

Excerpted from

***How the World Can Be the Way It Is:  
An Inquiry for the New Millennium Into Science, Philosophy and Perception***

by Steve Hagen,  
published September 1995, by Quest Books.

***Merging with Your Object***

We must see, when we pick up any object of consciousness, whether it be mental or physical, that the “rest of all that exists”—i.e., Totality, Wholeness—must enter into the picture. As long as we operate with discriminating consciousness and see ourselves only as a fragment—a part of Reality which is divided off and intrinsically separate from everything else—we can know only uncertainty, fear, and the misery of that hollow, empty feeling of utter meaninglessness. It need not be this way for us.

I cannot give you the direct experience of *knowing* that aspect which remains hidden from our common-sense consciousness. I can, however, give an example that may remind you of this hidden aspect of consciousness as it works in our everyday life. Let me tell you about my mother and lefse. (Lefse, for those of you who don't know, is a kind of Norwegian pancake or bread made from potatoes, cream, flour, butter and sugar.)

Like all real boundaries, the boundary between my mother and lefse is infinitely complex. I witnessed this complexity years ago as a child, though at the time I did not realize just what it was that I had witnessed. The occasion was when my eldest brother and his wife, newly married and inexperienced in the kitchen, tried to make lefse on their own. Once they had put all the ingredients together, they discovered that they could not work with the dough. When they tried to roll it out it would stick to the board. When they tried to pick it up it would fall apart. They thought they had ruined it and were about to throw it out when, in desperation, they put in a distress call to Mom. I went along to see if I could be of any help. I had a major interest in lefse in those days.

My mother appeared on the scene like a midwife approaching a distraught husband. Rolling up her sleeves and taking a sure command, she went to the huge lump of dough rising from the large mixing bowl in the center of the table. I can still see her as she put her hands upon that mound and in a soft but certain tone she said, “Oh, it's just

about right.” Giving us a nod and a smile, it was clear that this baby would be spared. Quickly she dispatched her orders. It needed just a little more of this, and just another touch of that—and in seconds she was rolling out lefse and frying them up. Lefse appeared one after another, until soon the stacks were piling up under steaming cloths.

My mother’s boundary was intimately connected with that of the lefse. The two merged, while nevertheless remaining separate. In fact, many things came together in that moment—not just my mother and the lefse. The dough had to be there, obviously. And though it was “just about right,” my mother had to be there as well or there would have been no lefse. With my mother came the know-how—which, in turn, revealed that many other, previous and unseen events were also entangled in this happening of my mother making lefse. And within the dough were those who produced the ingredients, and who trucked them to market. Within that dough were entangled the potato plant, and last year’s harvest.

Yet all the while these countless hidden things came together in this event, it was nevertheless quite evident which was my mother and which was the lefse.

There’s nothing mystical about what I’m trying to point to here. It’s not a poetic metaphor or a Zen-like analogy. It’s a simple, concrete example of that “other” aspect which must be accounted for if we would avoid contradictions. It’s an example of someone actually becoming merged in an exchange of identity with her object.