

FOREWORD

During my search, I have been honored to engage in dialogue with some of the most daring, inspiring and insightful "paradigm pioneers" of our time: in medicine, science, psychology, business, religion/spirituality, and human potential. This change is accompanied by a shift in world view the basic picture we carry with us of "the way things are." A world view seeks to answer two fundamental questions, "Who are we?" and "What is the nature of the Universe in which we live?" Our answers to these questions dictate the quality and characteristics of our personal relationships with family, friends and employers/employees. Stan Grof, in his research of non-ordinary states of consciousness, summarizes by saying "the psyche and consciousness of each of us is, in the last analysis, commensurate with "All-That-Is" because there are no absolute boundaries between the body/ego and the totality of existence." Dr. Larry Dossey's Era-3 medicine, where the thoughts, attitudes, and healing intentions of one individual can influence the physiology of another person (in contrast to Era-2, prevailing mind-body medicine) is very well supported by scientific studies into the healing power of prayer. So contrary to what those who pledge their allegiance to the traditional paradigm might think, the influential, pioneering individuals I spoke with felt that we have not reached the pinnacle of human development, we are connected, rather than separate, from all of life, and that the full spectrum of consciousness encompasses both physical and a multitude of nonphysical dimensions of reality.

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The Power of Now

THE ORIGIN OF THIS BOOK I have little use for the past and rarely think about it; however, I would briefly like to tell you how I came to be a spiritual teacher and how this book came into existence. Until my thirtieth year, I lived in a state of almost continuous anxiety interspersed with periods of suicidal depression. One night not long after my twenty-ninth birthday, I woke up in the early hours with a feeling of absolute dread. I had woken up with such a feeling many times before, but this time it was more intense than it had ever been. The silence of the night, the vague outlines of the furniture in the dark room, the distant noise of a passing train everything felt so alien, so hostile, and so utterly meaningless that it created in me a deep loathing of the world. I could feel that a deep longing for annihilation, for nonexistence, was now becoming much stronger than the instinctive desire to continue to live. If I cannot live with myself, there must be two of me: the 'I' and the 'self' that 'I' cannot live with. "Maybe," I thought, "only one of them is real." I heard the words "resist nothing," as if spoken inside my chest. Yes, if a diamond could make a sound, this is what it would be like. Without any thought, I felt, I knew, that there is infinitely more to light than we realize. I recognized the room, and yet I knew that I had never truly seen it before. That day I walked around the city in utter amazement at the miracle of life on earth, as if I had just been born into this world. For the next few months, I lived in a state of uninterrupted deep peace and bliss. After that, it diminished somewhat in intensity, or perhaps it just seemed to because it became my natural state. I could still function in the world, although I realized that nothing I ever did could possibly add anything to what I already had. I knew, of course, that something profoundly significant had happened to me, but I didn't understand it at all. It wasn't until several years later, after I had read spiritual texts and spent time with spiritual teachers, that I realized that what everybody was looking for had already happened to me. I understood that the intense pressure of suffering that night must have forced my consciousness to withdraw from its identification with the unhappy and deeply fearful self, which is ultimately a creation of the mind. This withdrawal must have been so complete that this false, suffering self immediately collapsed, just as if a plug had been pulled out of an inflatable toy. A time came when, for a while, I was left with nothing on the physical plane. More fundamental, perhaps, than any experience is the undercurrent of peace that has never left me since then. Sometimes it is very strong, almost palpable, and others can feel it too. Later, people would occasionally come up to me and say: "I want what you have. Can you give it to me, or show me how to get it?" And I would say: "You have it already."

THE TRUTH THAT IS WITHIN YOU

This book represents the essence of my work, as far as it can be conveyed in words, with individuals and small groups of spiritual seekers during the past ten years, in Europe and in North America. In deep love and appreciation, I would like to thank those exceptional people for their courage, their willingness to embrace inner change, thought that kept repeating itself in my mind. If I cannot live with myself, there must be two of me: the 'I' and the 'self' that 'I' cannot live with. ? Maybe, I thought, ?only one of them is real.? their challenging questions, and their readiness to listen. I also hope that it will reach many others who will find its content worthy of consideration, although they may not be ready to fully live or practice it. It is possible that at a later time, the seed that was sown when reading this book will merge with the seed of enlightenment that each human being carries within, and suddenly that seed will sprout and come alive within them. The book in its present form originated, often spontaneously, in response to questions asked by individuals in seminars, meditation classes and private counseling sessions, and so I have kept the question-and-answer format. Others are generic, which is to say I combined certain types of questions that were frequently asked into one, and extracted the essence from different answers to form one generic answer. Such knowledge is vital, for unless you learn to recognize the false as false as not you there can be no lasting transformation, and you would always end up being drawn back into illusion and into some form of pain. On this level of the book, the words are not always concerned with information, but often designed to draw you into this new consciousness as you read. As soon as you do, however, I believe you will realize that they contain a great deal of spiritual power, and they may become for you the most rewarding parts of the book. Moreover, since every person carries the seed of enlightenment within, I often address myself to the knower in you who dwells behind the thinker, the deeper self that immediately recognizes spiritual truth, resonates with it, and gains strength from it. The pause symbol ¶ after certain passages is a suggestion that you may want to stop reading for a moment, become still, and feel and experience the truth of what has just been said. As you begin reading the book, the meaning of certain words, such as ?Being? or ?presence,? may not be entirely clear to you at first. They will probably be answered later in the book, or they may turn out to be irrelevant as you go more deeply into the teaching and into yourself. The mind always wants to categorize and compare, but this book will work better for you if you do not attempt to compare its terminology with that of other teachings; otherwise, you will probably become confused. I use words such as ?mind,? ?happiness,? and ?consciousness? in ways that do not necessarily correlate with other teachings. When I occasionally quote the words of Jesus or the Buddha, from A Course in Miracles or from other teachings, I do so not in order to compare, but to draw your attention to the fact that in essence there is and always has been only one spiritual teaching, although it comes in many forms. Some of these forms, such as the ancient religions, have become so overlaid with extraneous matter that their spiritual essence has become almost completely obscured by it. When I quote from the ancient religions or other teachings, it is to reveal their deeper meaning and thereby restore their transformative power particularly for those readers who are followers of these religions or teachings. This book can be seen as a restatement for our time of that one timeless spiritual teaching, the essence of all religions. I speak from inner experience, and if at times I speak forcefully, it is to cut through heavy layers of mental resistance and to reach that place within you where you already know, just as I know, and where the truth is recognized when it is heard. There is then a feeling of exaltation and heightened aliveness, as something within you says: ?Yes.

THE GREATEST OBSTACLE TO ENLIGHTENMENT

"Spare some change?" mumbled the beggar, mechanically holding out his old baseball cap. "I have nothing to give you," said the stranger. "Nothing," replied the beggar. There's nothing in there." "Have a look inside," insisted the stranger. The word enlightenment conjures up the idea of some superhuman accomplishment, and the ego likes to keep it that way, but it is simply your natural state of felt oneness with Being. I love the Buddha's simple definition of enlightenment as "the end of suffering." There is nothing superhuman in that, is there? He uses a negative definition so that the mind cannot make it into something to believe in or into a superhuman accomplishment, a goal that is impossible for you to attain. By misuse, I mean that people who have never even glimpsed the realm of the sacred, the infinite vastness behind that word, use it with great conviction, as if they knew what they are talking about. This misuse gives rise to absurd beliefs, assertions, and egoic delusions, such as "My or our God is the only true God, and your God is false," or Nietzsche's famous statement "God is dead." The word God has become a closed concept. The moment the word is uttered, a mental image is created, no longer, perhaps, of an old man with a white beard, but still a mental representation of someone or something outside you, and, yes, almost inevitably a male someone or something. Not to be able to stop thinking is a dreadful affliction, but we don't realize this because almost everybody is suffering from it, so it is considered normal. The philosopher Descartes believed that he had found the most fundamental truth when he made his famous statement: "I think, therefore I am." He had, in fact, given expression to the most basic error, to equate thinking with Being and identity with thinking. The compulsive thinker, which means almost everyone, lives in a state of apparent separateness, in an insanely complex world of continuous problems and conflict, a world that reflects the ever-increasing fragmentation of the mind. Enlightenment is a state of wholeness, of being "at one" and therefore at peace. Identification with your mind creates an opaque screen of concepts, labels, images, words, judgments, and definitions that blocks all true relationship. It is this screen of thought that creates the illusion of separateness, the illusion that there is you and a totally separate "other." You then forget the essential fact that, underneath the level of physical appearances and separate forms, you are one with all that is. By "forget," I mean that you can no longer feel this oneness as self-evident reality. It is true that I do a lot of aimless thinking, like most people, but I can still choose to use my mind to get and accomplish things, and I do that all the time.

FREEING YOURSELF FROM YOUR MIND

When someone goes to the doctor and says, "I hear a voice in my head," he or she will most likely be sent to a psychiatrist. The fact is that, in a very similar way, virtually everyone hears a voice, or several voices, in their head all the time: the involuntary thought processes that you don't realize you have the power to stop. Well, that's not much different from what you and all other "normal" people do, except that you don't do it out loud. Sometimes this soundtrack is accompanied by visual images or "mental movies." Even if the voice is relevant to the situation at hand, it will interpret it in terms of the past. This is because the voice belongs to your conditioned mind, which is the result of all your past history as well as of the collective cultural mind-set you inherited. Pay particular attention to any repetitive thought patterns, those old gramophone records that have been playing in your head perhaps for many years. This is what I mean by "watching the thinker," which is another way of saying: listen to the voice in your head, be there as the witnessing presence. You'll soon realize: there is the voice, and here I am listening to it, watching it. As you listen to the thought, you feel a conscious presence your deeper self behind or underneath the thought, as it were. When a thought subsides, you experience a discontinuity in the mental stream a gap of "no-mind." At first, the gaps will be short, a few seconds perhaps, but gradually they will become longer. As you go more deeply into this realm of no-mind, as it is sometimes called in the East, you realize the state of pure consciousness. In that state, you feel your own presence with such intensity and such joy that all thinking, all emotions, your physical body, as well as the whole external world become relatively insignificant in comparison to it. ▫ Instead of "watching the thinker," you can also create a gap in the mind stream simply by directing the focus of your attention into the Now. In this way, you draw consciousness away from mind activity and create a gap of no-mind in which you are highly alert and aware but not thinking. In your everyday life, you can practice this by taking any routine activity that normally is only a means to an end and giving it your fullest attention, so that it becomes an end in itself. For example, every time you walk up and down the stairs in your house or place of work, pay close attention to every step, every movement, even your breathing. Or when you wash your hands, pay attention to all the sense perceptions associated with the activity: the sound and feel of the water, the movement of your hands, the scent of the soap, and so on. Every time you create a gap in the stream of mind, the light of your consciousness grows stronger. One day you may catch yourself smiling at the voice in your head, as you would smile at the antics of a child. This means that you no longer take the content of your mind all that seriously, as your sense of self does not depend on it.

