

CONCEPT AND POEM: INSIDE and OUTSIDE

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We are used to thinking that our mind is within our skull and that our inner life is inside and the external world is outside. One of the first things one learns in esoteric studies and knowledge is that that actual truth is just the reverse. What we call 'outside' or external is within, and what we call "in" is actually outside and surrounding any "thing." Just as sugar or salt forms its crystal within itself from the surrounding fluid, so does external day-to-day reality form within the atmosphere of our surrounding mind. The same type of logic holds true when we inquire where life began.

The problem with finding when anything began (like the beginning of the world) is that life is cyclic, not linear. It is tempting to conceive of history as one long line of time, but time too is cyclic. Every moment is one part or one phase of a cycle and cycles repeat themselves, endlessly, or else they don't exist. Heartbeats and breathing are cycles. Every cycle repeats itself endlessly or it ceases to exist, so there are only endless beginnings and beginning-less endings. Time is thus endless and beginning-less, just as no section or degree of a circle or cycle is more or less important than another. All are essential, and each one can be and is both the beginning and the end.

The present moment "now" is the end of all that has come before now. 'Now' is also the beginning of all that will come in the future. Therefore, the present moment "Now" is both the beginning and the end. Every moment is a 'now', the result of all the past and the key or only way to all the future. Flipping the conventional concept can be confusing, but is well worth thinking through. Here is a little poem I wrote about this idea some forty years ago.

In or Out

'In' is not within the 'out',
And 'out' without the 'in'.
No, 'in' is without the 'out',
And 'out' within the 'in'.

Michael Erlewine
Sept. 29, 1970

