got the parent caught, he or she must be fed; he must be satisfied to play the game. Yet it isn't that easy to detect his needs, to give him what he wants so you'll get yours. You must be good at watchfulness and care, with one eye guarding the inner road on which your energy may flow. Guard that road, for the unrestricted outflow of your own-self may take a form unpleasing to the Big One. You see, it's not an easy business, living in dependency. It costs a lot.

Then are you never to be cared for? Are you never to relax, let go; in the arms or lover, friend (or the world itself), feeling cared for, at peace? Of course you can, such letting go needs no fantasy and no parent--only trust: trust in yourself, that your need will end, that you will want to work again and care for others, that your emptiness can be filled; trust in others, that they receive in the act of giving, that they need you to need them. It is an inward process through which you turn to others, as they are, to receive that which you must have. You do not need parents now, and you do not have them (as you had



them then, or wanted them to be). To resurrect parents requires fantasy, and the price of fantasy is high.

You pay with fear. Pretending you are helpless, imagining you are small, feeling needy for protection, you scare yourself. It's part of the game, to be afraid. And having summoned parents, you become more fearful, for you harbor treason: wishes for the parents' power, anger at the parents' needs, resentment of the role of humbleness you must adopt. The treason is concealed but it poisons trust, creating loneliness.

You pay with greed. The child is needy, and feeling needy, in want of something from outside, how reasonable to seek possessions, love and power, money, sex and food. But the fantasy of needfulness turns pleasure into possession and power into tyranny. The acquisitions are symbolic: A millionaire will seek more millions, beyond consumption, for the emptiness will not be filled and the desire for security is not appeased. That hunger can consume the world, yet the appetite stays sharp. So your greed whips you on: to acquire clothes for vanity, thus building loneliness; to acquire homes for grandeur, in which you feel smaller.

You pay with vanity. You must be special and attractive in your body or your mind to catch the eye and hold the person who must save you. It's competition to the death, to win the prize from all the others. Fame entices in the hope that all-out war will capture entire populations of providers. And if you win, the people crowding towards you have dead eyes; they are blind, grasping, dependent, and self-centered. Throwing their own ropes of fantasy, they tie you to the book, performance, reputation--whatever object you have created. You have summoned angels to provide and find yourself with vampires that feed their own vanity by possessing you. In consolation, they leave piles of money on the floor. You gather it up thinking money means more pleasure, except that pleasure done too often fades away; and so you find, instead, the death of pleasure.

It is as if we saw the enormous animals of sickness, age, and death roaming wild across our land. Grasping power and fame like a bit and bridle in our sweating hands, we go chasing madly to fit them over the terrifying muzzles. But the animals are too big; they cannot be controlled. Sickness, age, and death tower over us, gigantic, while we scurry on hands and knees to harness their shadows.

So the house becomes emptier than when you began. That emptiness is born of your abstractions, and the fantasy of emptiness engenders fear. Fear drives you to the Future, and the satisfaction of the Now recedes and further disappears. Rising in its place are more abstractions, more desires, jealousies, envy, more vanity--more hungry ghosts rioting in the shadowy house within which you march around the deserted living room.

Dependency exacts a further price: it murders creativity. Creative action plays with the unknown. But as the child fears the dark, full of big dogs and mental monsters formed from fantasies, the adult child will be fearful, too, faced with the dark world of the unknown mind, with vast concepts looming enormous just beyond the front yard. Peering out, he sees no parents in the darkness of that land where he has never been. The unknown is uncontrolled--no strategies exist that will enclose the endless territory of the new. Only trust in yourself and in this world can carry you past the watchdogs of your fears and out of the iron gates of the already-known. Dependency locks you in, secure.

In order to create, you must move forward into what you cannot see and urge it into being. You cannot do that in submission, doing what you're told--nor, in rebellion, not doing what you're told. In both, the



focus is the same: turned back to 'Them'. To be dependent, you stay a child. To stay a child, you stop reality's forward motion, roll back to a past time and freeze it there, preserved forever. It's "transference," the reliving of the past in the midst of the present, the casting of all newcomers into the roles of the dead. Time stands still, stagnant. When transference is finally given up, a person mourns the departing ghosts, who slip back into their proper graves, leaving that person "alone"--in the world--Now. But while the wax museum holds sway, nothing new can enter. Information needed for creation is made to pass a censor, whose job is preservation. Thus the past is reinforced to keep 'Now' from flowing, for the flow will carry your parents away.

So to keep a fantasy, do not peer too closely at the world; fuzzy vision suits you best. Your creative power, turned away, is aimed inside to juggle fantasies, to solve the problems of a child's intrigue. Thus, "What am I? Who am I?" the cardinal questions of our life are never asked. These guiding questions direct creation in a thousand cultures; they are the points by which we navigate our voyage, carrying us as far as we will leave the land. They do not orient our lives in dependency. Aborted in its course, the creative thrust misses the world.

Dependency kills us, for it is the unknown that gives us life. The unknown flowers when we are receptive to it, allowing it to enter. The unknown carries us to the constantly forming edge of the world where light, beauty, and ecstasy are found. There is no other path to the spiritual, to the creative, to reality.

Arthur J, Deikman, M.D. has done groundbreaking work in the scientific study of meditation and the mystical experience. His years of research in this area resulted in numerous scientific papers and three books: "Personal Freedom" (1976), "The Observing Self-Mysticism and Psychotherapy"(1982), and "The Wrong Way Home: Uncovering the Patterns of Cult Behavior in American Society" (1990).

These works reflect a modern perspective on spirituality based on developmental, psychodynamic, and cognitive psychologies- informed by personal experience with the Zen Buddhist and Sufic traditions. Dr. Deikman was a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco, where he combined teaching, research and private practice he was a member of the editorial board of the 'Journal of Humanistic Psychology' and 'Human Givens'. He was also a contributor to 'The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease'. He passed away in 2013