ENLIGHTENMENT: RISING ABOVE THOUGHT

The term ego means different things to different people, but when I use it here it means a false self, created by unconscious identification with the mind. I wouldn't mind learning to think more clearly, in a more focused way, but I don't want to lose my mind. In the enlightened state, you still use your thinking mind when needed, but in a much more focused and effective way than before. When you do use your mind, and particularly when a creative solution is needed, you oscillate every few minutes or so between thought and stillness, between mind and no- mind. The surprising result of a nation- wide inquiry among America's most eminent mathematicians, including Einstein, to find out their working methods, was that thinking plays only a subordinate part in the brief, decisive phase of the creative act itself. So I would say that the simple reason why the majority of scientists are not creative is not because they don't know how to think but because they don't know how to stop thinking! It wasn't through the mind, through thinking, that the miracle that is life on earth or your body were created and are being sustained.

EMOTION: THE BODY'S REACTION TO YOUR MIND

Of course, you are not usually conscious of all your thought patterns, and it is often only through watching your emotions that you can bring them into awareness. If you have difficulty feeling your emotions, start by focusing attention on the inner energy field of your body. But sometimes there is a conflict between the two: the mind says "no" while the emotion says "yes," or the other way around. If you really want to know your mind, the body will always give you a truthful reflection, so look at the emotion or rather feel it in your body. You may not yet be able to bring your unconscious mind activity into awareness as thoughts, but it will always be reflected in the body as an emotion, and of this you can become aware. ✧ An emotion usually represents an amplified and energized thought pattern, and because of its often overpowering energetic charge, it is not easy initially to stay present enough to be able to watch it. If you are pulled into unconscious identification with the emotion through lack of presence, which is normal, the emotion temporarily becomes "you." Often a vicious circle builds up between your thinking and the emotion: they feed each other. By dwelling mentally on the situation, event, or person that is the perceived cause of the emotion, the thought feeds energy to the emotion, which in turn energizes the thought pattern, and so on. It may be best to use a term that is as undifferentiated as that basic emotion and simply call it "pain." One of the main tasks of the mind is to fight or remove that emotional pain, which is one of the reasons for its incessant activity, but all it can ever achieve is to cover it up temporarily. The mind can never find the solution, nor can it afford to allow you to find the solution, because it is itself an intrinsic part of the "problem." Imagine a chief of police trying to find an arsonist when the arsonist is the chief of police. For most people, such gaps happen rarely and only accidentally, in moments when the mind is rendered "speechless," sometimes triggered by great beauty, extreme physical exertion, or even great danger. Emotion literally means "disturbance." The word comes from the Latin *emovere*, meaning "to disturb." Love, joy, and peace are deep states of Being or rather three aspects of the state of inner connectedness with Being. Emotions, on the other hand, being part of the dualistic mind, are subject to the law of opposites. So in the unenlightened, mind-identified condition, what is sometimes wrongly called joy is the usually short-lived pleasure side of the continuously alternating pain/pleasure cycle. As I said, even before you are enlightened before you have freed yourself from your mind you may get glimpses of true joy, true love, or of a deep inner peace, still but vibrantly alive. Humans have been in the grip of pain for eons, ever since they fell from the state of grace, entered the realm of time and mind, and lost awareness of Being. And every pleasure or emotional high contains within itself the seed of pain: its inseparable opposite, which will manifest in time. Anybody who has ever taken drugs to get "high" will know that the high eventually turns into a low, that the pleasure turns into some form of pain. Seen from a higher perspective, both the negative and the positive polarities are faces of the same coin, are both part of the underlying pain that is inseparable from the mind-identified egoic state of consciousness. There are two levels to your pain: the pain that you create now, and the pain from the past that still lives on in your mind and body.

CREATE NO MORE PAIN IN THE PRESENT

The intensity of the pain depends on the degree of resistance to the present moment, and this in turn depends on how strongly you are identified with your mind. What else is there?? Yes, we need the mind as well as time to function in this world, but there comes a point where they take over our lives, and this is where dysfunction, pain, and sorrow set in. The mind, to ensure that it remains in control, seeks continuously to cover up the present moment with past and future, and so, as the vitality and infinite creative potential of Being, which is inseparable from the Now, becomes covered up by time, your true nature becomes obscured by the mind. All individuals are suffering under this burden, but they also keep adding to it every moment whenever they ignore or deny that precious moment or reduce it to a means of getting to some future moment, which only exists in the mind, never in actuality. If you no longer want to create pain for yourself and others, if you no longer want to add to the residue of past pain that still lives on in you, then don't create any more time, or at least no more than is necessary to deal with the practical aspects of your life. Whereas before you dwelt in time and paid brief visits to the Now, have your dwelling place in the Now and pay brief visits to past and future when required to deal with the practical aspects of your life situation.

PAST PAIN: DISSOLVING THE PAIN- BODY

A pain-body may be dormant 90 percent of the time; in a deeply unhappy person, though, it may be active up to 10 percent of the time. Some people live almost entirely through their pain-body, while others may experience it only in certain situations, such as intimate relationships, or situations linked with past loss or abandonment, physical or emotional hurt, and so on. Watch out for any sign of unhappiness in yourself, in whatever form it may be the awakening pain-body. The pain-body wants to survive, just like every other entity in existence, and it can only survive if it gets you to unconsciously identify with it. It will feed on any experience that resonates with its own kind of energy, anything that creates further pain in whatever form: anger, destructiveness, hatred, grief, emotional drama, violence, and even illness. So the pain-body, when it has taken you over, will create a situation in your life that reflects back its own energy frequency for it to feed on. Once the pain-body has taken you over, you want more pain. The pain-body, which is the dark shadow cast by the ego, is actually afraid of the light of your consciousness. The pain-body may seem to you like a dangerous monster that you cannot bear to look at, but I assure you that it is an insubstantial phantom that cannot prevail against the power of your presence. Everything is shown up by being exposed to the light, and whatever is exposed to the light itself becomes light. Just as you cannot fight the darkness, you cannot fight the pain-body. The moment your thinking is aligned with the energy field of the pain-body, you are identified with it and again feeding it with your thoughts. For example, if anger is the predominant energy vibration of the pain-body and you think angry thoughts, dwelling on what someone did to you or what you are going to do to him or her, then you have become unconscious, and the pain-body has become you. Where there is anger, there is always pain underneath. Or when a dark mood comes upon you and you start getting into a negative mind-pattern and thinking how dreadful your life is, your thinking has become aligned with the pain-body, and you have become unconscious and vulnerable to the pain-body's attack. Become aware not only of the emotional pain but also of the one who observes, the silent watcher. For many women, the pain-body awakens particularly at the time preceding the menstrual flow. Right now, let me just say this: If you are able to stay alert and present at that time and watch whatever you feel within, rather than be taken over by it, it affords an opportunity for the most powerful spiritual practice, and a rapid transmutation of all past pain becomes possible.

EGO IDENTIFICATION WITH THE PAIN- BODY

It could be taught to a child, and hopefully one day it will be one of the first things children learn in school. In that case, unconscious fear of losing your identity will create strong resistance to any disidentification. In other words, you would rather be in pain be the pain-body than take a leap into the unknown and risk losing the familiar unhappy self. You can then take your attention into the pain-body, stay present as the witness, and so initiate its transmutation. But if you are fortunate enough to find someone who is intensely conscious, if you can be with them and join them in the state of presence, that can be helpful and will accelerate things. When a log that has only just started to burn is placed next to one that is burning fiercely, and after a while they are separated again, the first log will be burning with much greater intensity. Some therapists may also be able to fulfill that function, provided that they have gone beyond the level of mind and can create and sustain a state of intense conscious presence while they are working with you.

THE ORIGIN OF FEAR

If I didn't have a fear of fire, I might put my hand in it and get burned. The reason why you don't put your hand in the fire is not because of fear, it's because you know that you'll get burned. Now if someone threatened you with fire or with physical violence, you might experience something like fear. This is an instinctive shrinking back from danger, but not the psychological condition of fear that we are talking about here. This kind of psychological fear is always of something that might happen, not of something that is happening now. And if you are identified with your mind and have lost touch with the power and simplicity of the Now, that anxiety gap will be your constant companion. Fear of loss, fear of failure, fear of being hurt, and so on, but ultimately all fear is the ego's fear of death, of annihilation. In this mind-identified state, fear of death affects every aspect of your life. For example, even such a seemingly trivial and "normal" thing as the compulsive need to be right in an argument and make the other person wrong defending the mental position with which you have identified is due to the fear of death. If you identify with a mental position, then if you are wrong, your mind-based sense of self is seriously threatened with annihilation. Once you have disidentified from your mind, whether you are right or wrong makes no difference to your sense of self at all, so the forcefully compulsive and deeply unconscious need to be right, which is a form of violence, will no longer be there. Your sense of self is then derived from a deeper and truer place within yourself, not from the mind. So anyone who is identified with their mind and, therefore, disconnected from their true power, their deeper self rooted in Being, will have fear as their constant companion. The number of people who have gone beyond mind is as yet extremely small, so you can assume that virtually everyone you meet or know lives in a state of fear.

THE EGO'S SEARCH FOR WHOLENESS

Another aspect of the emotional pain that is an intrinsic part of the egoic mind is a deep-seated sense of lack or incompleteness, of not being whole. In either case, people will often enter into a compulsive pursuit of ego-gratification and things to identify with in order to fill this hole they feel within. As long as the egoic mind is running your life, you cannot truly be at ease; you cannot be at peace or fulfilled except for brief intervals when you obtained what you wanted, when a craving has just been fulfilled. The most common ego identifications have to do with possessions, the work you do, social status and recognition, knowledge and education, physical appearance, special abilities, relationships, personal and family history, belief systems, and often also political, nationalistic, racial, religious, and other collective identifications.

DON'T SEEK YOUR SELF IN THE MIND

Studying the complexities of the mind may make you a good psychologist, but doing so won't take you beyond the mind, just as the study of madness isn't enough to create sanity. You have already understood the basic mechanics of the unconscious state: identification with the mind, which creates a false self, the ego, as a substitute for your true self rooted in Being.

END THE DELUSION OF TIME

To be identified with your mind is to be trapped in time: the compulsion to live almost exclusively through memory and anticipation. The compulsion arises because the past gives you an identity and the future holds the promise of salvation, of fulfillment in whatever form. I think time is something very precious, and we need to learn to use it wisely rather than waste it. Time isn't precious at all, because it is an illusion. The more you are focused on time past and future the more you miss the Now, the most precious thing there is.

NOTHING EXISTS OUTSIDE THE NOW

What you think of as the past is a memory trace, stored in the mind, of a former Now. Just as the moon has no light of its own, but can only reflect the light of the sun, so are past and future only pale reflections of the light, power, and reality of the eternal present.

THE KEY TO THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

The reason why some people love to engage in dangerous activities, such as mountain climbing, car racing, and so on, although they may not be aware of it, is that it forces them into the Now that intensely alive state that is free of time, free of problems, free of thinking, free of the burden of the personality. If you go to a church, you may hear readings from the Gospels such as "Take no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself," or "Nobody who puts his hands to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God." Or you might hear the passage about the beautiful "owers that are not anxious about tomorrow but live with ease in the timeless Now and are provided for abundantly by God. The great Zen master Rinzai, in order to take his students' attention away from time, would often raise his finger and slowly ask: "What, at this moment, is lacking?" A powerful question that does not require an answer on the level of the mind. Su?s have a saying: "The Su? is the son of time present." And Rumi, the great poet and teacher of Su?sm, declares: "Past and future veil God from our sight; burn up both of them with fire." Meister Eckhart, the thirteenth-century spiritual teacher, summed it all up beautifully "Time is what keeps the light from reaching us.

ACCESSING THE POWER OF THE NOW

A moment ago, when you talked about the eternal present and the unreality of past and future, I found myself looking at that tree outside the window. With the timeless dimension comes a different kind of knowing, one that does not "kill" the spirit that lives within every creature and every thing. However, when it takes over all aspects of your life, including your relationships with other human beings and with nature, it becomes a monstrous parasite that, unchecked, may well end up killing all life on the planet and finally itself by killing its host. If you find it hard to enter the Now directly, start by observing the habitual tendency of your mind to want to escape from the Now. Another factor has come in, something that is not of the mind: the witnessing presence. You will then feel something more powerful than any of those things that you observe: the still, observing presence itself behind the content of your mind, the silent watcher. α Intense presence is needed when certain situations trigger a reaction with a strong emotional charge, such as when your self-image is threatened, a challenge comes into your life that triggers fear, things "go wrong," or an emotional complex from the past is brought up. except that it isn't you, it's the reactive pattern, the mind in its habitual survival mode. Identification with the mind gives it more energy;, observation of the mind withdraws energy from it. Once you can feel what it means to be present, it becomes much easier to simply choose to step out of the time dimension whenever time is not needed for practical purposes and move more deeply into the Now.

LETTING GO OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TIME

In this way, there will be no build-up of "psychological time," which is identification with the past and continuous compulsive projection into the future. On the other hand, if you dwell on it mentally, and self-criticism, remorse, or guilt come up, then you are making the mistake into "me" and "mine": you make it part of your sense of self, and it has become psychological time, which is always linked to a false sense of identity. Your life's journey is no longer an adventure, just an obsessive need to arrive, to attain, to "make it." You no longer see or smell the "flowers by the wayside" either, nor are you aware of the beauty and the miracle of life that unfolds all around you when you are present in the Now. I am just reminding you of a simple fact a fact so obvious that you may "find it hard to grasp and may even find it meaningless but once fully realized, it can cut like a sword through all the mind-created layers of complexity and "problems." Let me say it again: the present moment is all you ever have.

THE INSANITY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TIME

They occur, for example, in the form of ideologies such as communism, national socialism or any nationalism, or rigid religious belief systems, which operate under the implicit assumption that the highest good lies in the future and that therefore the end justifies the means. The end is an idea, a point in the mind-projected future, when salvation in whatever form happiness, fulfillment, equality, liberation, and so on will be attained. For example, it is estimated that as many as 50 million people were murdered to further the cause of communism, to bring about a "better world" in Russia, China, and other countries. In the normal, mind-identified or unenlightened state of consciousness, the power and infinite creative potential that lie concealed in the Now are completely obscured by psychological time. The old patterns of thought, emotion, behavior, reaction, and desire are acted out in endless repeat performances, a script in your mind that gives you an identity of sorts but distorts or covers up the reality of the Now.

NEGATIVITY AND SUFFERING HAVE THEIR ROOTS IN TIME

The present can be dreadful, and things can get better in the future, and often they do. Superficial changes are possible, but real transformation is rare and depends upon whether you can become present enough to dissolve the past by accessing the power of the Now. The quality of your consciousness at this moment is what shapes the future which, of course, can only be experienced as the Now. Unease, anxiety, tension, stress, worry all forms of fear are caused by too much future, and not enough presence. Guilt, regret, resentment, grievances, sadness, bitterness, and all forms of nonforgiveness are caused by too much past, and not enough presence. You believe that they are caused by specific situations in your life, and seen from a conventional viewpoint, this is true. If all your problems or perceived causes of suffering or unhappiness were miraculously removed for you today, but you had not become more present, more conscious, you would soon find yourself with a similar set of problems or causes of suffering, like a shadow that follows you wherever you go.

FINDING THE LIFE UNDERNEATH YOUR LIFE SITUATION

What you refer to as your "life" should more accurately be called your "life situation." It is psychological time: past and future. It is true that my present life situation is the result of things that happened in the past, but it is still my present situation, and being stuck in it is what makes me unhappy. So whenever you can, make some room, create some space, so that you find the life underneath your life situation. Observe the rhythm of your breathing; feel the air flowing in and out, feel the life energy inside your body.

ALL PROBLEMS ARE ILLUSIONS OF THE MIND

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A QUANTUM LEAP IN THE EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

I have had glimpses of this state of freedom from mind and time that you describe, but past and future are so overwhelmingly strong that I cannot keep them out for long. But what we are doing here is part of a profound transformation that is taking place in the collective consciousness of the planet and beyond: the awakening of consciousness from the dream of matter, form, and separation. The doing and the happening is in fact a single process; because you are one with the totality of consciousness, you cannot separate the two. However you look at it, it is a quantum leap in the evolution of consciousness, as well as our only chance of survival as a race.

THE JOY OF BEING

To alert you that you have allowed yourself to be taken over by psychological time, you can use a simple criterion. If there isn't, then time is covering up the present moment, and life is perceived as a burden or a struggle. This implies that you also completely accept what is, because you cannot give your full attention to something and at the same time resist it. As soon as you honor the present moment, all unhappiness and struggle dissolve, and life begins to flow with joy and ease. When you act out of present-moment awareness, whatever you do becomes imbued with a sense of quality, care, and love even the most simple action. In the Bhagavad Gita, one of the oldest and most beautiful spiritual teachings in existence, non-attachment to the fruit of your action is called Karma Yoga. It is described as the path of "consecrated action." When the compulsive striving away from the Now ceases, the joy of Being flows into everything you do. In the absence of psychological time, your sense of self is derived from Being, not from your personal past. Therefore, the psychological need to become anything other than who you are already is no longer there. In the world, on the level of your life situation, you may indeed become wealthy, knowledgeable, successful, free of this or that, but in the deeper dimension of Being you are complete and whole now. Yet on a deeper level you are already complete, and when you realize that, there is a playful, joyous energy behind what you do. Being free of psychological time, you no longer pursue your goals with grim determination, driven by fear, anger, discontent, or the need to become someone. When your deeper sense of self is derived from Being, when you are free of "becoming" as a psychological need, neither your happiness nor your sense of self depends on the outcome, and so there is freedom from fear. You don't seek permanency where it cannot be found: in the world of form, of gain and loss, birth and death. You don't demand that situations, conditions, places, or people should make you happy, and then suffer when they don't live up to your expectations. You know that "nothing real can be threatened." When this is your state of Being, how can you not succeed?

LOSS OF NOW: THE CORE DELUSION

When every cell of your body is so present that it feels vibrant with life, and when you can feel that life every moment as the joy of Being, then it can be said that you are free of time. When you have had your first few glimpses of the timeless state of consciousness, you begin to move back and forth between the dimensions of time and presence. Then, with increasing frequency, you choose to have the focus of your consciousness in the present moment rather than in the past or future, and whenever you realize that you had lost the Now, you are able to stay in it not just for a couple of seconds, but for longer periods as perceived from the external perspective of clock time. So before you are firmly established in the state of presence, which is to say before you are fully conscious, you shift back and forth for a while between consciousness and unconsciousness, between the state of presence and the state of mind identification.

ORDINARY UNCONSCIOUSNESS AND DEEP UNCONSCIOUSNESS

The unease of ordinary unconsciousness turns into the pain of deep unconsciousness a state of more acute and more obvious suffering or unhappiness when things go wrong, when the ego is threatened or there is a major challenge, threat, or loss, real or imagined, in your life situation or conflict in a relationship. In ordinary unconsciousness, habitual resistance to or denial of what is creates the unease and discontent that most people accept as normal living. If you cannot be present even in normal circumstances, such as when you are sitting alone in a room, walking in the woods, or listening to someone, then you certainly won't be able to stay conscious when something goes wrong or you are faced with difficult people or situations, with loss or the threat of loss. When you learn to be the witness of your thoughts and emotions, which is an essential part of being present, you may be surprised when you first become aware of the background static of ordinary unconsciousness and realize how rarely, if ever, you are truly at ease within yourself.

WHAT ARE THEY SEEKING?

We think they are mad. The undercurrent of constant unease started long before the rise of Western industrial civilization, of course, but in Western civilization, which now covers almost the entire globe, including most of the East, it manifests in an unprecedentedly acute form. Freud, by the way, also recognized the existence of this undercurrent of unease and wrote about it in his book *Civilization and Its Discontents*, but he did not recognize the true root of the unease and failed to realize that freedom from it is possible.

DISSOLVING ORDINARY UNCONSCIOUSNESS

Observe the many ways in which unease, discontent, and tension arise within you through unnecessary judgment, resistance to what is, and denial of the Now. Once you know how to dissolve ordinary unconsciousness, the light of your presence will shine brightly, and it will be much easier to deal with deep unconsciousness whenever you feel its gravitational pull. However, ordinary unconsciousness may not be easy to detect initially because it is so normal. Once you detect that there is a low level of unease, the background static, see in what way you are avoiding, resisting, or denying life by denying the Now.

FREEDOM FROM UNHAPPINESS

Then look at the emotion, which is the body's reaction to those thoughts. Maybe you are being taken advantage of, maybe the activity you are engaged in is tedious, maybe someone close to you is dishonest, irritating, or unconscious, but all this is irrelevant. You are creating unhappiness, conflict between the inner and the outer. Either stop doing what you are doing, speak to the person concerned and express fully what you feel, or drop the negativity that your mind has created around the situation and that serves no purpose whatsoever except to strengthen a false sense of self. Anything that is done with negative energy will become contaminated by it and in time give rise to more pain, more unhappiness. Furthermore, any negative inner state is contagious: Unhappiness spreads more easily than a physical disease. You are responsible for your inner space; nobody else is, just as you are responsible for the planet. As within, so without: If humans clear inner pollution, then they will also cease to create outer pollution. Deep unconsciousness, such as the pain-body, or other deep pain, such as the loss of a loved one, usually needs to be transmuted through acceptance combined with the light of your presence your sustained attention. Many patterns in ordinary unconsciousness, on the other hand, can simply be dropped once you know that you don't want them and don't need them anymore, once you realize that you have a choice, that you are not just a bundle of conditioned reflexes. My understanding is that we should give ourselves permission to have whatever feelings come up, rather than judge them as bad or say that we shouldn't have them. It's okay to feel resentful; it's okay to be angry, irritated, moody, or whatever otherwise, we get into repression, inner conflict, or denial. Any such feeling I call negative, which simply means bad. Not in the sense that "You shouldn't have done that" but just plain factual bad, like feeling sick in the stomach. And that's not taking into account the mental, emotional and physical violence, the torture, pain, and cruelty they continue to inflict on each other as well as on other sentient beings on a daily basis. Only people who are in a deeply negative state, who feel very bad indeed, would create such a reality as a reflection of how they feel. Coming back specifically to what you said it is certainly true that, when you accept your resentment, moodiness, anger, and so on, you are no longer forced to act them out blindly, and you are less likely to project them onto others. When you have been practicing acceptance for a while, as you have, there comes a point when you need to go on to the next stage, where those negative emotions are not created anymore. If you don't, your "acceptance" just becomes a mental label that allows your ego to continue to indulge in unhappiness and so strengthen its sense of separation from other people, your surroundings, you're here and now. As you know, separation is the basis for the ego's sense of identity. And if you really knew deeply that everything is "okay," as you put it, and which of course is true, then would you have those negative feelings in the first place? Without judgment, without resistance to what is, they would not arise. You have an idea in your mind that "everything is okay," but deep down you don't really believe it, and so the old mental- emotional patterns of resistance are still in place.

WHEREVER YOU ARE, BE THERE TOTALLY

See if you can catch yourself complaining, in either speech or thought, about a situation you find yourself in, what other people do or say, your surroundings, your life situation, even the weather. Through self-observation, find out if that is the case in your life. If you find your here and now intolerable and it makes you unhappy, you have three options: remove yourself from the situation, change it, or accept it totally. If you want to take responsibility for your life, you must choose one of those three options, and you must choose now. If you take any action leaving or changing your situation drop the negativity first, if at all possible. Any action is often better than no action, especially if you have been stuck in an unhappy situation for a long time. If it is a mistake, at least you learn something, in which case it's no longer a mistake. Acknowledge the fear, watch it, take your attention into it, be fully present with it. If there is truly nothing that you can do to change your here and now, and you can't remove yourself from the situation, then accept your here and now totally by dropping all inner resistance. The false, unhappy self that loves feeling miserable, resentful, or sorry for itself can then no longer survive. Through surrender, you will be free internally of the situation. Alternatively, completely accept your inactivity, laziness, or passivity at this moment, if that is your choice. If you go into it fully and consciously, you will soon come out of it. Either way, there is no inner conflict, no resistance, no negativity. Stress is caused by being "here" but wanting to be "there," or being in the present but wanting to be in the future. If you have to, you can move fast, work fast, or even run, without projecting yourself into the future and without resisting the present. Enjoy the flow of energy, the high energy of that moment. Now you are no longer stressed, no longer splitting yourself in two. Just moving, running, working and enjoying it. You are identified with your mind, which is projecting itself into an imaginary future situation and creating fear. There is no way that you can cope with such a situation, because it doesn't exist. All that you ever have to deal with, cope with, in real life as opposed to imaginary mind projections is this moment. Ask yourself what "problem" you have right now, not next year, tomorrow, or "a few minutes from now." You can always cope with the Now, but you can never cope with the future nor do you have to. The answer, the strength, the right action or the resource will be there when you need it, not before, not after. If you develop such a mind pattern, no matter what you achieve or get, the present will never be good enough; the future will always seem better. What I call "small-scale waiting" is waiting in line at the post office, in a traffic jam, at the airport, or waiting for someone to arrive, to finish work, and so on. "Large-scale waiting" is waiting for the next vacation, for a better job, for the children to grow up, for a truly meaningful relationship, for success, to make money, to be important, to become enlightened. Basically, it means that you want the future; you don't want the present. You don't want what you've got, and you want what you haven't got. With every kind of waiting, you unconsciously create inner conflict between your here and now, where you don't want to be, and the projected future, where you want to be. You can improve your life situation, but you cannot improve your life. The mistake lies in using it as a substitute for the feeling of life, for Being. For example, many people are waiting for prosperity. It cannot come in the future. When you honor, acknowledge, and fully accept your present reality where you are, who you are, what you are doing right now when you fully accept what you have got, you are grateful for what you have got, grateful for what is, grateful for Being. It cannot come in the future. Then, in time, that prosperity manifests for you in various ways. If you are dissatisfied with what you have got, or even frustrated or angry about your present lack, that may motivate you to become rich, but even if you do make millions, you will continue to experience the inner condition of lack, and deep down you will continue to feel unfulfilled. You may have many exciting experiences that money can buy, but they will come and go and always leave you with an empty feeling and the need for further physical or psychological gratification. If you are present, there is never any need for you to wait for anything. So next time somebody says, "Sorry to

THE INNER PURPOSE OF YOUR LIFE'S JOURNEY

But if your destination, or the steps you are going to take in the future, take up so much of your attention that they become more important to you than the step you are taking now, then you completely miss the journey's inner purpose, which has nothing to do with where you are going or what you are doing, but everything to do with how. Ultimately, of course, every outer purpose is doomed to fail sooner or later, simply because it is subject to the law of impermanence of all things.

THE PAST CANNOT SURVIVE IN YOUR PRESENCE

You may think that you need more time to understand the past or become free of it, in other words, that the future will eventually free you of the past. If you can be present enough to watch all those things, not critically or analytically but nonjudgmentally, then you are dealing with the past and dissolving it through the power of your presence. As you become more conscious of your present reality, you may suddenly get certain insights as to why your conditioning functions in those particular ways; for example, why your relationships follow certain patterns, and you may remember things that happened in the past or see them more dearly.

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK IT IS

If the student had been fully present and in a state of alertness, if he had kept his loin girded and his lamp burning, which is one of the analogies that Jesus uses for presence, he would have noticed the master coming up from behind and stopped him or stepped aside. To stay present in everyday life, it helps to be deeply rooted within yourself otherwise, the mind, which has incredible momentum, will drag you along like a wild river.

THE ESOTERIC MEANING OF ?WAITING?

In another parable, Jesus speaks of the ?ve careless (unconscious) women who do not have enough oil (consciousness) to keep their lamps burning (stay present) and so miss the bridegroom (the Now) and don't get to the wedding feast (enlightenment).

BEAUTY ARISES IN THE STILLNESS OF YOUR PRESENCE

Zen masters use the word satori to describe a flash of insight, a moment of no-mind and total presence. Presence is needed to become aware of the beauty, the majesty, the sacredness of nature. Beyond the beauty of the external forms, there is more here: something that cannot be named, something ineffable, some deep, inner, holy essence. Whenever and wherever there is beauty, this inner essence shines through somehow. ☐ When you experienced those moments of presence, you likely didn't realize that you were briefly in a state of no-mind. Your satori may only have lasted for a few seconds before the mind came in, but it was there; otherwise, you would not have experienced the beauty. Because of the narrowness of that gap and a lack of vigilance and alertness on your part, you were probably unable to see the fundamental difference between the perception, the thought-less awareness of beauty, and the naming and interpreting of it as thought: The time gap was so small that it seemed to be a single process. Because they are not still, not present, they don't truly see the power, don't feel its essence, its holiness just as they don't know themselves, don't feel their own essence, their own holiness. Because we live in such a mind-dominated culture, most modern art, architecture, music, and literature are devoid of beauty, of inner essence, with very few exceptions.

REALIZING PURE CONSCIOUSNESS

Since Being, consciousness, and life are synonymous, we could say that presence means consciousness becoming conscious of itself, or life attaining self-consciousness. In the Bible, God declares: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, and I am the living One." In the timeless realm where God dwells, which is also your home, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, are one, and the essence of everything that ever has been and ever will be is eternally present in an unmanifested state of oneness and perfection totally beyond anything the human mind can ever imagine or comprehend. In our world of seemingly separate forms, however, timeless perfection is an inconceivable concept. Here even consciousness, which is the light emanating from the eternal Source, seems to be subject to a process of development, but this is due to our limited perception. Nevertheless, let me continue to speak for a moment about the evolution of consciousness in this world. Everything that exists has Being, has God-essence, has some degree of consciousness. Even a stone has rudimentary consciousness; otherwise, it would not be, and its atoms and molecules would disperse. The sun, the earth, plants, animals, humans all are expressions of consciousness in varying degrees, consciousness manifesting as form. The world arises when consciousness takes on shapes and forms, thought forms and material forms. Only if you create a separate identity for each form, if you forget that its consciousness is God-essence expressing itself in form. In present-day humans, consciousness is completely identified with its disguise. Finally, the pressure of suffering created by this apparent dysfunction forces consciousness to disidentify from form and awakens it from its dream of form: It regains self-consciousness, but it is at a far deeper level than when it lost it. Whenever you watch the mind, you withdraw consciousness from mind forms, which then becomes what we call the watcher or the witness. Consequently, the watcher pure consciousness beyond form becomes stronger, and the mental formations become weaker. When we talk about watching the mind we are personalizing an event that is truly of cosmic significance: through you, consciousness is awakening out of its dream of identification with form and withdrawing from form. ♫ When consciousness frees itself from its identification with physical and mental forms, it becomes what we may call pure or enlightened consciousness, or presence. Already for most humans, the only respite they find from their own minds is to occasionally revert to a level of consciousness below thought. If it weren't for alcohol, tranquilizers, antidepressants, as well as the illegal drugs, which are all consumed in vast quantities, the insanity of the human mind would become even more glaringly obvious than it is already. While individual users may get some relief from the daily torture inflicted on them by their minds, they are prevented from generating enough conscious presence to rise above thought and so find true liberation. Falling back to a level of consciousness below mind, which is the pre-thinking level of our distant ancestors and of animals and plants, is not an option for us. No gain in consciousness is ever lost, so it would simply express itself through some other form. Although every word that I use has a history, of course, and comes from the past, as all language does, the words that I speak to you now are carriers of the high-energy frequency of presence, quite apart from the meaning they convey as words.

CHRIST: THE REALITY OF YOUR DIVINE PRESENCE

You can substitute 'Christ' for presence, if that is more meaningful to you. God said: 'I AM THAT I AM'. No time here, just presence. The 'second coming' of Christ is a transformation of human consciousness, a shift from time to presence, from thinking to pure consciousness, not the arrival of some man or woman. If 'Christ' were to return tomorrow in some externalized form, what could he or she possibly say to you other than this: 'I am the Truth'.

BEING IS YOUR DEEPEST SELF

You have already had signifi-cant glimpses of Being, but the mind will always try to squeeze it into a little box and then put a label on it. To feel and thus to know that you are and to abide in that deeply rooted state is enlightenment, is the truth that Jesus says will make you free. This 'illusion of the self,' as the Buddha calls it, is the core error. Free from fear in its countless disguises as the inevitable consequence of that illusion the fear that is your constant tormentor as long as you derive your sense of self only from this ephemeral and vulnerable form. And free from sin, which is the suffering you unconsciously inflict on yourself and others as long as this illusory sense of self governs what you think, say, and do.

LOOK BEYOND THE WORDS

Over the centuries, many erroneous views and interpretations have accumulated around words such as sin, due to ignorance, misunderstanding, or a desire to control, but they contain an essential core of truth. If you are unable to look beyond such interpretations and so cannot recognize the reality to which the word points, then don't use it. You can study and talk about honey for as long as you like, but you won't really know it until you taste it. The reverse also applies: If, for whatever reason, you disliked the word honey, that might prevent you from ever tasting it. If you had a strong aversion to the word God, which is a negative form of attachment, you may be denying not just the word but also the reality to which it points. If you don't like the word sin, then call it unconsciousness or insanity. That may get you closer to the truth, the reality behind the word, than a long-misused word like sin, and leaves little room for guilt.

FINDING YOUR INVISIBLE AND INDESTRUCTIBLE REALITY

In your natural state of connectedness with Being, this deeper reality can be felt every moment as the invisible inner body, the animating presence within you. So to "inhabit the body" is to feel the body from within, to feel the life inside the body and thereby come to know that you are beyond the outer form. A very effective way of doing this is simply to take the focus of your attention away from thinking and direct it into the body, where Being can be felt in the first instance as the invisible energy field that gives life to what you perceive as the physical body.

CONNECTING WITH THE INNER BODY

It will feel as if every cell is becoming more alive, and if you have a strong visual sense, you may get an image of your body becoming luminous. Although such an image can help you temporarily, pay more attention to the feeling than to any image that may arise. ∞ The feeling of your inner body is formless, limitless, and unfathomable. Please open your eyes now, but keep some attention in the inner energy field of the body even as you look around the room.

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE BODY

A long time after their fall from a state of grace and oneness into illusion, humans suddenly woke up in what seemed to be an animal body and they found this very disturbing. When religions arose, this disassociation became even more pronounced as the "you are not your body" belief. Countless people in East and West throughout the ages have tried to find God, salvation, or enlightenment through denial of the body. Even the Buddha is said to have practiced body denial through fasting and extreme forms of asceticism for six years, but he did not attain enlightenment until after he had given up this practice. Although such an experience can be fascinating and can give you a glimpse of the state of liberation from the material form, in the end you will always have to return to the body, where the essential work of transformation takes place. Of the ancient teachings concerning the body, only certain fragments survive, such as Jesus's statement that "your whole body will be filled with light," or they survive as myths, such as the belief that Jesus never relinquished his body but remained one with it and ascended into "heaven" with it. Almost no one to this day has understood those fragments or the hidden meaning of certain myths, and the "you are not your body" belief has prevailed universally, leading to body denial and attempts to escape from the body. I have already spoken of the Truth that is hidden within your body, but I will summarize for you again the lost teachings of the masters so here is another signpost.

SERMON ON THE BODY

It is a misperception of your essential reality that is beyond birth and death, and is due to the limitations of your mind, which, having lost touch with Being, creates the body as evidence of its illusory belief in separation and to justify its state of fear. But do not turn away from the body, for within that symbol of impermanence, limitation, and death that you perceive as the illusory creation of your mind is concealed the splendor of your essential and immortal reality. Through the inner body, you are inseparably connected to this unmanifested One Life birthless, deathless, eternally present.

HAVE DEEP ROOTS WITHIN

The more consciousness you direct into the inner body, the higher its vibrational frequency becomes, much like a light that grows brighter as you turn up the dimmer switch and so increase the flow of electricity. Feel your whole body from within, as a single field of energy. By all means focus on what you are doing, but feel the inner body at the same time whenever possible. Whenever you are waiting, wherever it may be, use that time to feel the inner body. Instead of mentally projecting yourself away from the Now, go more deeply into the Now by going more deeply into the body. The art of inner-body awareness will develop into a completely new way of living, a state of permanent connectedness with Being, and will add a depth to your life that you have never known before. Your conditioned reaction will then be involuntary, automatic, and predictable, fueled by the one basic emotion that underlies the mind-identified state of consciousness: fear. So when such challenges come, as they always do, make it a habit to go within at once and focus as much as you can on the inner energy field of your body. When you focus within and feel the inner body, you immediately become still and present as you are withdrawing consciousness from the mind. As long as you are in conscious contact with your inner body, you are like a tree that is deeply rooted in the earth, or a building with a deep and solid foundation.

BEFORE YOU ENTER THE BODY, FORGIVE

Unless you first give it some attention, the emotion will prevent you from gaining access to the inner body, which lies at a deeper level underneath it. When you are not in your body, however, an emotion can survive inside you for days or weeks, or join with other emotions of a similar frequency that have merged and become the pain-body, a parasite that can live inside you for years, feed on your energy, lead to physical illness, and make your life miserable (see Chapter 2). So place your attention on feeling the emotion, and check whether your mind is holding on to a grievance pattern such as blame, self-pity, or resentment that is feeding the emotion. Nonforgiveness is often toward another person or yourself, but it may just as well be toward any situation or condition past, present or future that your mind refuses to accept.

YOUR LINK WITH THE UNMANIFESTED

Presence is pure consciousness consciousness that has been reclaimed from the mind, from the world of form. The inner body is your link with the Unmanifested, and in its deepest aspect is the Unmanifested: the Source from which consciousness emanates as light emanates from the sun. If you haven't reached that stage yet, the practice of body awareness will bring about the deepening that is necessary.

SLOWING DOWN THE AGING PROCESS

Whereas the outer body normally appears to grow old and wither fairly quickly, the inner body does not change with time, except that you may feel it more deeply and become it more fully. When you become identified more with the timeless inner body than with the outer body, when presence becomes your normal mode of consciousness and past and future no longer dominate your attention, you do not accumulate time anymore in your psyche and in the cells of the body. So if you inhabit the inner body, the outer body will grow old at a much slower rate, and even when it does, your timeless essence will shine through the outer form, and you will not give the appearance of an old person.

STRENGTHENING THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

The more consciousness you bring into the body, the stronger the immune system becomes. Inhabiting the body protects you not by putting up a shield, but by raising the frequency vibration of your total energy field, so that anything that vibrates at a lower frequency, such as fear, anger, depression, and so on, now exists in what is virtually a different order of reality. It is particularly effective if used when you feel the first symptoms of an illness, but it also works with illnesses that are already entrenched if you use it at frequent intervals and with an intense focus. When you are unoccupied for a few minutes, and especially last thing at night before falling asleep and first thing in the morning before getting up, flood your body with consciousness. Choose different parts of your body to focus your attention on briefly at first: hands, feet, arms, legs, abdomen, chest, head, and so on. Then let your attention run through the body like a wave a few times, from feet to head and back again. After that, feel the inner body in its totality, as a single field of energy.

LET THE BREATH TAKE YOU INTO THE BODY

At times, when my mind has been very active, it has acquired such momentum that I find it impossible to take my attention away from it and feel the inner body. If at any time you are finding it hard to get in touch with the inner body, it is usually easier to focus on your breathing first. Conscious breathing, which is a powerful meditation in its own right, will gradually put you in touch with the body. Breathe into the body, and feel your abdomen expanding and contracting slightly with each inhalation and exhalation. If you find it easy to visualize, close your eyes and see yourself surrounded by light or immersed in a luminous substance a sea of consciousness.

CREATIVE USE OF MIND

If you need to use your mind for a specific purpose, use it in conjunction with your inner body. Only if you are able to be conscious without thought can you use your mind creatively, and the easiest way to enter that state is through your body. Whenever an answer, a solution, or a creative idea is needed, stop thinking for a moment by focusing attention on your inner energy field. In any thought activity, make it a habit to go back and forth every few minutes or so between thinking and an inner kind of listening, an inner stillness.

THE ART OF LISTENING

When listening to another person, don't just listen with your mind, listen with your whole body. That takes attention away from thinking and creates a still space that enables you to truly listen without the mind interfering. They pay more attention to that than to what the other person is saying, and none at all to what really matters: the Being of the other person underneath the words and the mind. Most human relationships consist mainly of minds interacting with each other, not of human beings communicating, being in communion.

GOING DEEPLY INTO THE BODY

I can feel the energy inside my body, especially in my arms and legs, but I don't seem to be able to go more deeply, as you suggested earlier. When you can feel the inner body clearly as a single field of energy, let go, if possible, of any visual image and focus exclusively on the feeling. If you can, also drop any mental image you may still have of the physical body. All that is left then is an all-encompassing sense of presence or 'beingness,' and the inner body is felt to be without a boundary. Merge with the energy field, so that there is no longer a perceived duality of the observer and the observed, of you and your body. The distinction between inner and outer also dissolves now, so there is no inner body anymore. Stay in this realm of pure Being for as long as feels comfortable; then become aware again of the physical body, your breathing and physical senses, and open your eyes. Look at your surroundings for a few minutes in a meditative way that is, without labeling them mentally and continue to feel the inner body as you do so.

THE SOURCE OF CHI

When you reach a point of absolute stillness, which is nevertheless vibrant with life, you have gone beyond the inner body and beyond chi to the Source itself: the Unmanifested. So if you take your attention deeply into the inner body, you may reach this point, this singularity, where the world dissolves into the Unmanifested and the Unmanifested takes on form as the energy stream of chi, which then becomes the world.

DREAMLESS SLEEP

This energy is much more vital than food: 'Man does not live by bread alone.' But in dreamless sleep, you don't go into it consciously. So use your inner body as a portal through which you enter the Unmanifested, and keep that portal open so that you stay connected with the Source at all times.

OTHER PORTALS

In other words, you feel the God- essence in every creature, every power, every stone, and you realize: 'All that is, is holy.' This is why Jesus, speaking entirely from his essence or Christ identity, says in the Gospel of Thomas: 'Split a piece of wood; I am there. Continuous mind activity keeps you imprisoned in the world of form and becomes an opaque screen that prevents you from becoming conscious of the Unmanifested, conscious of the formless and timeless God- essence in yourself and in all things and all creatures. In the state of surrender, your form identity softens and becomes somewhat 'transparent,' as it were, so the Unmanifested can shine through you. Get in touch with the energy field of the inner body, be intensely present, disidentify from the mind, surrender to what is; these are all portals you can use but you only need to use one. As soon as one of the portals is open, love is present in you as the 'feeling-realization' of oneness.

SILENCE

It pervades this world, but it is so well disguised that almost everybody misses it completely. Paying attention to outer silence creates inner silence: the mind becomes still. Every sound is born out of silence, dies back into silence, and during its life span is surrounded by silence. It is an intrinsic but unmanifested part of every sound, every musical note, every song, every word. You cannot pay attention to silence without simultaneously becoming still within. Silence without, stillness within.

SPACE

Just as no sound can exist without silence, nothing can exist without nothing, without the empty space that enables it to be. Not only that, but even inside every physical body there is far more 'nothing' than 'something.' Physicists tell us that the solidity of matter is an illusion. Even seemingly solid matter, including your physical body, is nearly 100 percent empty space so vast are the distances between the atoms compared to their size. You can't do a Ph.D. on 'nothing.' When scientists study space, they usually make it into something and thereby miss its essence entirely. Since space is 'nothing,' we can say that what is not there is more important than what is there. Pay attention to 'nothing.' As you do that, a shift in consciousness takes place inside you. By becoming aware of the empty space around you, you simultaneously become aware of the space of no-mind, of pure consciousness: the Unmanifested.

THE TRUE NATURE OF SPACE AND TIME

Suddenly, space wouldn't be vast anymore; it would not be there at all. Space comes into being the moment the One becomes two, and as 'two' become the 'ten thousand things,' as Lao Tse calls the manifested world, space becomes more and more vast. Before the universe came into being, before the 'big bang' if you like, there wasn't a vast empty space waiting to be 'lled. When the One became 'the ten thousand things,' suddenly space seemed to be there and enabled the many to be. And the greatest miracle is this: That stillness and vastness that enables the universe to be, is not just out there in space it is also within you. Whereas space is the still, infinitely deep realm of no-mind, the inner equivalent of time is presence, awareness of the eternal Now. When space and time are realized within as the Unmanifested no-mind and presence external space and time continue to exist for you, but they become much less important. Just as you would not be conscious of space if there were no objects in space, the world is needed for the Unmanifested to be realized. You may have heard the Buddhist saying: 'If there were no illusion, there would be no enlightenment.' It is through the world and ultimately through you that the Unmanifested knows itself.

CONSCIOUS DEATH

Even if you have missed all the other opportunities for spiritual realization during your lifetime, one last portal will open up for you immediately after the body has died. In the Tibetan Book of the Dead, it is described as 'the luminous splendor of the colorless light of Emptiness,' which it says is 'your own true self.' This portal opens up only very briefly, and unless you have already encountered the dimension of the Unmanifested in your lifetime, you will likely miss it. This opportunity is tragically missed most of the time, since we live in a culture that is almost totally ignorant of death, as it is almost totally ignorant of anything that truly matters.

ENTER THE NOW FROM WHEREVER YOU ARE

Happiness may be perceived as a heightened sense of aliveness attained through physical pleasure, or a more secure and more complete sense of self attained through some form of psychological gratification. True salvation is fulfillment, peace, life in all its fullness. True salvation is a state of freedom from fear, from suffering, from a perceived state of lack and insufficiency and therefore from all wanting, needing, grasping, and clinging. It is freedom from compulsive thinking, from negativity, and above all from past and future as a psychological need. It is saying, in fact, that you need time that you need to find, sort out, do, achieve, acquire, become, or understand something before you can be free or complete. You see time as the means to salvation, whereas in truth it is the greatest obstacle to salvation. You think that you can't get there from where and who you are at this moment because you are not yet complete or good enough, but the truth is that here and now is the only point from where you can get there. So there is no only way to salvation: Any condition can be used, but no particular condition is needed. However, there is only one point of access: the Now: There can be no salvation away from this moment.

LOVE/HATE RELATIONSHIPS

Unless and until you access the consciousness frequency of presence, all relationships, and particularly intimate relationships, are deeply flawed and ultimately dysfunctional. They may seem perfect for a while, such as when you are "in love," but invariably that apparent perfection gets disrupted as arguments, conflicts, dissatisfaction, and emotional or even physical violence occur with increasing frequency. Love can then turn into savage attack, feelings of hostility, or complete withdrawal of affection at the flick of a switch. The relationship then oscillates for a while, a few months or a few years, between the polarities of "love" and hate, and it gives you as much pleasure as it gives you pain. When a balance between the positive/negative polarities is lost and the negative, destructive cycles occur with increasing frequency and intensity, which tends to happen sooner or later, then it will not be long before the relationship finally collapses. It may appear that if you could only eliminate the negative or destructive cycles, then all would be well and the relationship would flower beautifully but alas, this is not possible. I am speaking here of what is commonly called romantic relationships not of true love, which has no opposite because it arises from beyond the mind. It can manifest in many forms: possessiveness, jealousy, control, withdrawal and unspoken resentment, the need to be right, insensitivity and self-absorption, emotional demands and manipulation, the urge to argue, criticize, judge, blame, or attack, anger, unconscious revenge for past pain inflicted by a parent, rage and physical violence. On the positive side, you are "in love" with your partner. You are on a high when the drug is available, but even the possibility or the thought that he or she might no longer be there for you can lead to jealousy, possessiveness, attempts at manipulation through emotional blackmail, blaming and accusing fear of loss.

ADDICTION AND THE SEARCH FOR WHOLENESS

The reason why the romantic love relationship is such an intense and universally sought-after experience is that it seems to offer liberation from a deep-seated state of fear, need, lack, and incompleteness that is part of the human condition in its unredeemed and unenlightened state. On the physical level, you are obviously not whole, nor will you ever be: You are either a man or a woman, which is to say, one-half of the whole. On this level, the longing for wholeness the return to oneness manifests as male- female attraction, man's need for a woman, woman's need for a man. The root of this physical urge is a spiritual one: the longing for an end to duality, a return to the state of wholeness. On the psychological level, the sense of lack and incompleteness is, if anything, even greater than on the physical level. This false, mind-made self, the ego, feels vulnerable, insecure, and is always seeking new things to identify with to give it a feeling that it exists. You now have a single focal point that replaces them all, gives meaning to your life, and through which you define your identity: the person you are in love with. If in your relationships you experience both love and the opposite of love attack, emotional violence, and so on then it is likely that you are confusing ego attachment and addictive clinging with love. If your love has an opposite, then it is not love but a strong ego-need for a more complete and deeper sense of self, a need that the other person temporarily meets. The feelings of fear, pain, and lack that are an intrinsic part of egoic consciousness but had been covered up by the love relationship now resurface. When those painful feelings reappear, you feel them even more strongly than before, and what is more, you now perceive your partner as the cause of those feelings. This attack may awaken the partner's own pain, and he or she may counter your attack. At this point, the ego is still unconsciously hoping that its attack or its attempts at manipulation will be sufficient punishment to induce your partner to change their behavior, so that it can use them again as a cover-up for your pain. Whatever the substance you are addicted to alcohol, food, legal or illegal drugs, or a person you are using something or somebody to cover up your pain. Every addiction reaches a point where it does not work for you anymore, and then you feel the pain more intensely than ever. This is one reason why most people are always trying to escape from the present moment and are seeking some kind of salvation in the future, The first thing that they might encounter if they focused their attention on the Now is their own pain, and this is what they fear.

FROM ADDICTIVE TO ENLIGHTENED RELATIONSHIPS

For love to flourish, the light of your presence needs to be strong enough so that you no longer get taken over by the thinker or the pain-body and mistake them for who you are. You are a human mind again, pretending to be a human being, interacting with another mind, playing a drama called love. Although brief glimpses are possible, love cannot flourish unless you are permanently free of mind identification and your presence is intense enough to have dissolved the pain-body or you can at least remain present as the watcher.

RELATIONSHIPS AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

As the egoic mode of consciousness and all the social, political, and economic structures that it created enter the final stage of collapse, the relationships between men and women reflect the deep state of crisis in which humanity now finds itself. As humans have become increasingly identified with their mind, most relationships are not rooted in Being and so turn into a source of pain and become dominated by problems and conflict. Still others compromise and continue to be together in a dysfunctional relationship in which negativity prevails, for the sake of the children or security, through force of habit, fear of being alone, or some other mutually beneficial arrangement, or even through the unconscious addiction to the excitement of emotional drama and pain. For example, when you know there is disharmony and you hold that knowing, through your knowing a new factor has come in, and the disharmony cannot remain unchanged. So whenever your relationship is not working, whenever it brings out the madness in you and in your partner, be glad. If there is jealousy, defensiveness, the urge to argue, the need to be right, an inner child demanding love and attention, or emotional pain of any kind whatever it is, know the reality of that moment and hold the knowing. If you observe unconscious behavior in your partner, hold it in the loving embrace of your knowing so that you won't react. If you react at all to your partner's unconsciousness, you become unconscious yourself. You will then either be totally free of reaction or you may react and still be the knowing, the space in which the reaction is watched and allowed to be. Accusing, defending, attacking all those patterns that are designed to strengthen or protect the ego or to get its needs met will then become redundant. When you have removed the two factors that are destructive of relationships: When the pain-body has been transmuted and you are no longer identified with mind and mental positions, and if your partner has done the same, you will experience the bliss of the powering of relationship. Instead of mirroring to each other your pain and your unconsciousness, instead of satisfying your mutual addictive ego needs, you will reflect back to each other the love that you feel deep within, the love that comes with the realization of your oneness with all that is. If your partner is still identified with the mind and the pain-body while you are already free, this will represent a major challenge not to you but to your partner. Remember that the ego needs problems, conflict, and enemies to strengthen the sense of separateness on which its identity depends. The unenlightened partner's mind will be deeply frustrated because its fixed positions are not resisted, which means they will become shaky and weak, and there is even the danger that they may collapse altogether, resulting in loss of self. But beware: Some people who are unresponsive, withdrawn, insensitive, or cut off from their feelings may think and try to convince others that they are enlightened, or at least that there is nothing wrong with them and everything wrong with their partner. Another indicator is how a person behaves in difficult or challenging situations or when things go wrong. If your enlightenment is egoic self-delusion, then life will soon give you a challenge that will bring out your unconsciousness in whatever form as fear, anger, defensiveness, judgment, depression, and so on. For example, a woman may be challenged by an unresponsive male partner who lives almost entirely in his head. The absence of love in the relationship, which is usually more keenly felt by a woman than a man, will trigger the woman's pain-body, and through it she will attack her partner blame, criticize, make wrong, and so on. To defend himself against her pain-body's attack, which he sees as totally unwarranted, he will become even more deeply entrenched in his mental positions as he justifies, defends himself or counterattacks. When both partners have thus been taken over, a level of deep unconsciousness has been reached, of emotional violence, savage attack and counterattack. Many volumes have been written, and many more could be written, about the ways in which unconsciousness is brought out in male-female relationships. For example, the woman's hostility could become a signal for the man to come out of his mind-identified state, awaken into the Now, become present instead of becoming

WHY WOMEN ARE CLOSER TO ENLIGHTENMENT

Generally speaking, it is easier for a woman to feel and be in her body, so she is naturally closer to Being and potentially closer to enlightenment than a man. In the Tao Te Ching, one of the most ancient and profound books ever written, the Tao, which could be translated as Being, is described as "infinite, eternally present, the mother of the universe." Naturally, women are closer to it than men since they virtually "embody" the Unmanifested. Since the Source is seen as female, this is represented as the light and dark sides of the archetypal feminine in psychology and mythology. When the mind took over and humans lost touch with the reality of their divine essence, they started to think of God as a male figure. But it is still a representation and a concept, perhaps temporarily useful, just as a map or a signpost is temporarily useful, but more a hindrance than a help when you are ready to realize the reality beyond all concepts and images. This is why the traditional God is a patriarchal, controlling authority figure, an often angry man who you should live in fear of, as the Old Testament suggests. To go beyond the mind and reconnect with the deeper reality of Being, very different qualities are needed: surrender, nonjudgment, an openness that allows life to be instead of resisting it, the capacity to hold all things in the loving embrace of your knowing. At this time, the vast majority of men as well as women are still in the grip of the mind: identified with the thinker and the pain-body. As a general rule, the major obstacle for men tends to be the thinking mind, and the major obstacle for women the pain-body, although in certain individual cases the opposite may be true, and in others the two factors may be equal.

DISSOLVING THE COLLECTIVE FEMALE PAIN-BODY

For example, certain races or countries in which extreme forms of strife and violence occur have a heavier collective pain-body than others. Anyone with a strong pain-body and not enough consciousness to disidentify from it will not only continuously or periodically be forced to relive their emotional pain but may also easily become either the perpetrator or the victim of violence, depending on whether their pain-body is predominantly active or passive. Apart from her personal pain-body, every woman has her share in what could be described as the collective female pain-body unless she is fully conscious. The emotional or physical pain that for many women precedes and coincides with the menstrual flow is the pain-body in its collective aspect that awakens from its dormancy at that time, although it can be triggered at other times too. Your main task as a woman now is to transmute the pain-body so that it no longer comes between you and your true self, the essence of who you are. Of course, you also have to deal with the other obstacle to enlightenment, which is the thinking mind, but the intense presence you generate when dealing with the pain-body will also free you from identification with the mind. The pain-body is an energy field, almost like an entity, that has become temporarily lodged in your inner space. Of course, the pain-body is there because of certain things that happened in the past. If a woman is still holding on to anger, resentment, or condemnation, she is holding on to her pain-body. This may give her a comforting sense of identity, of solidarity with other women, but it is keeping her in bondage to the past and blocking full access to her essence and true power. Usually, it is a time of unconsciousness for many women, as they are taken over by the collective female pain-body. I have described the basic process already, but let me take you through it again, this time with special reference to the collective female pain-body. When you know that the menstrual flow is approaching, before you feel the first signs of what is commonly called premenstrual tension, the awakening of the collective female pain-body, become very alert and inhabit your body as fully as possible. Later, when the pain-body has fully awakened from its dormant state, you may experience considerable turbulence in your inner space for a while, perhaps for several days. The pain-body becomes transformed into radiant consciousness, just as a piece of wood, when placed in or near a fire, itself is transformed into fire. Menstruation will then become not only a joyful and fulfilling expression of your womanhood but also a sacred time of transmutation, when you give birth to a new consciousness. If he stays present whenever you fall back into unconscious identification with the pain-body, which can and will happen at first, you will be able to quickly rejoin him in that state. This means that whenever the pain-body temporarily takes over, whether during menses or at other times, your partner will not mistake it for who you are. Even if the pain-body attacks him, as it probably will, he will not react to it as if it were "you," withdraw, or put up some kind of defense. At other times, you will be able to do the same for him or help him reclaim consciousness from the mind by drawing his attention into the here and now whenever he becomes identified with his thinking. So it is perfectly possible for an enlightened person, if the need for the male or female polarity is not met, to feel a sense of lack or incompleteness on the outer level of his or her being, yet at the same time be totally complete, fulfilled, and at peace within. Being an outsider to some extent, someone who does not fit in with others or is rejected by them for whatever reason, makes life difficult, but it also places you at an advantage as far as enlightenment is concerned.

THE HIGHER GOOD BEYOND GOOD AND BAD

There is only a higher good which includes the 'bad.' Seen from the perspective of the mind, however, there is good-bad, like-dislike, love-hate. Hence, in the Book of Genesis, it is said that Adam and Eve were no longer allowed to dwell in 'paradise' when they 'ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.' This sounds to me like denial and self-deception. As a result, the usual ego motivations for 'doing' fear, greed, control, defending or feeding the false sense of self will cease to operate. 'Accept whatever comes to you woven in the pattern of your destiny, for what could more aptly 't your needs?' This was written 2,000 years ago by Marcus Aurelius, one of those exceedingly rare humans who possessed worldly power as well as wisdom. As soon as they do, one of the greatest miracles happens: the awakening of Being- consciousness through what appears as evil, the transmutation of suffering into inner peace. Through forgiveness, which essentially means recognizing the insubstantiality of the past and allowing the present moment to be as it is, the miracle of transformation happens not only within but also without.

THE END OF YOUR LIFE DRAMA

When egos come together, whether in personal relationships or in organizations or institutions, 'bad' things happen sooner or later: drama of one kind or another, in the form of conflict, problems, power struggles, emotional or physical violence, and so on.

IMPERMANENCE AND THE CYCLES OF LIFE

However, as long as you are in the physical dimension and linked to the collective human psyche, physical pain although rare is still possible. Also, as long as you are in this dimension, you are still subject to its cyclical nature and to the law of impermanence of all things, but you no longer perceive this as "bad" it just is. Through allowing the "isness" of all things, a deeper dimension underneath the play of opposites reveals itself to you as an abiding presence, an unchanging deep stillness, an uncaused joy beyond good and bad. This is reflected everywhere: in the life cycle of a star or a planet, a physical body, a tree, a flower; in the rise and fall of nations, political systems, civilizations; and in the inevitable cycles of gain and loss in the life of an individual. There are cycles of success, when things come to you and thrive, and cycles of failure, when they wither or disintegrate and you have to let them go in order to make room for new things to arise, or for transformation to happen. If growth, of whatever kind, were to go on and on, it would eventually become monstrous and destructive. In this world, which is to say on the level of form, everybody "fails" sooner or later, of course, and every achievement eventually comes to naught. You can still be active and enjoy manifesting and creating new forms and circumstances, but you won't be identified with them. There will be periods when you are highly active and creative, but there may also be times when everything seems stagnant, when it seems that you are not getting anywhere, not achieving anything. The compulsion to do, and the tendency to derive your sense of self-worth and identity from external factors such as achievement, is an inevitable illusion as long as you are identified with the mind. All conditions are highly unstable and in constant flux, or, as he put it, impermanence is a characteristic of every condition, every situation you will ever encounter in your life. Impermanence is also central to Jesus's teaching: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal . . ." As long as a condition is judged as "good" by your mind, whether it be a relationship, a possession, a social role, a place, or your physical body, the mind attaches itself to it and identifies with it. It makes you happy, makes you feel good about yourself, and it may become part of who you are or think you are. Either it ends or it changes, or it may undergo a polarity shift: The same condition that was good yesterday or last year has suddenly or gradually turned into bad. When a condition or situation that the mind has attached itself to and identified with changes or disappears, the mind cannot accept it. Others, whenever a major loss of one kind or another occurs, just become deeply unhappy or make themselves ill. If she had been able to connect with the formless and timeless life within, she could have watched and allowed the fading of her external form from a place of serenity and peace. Moreover, her external form would have become increasingly transparent to the light shining through from her ageless true nature, so her beauty would not really have faded but simply become transformed into spiritual beauty. It is simply recognizing the nature of things, so that you don't pursue an illusion for the rest of your life. Things and conditions can give you pleasure, but they will also give you pain. Things and conditions can give you pleasure, but they cannot give you joy. Many people never realize that there can be no "salvation" in anything they do, possess, or attain. The Old Testament prophet must have arrived at such a realization when he wrote "I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. This I know." What he meant, of course, was this: I have learned to offer no resistance to what is; I have learned to allow the present moment to be and to accept the impermanent nature of all things and conditions. This state is then no longer dependent upon things being in a certain way, good or bad. It seems almost paradoxical, yet when your inner dependency on form is gone, the general conditions of your life, the outer forms, tend to improve greatly. Things, people, or conditions that you thought you needed for your happiness now come to you with no struggle or effort on your part, and you are free to enjoy and appreciate them while they last. All those things, of course, will still pass away. cycles will come and go, but with

USING AND RELINQUISHING NEGATIVITY

Negativity ranges from irritation or impatience to fierce anger, from a depressed mood or sullen resentment to suicidal despair. Sometimes the resistance triggers the emotional pain-body, in which case even a minor situation may produce intense negativity, such as anger, depression, or deep grief. It believes that through it, it can attract a desirable condition or dissolve an undesirable one. A Course in Miracles rightly points out that, whenever you are unhappy, there is the unconscious belief that the unhappiness buys you what you want. The fact is, of course, that negativity does not work. Instead of dissolving an undesirable one, it keeps it in place. Its only useful function is that it strengthens the ego, and that is why the ego loves it. Once you have identified with some form of negativity, you do not want to let go, and on a deeply unconscious level, you do not want positive change. It would threaten your identity as a depressed, angry, or hard-done-by person. It is a psychic pollutant, and there is a deep link between the poisoning and destruction of nature and the vast negativity that has accumulated in the collective human psyche. No other life form on the planet knows negativity, only humans, just as no other life form violates and poisons the Earth that sustains it. Watch any plant or animal and let it teach you acceptance of what is, surrender to the Now. Let it teach you integrity which means to be one, to be yourself, to be real. Let it teach you how to live and how to die, and how not to make living and dying into a problem. How peacefully they float along, at ease with themselves, totally present in the Now, dignified and perfect as only a mindless creature can be. Occasionally, however, two ducks will get into a fight sometimes for no apparent reason, or because one duck has strayed into another's private space. The fight usually lasts only for a few seconds, and then the ducks separate, swim off in opposite directions, and vigorously flap their wings a few times. When I observed that for the first time, I suddenly realized that by flapping their wings they were releasing surplus energy, thus preventing it from becoming trapped in their body and turning into negativity. This is natural wisdom, and it is easy for them because they do not have a mind that keeps the past alive unnecessarily and then builds an identity around it. For example, if I often feel depressed, it may be a signal that there is something wrong with my life, and it may force me to look at my life situation and make some changes. Yes, recurring negative emotions do sometimes contain a message, as do illnesses. But any changes that you make, whether they have to do with your work, your relationships, or your surroundings, are ultimately only cosmetic unless they arise out of a change in your level of consciousness. And as far as that is concerned, it can only mean one thing: becoming more present. When you have reached a certain degree of presence, you don't need negativity anymore to tell you what is needed in your life situation. But as long as negativity is there, use it. There are as yet few people on the planet who can sustain a state of continuous presence, although some are getting close to it. Whenever you notice that some form of negativity has arisen within you, look on it not as a failure, but as a helpful signal that is telling you: "Wake up. Be present." There is a novel by Aldous Huxley called *Island*, written in his later years when he became very interested in spiritual teachings. The first thing that the man notices are the colorful parrots perched in the trees, and they seem to be constantly croaking the words "Attention. So whenever you feel negativity arising within you, whether caused by an external factor, a thought, or even nothing in particular that you are aware of, look on it as a voice saying "Attention. Wake up." Even the slightest irritation is significant and needs to be acknowledged and looked at; otherwise, there will be a cumulative build-up of unobserved reactions. As I said before, you may be able to just drop it once you realize that you don't want to have this energy held inside you and that it serves no purpose. As an alternative to dropping a negative reaction, you can make it disappear by imagining yourself becoming transparent to the external cause of the reaction. I recommend that you practice it with little, even trivial, things first. Because it holds the unconscious belief that its resistance, which you experience as negativity or unhappiness in some

THE NATURE OF COMPASSION

Having gone beyond the mind-made opposites, you become like a deep lake. You abide in Being unchanging, timeless, deathless and you are no longer dependent for fulfillment or happiness on the outer world of constantly fluctuating forms. You can enjoy them, play with them, create new forms, appreciate the beauty of it all. Your mind will like or dislike their form, which is not just their body but includes their mind as well. Coming from Being, you will perceive another person's body and mind as just a screen, as it were, behind which you can feel their true reality, as you feel yours. So, when confronted with someone else's suffering or unconscious behavior, you stay present and in touch with Being and are thus able to look beyond the form and feel the other person's radiant and pure Being through your own. Miracles of healing sometimes occur through this realization, by awakening Being-consciousness in others if they are ready. But there are two sides to compassion, two sides to this bond. On the one hand, since you are still here as a physical body, you share the vulnerability and mortality of your physical form with every other human and with every living being. Next time you say "I have nothing in common with this person," remember that you have a great deal in common: A few years from now two years or seventy years, it doesn't make much difference both of you will have become rotting corpses, then piles of dust, then nothing at all. One of the most powerful spiritual practices is to meditate deeply on the mortality of physical forms, including your own. Nothing that was real ever died, only names, forms, and illusions. ✦ The realization of this deathless dimension, your true nature, is the other side of compassion. On a deep feeling-level, you now recognize not only your own immortality but through your own that of every other creature as well. On the level of form, you share mortality and the precariousness of existence. In compassion, the seemingly opposite feelings of sadness and joy merge into one and become transmuted into a deep inner peace, This is the peace of God. It is one of the most noble feelings that humans are capable of, and it has great healing and transformative power. But true compassion, as I have just described it, is as yet rare. It does not happen until sadness merges with joy, the joy of Being beyond form, the joy of eternal life.

TOWARD A DIFFERENT ORDER OF REALITY

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ACCEPTANCE OF THE NOW

To some people, surrender may have negative connotations, implying defeat, giving up, failing to rise to the challenges of life, becoming lethargic, and so on. The only place where you can experience the flow of life is the Now, so to surrender is to accept the present moment unconditionally and without reservation. Inner resistance is to say "no" to what is, through mental judgment and emotional negativity. It becomes particularly pronounced when things "go wrong," which means that there is a gap between the demands or rigid expectations of your mind and what is. If you have lived long enough, you will know that things "go wrong" quite often. In fact, it is not the overall situation that you need to accept when you surrender, but just the tiny segment called the Now. "Okay, I resign myself to being stuck in the mud." Resignation is not surrender. The fog is your life situation, which includes past and future; the "flashlight" is your conscious presence; the dear space is the Now. Bodywork and certain forms of physical therapy can be helpful in restoring this flow, but unless you practice surrender in your everyday life, those things can only give temporary symptom relief since the cause the resistance pattern has not been dissolved. There is something within you that remains unaffected by the transient circumstances that make up your life situation, and only through surrender do you have access to it. If you find your life situation unsatisfactory or even intolerable, it is only by surrendering first that you can break the unconscious resistance pattern that perpetuates that situation. Surrender is perfectly compatible with taking action, initiating change or achieving goals. Surrender reconnects you with the source-energy of Being, and if your doing is infused with Being, it becomes a joyful celebration of life energy that takes you more deeply into the Now. It is the quality of your consciousness at this moment that is the main determinant of what kind of future you will experience, so to surrender is the most important thing you can do to bring about positive change. In the state of surrender, you see very clearly what needs to be done, and you take action, doing one thing at a time and focusing on one thing at a time. That's why Jesus said: "Look at the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin." If your overall situation is unsatisfactory or unpleasant, separate out this instant and surrender to what is. Ask yourself, "Is there anything I can do to change the situation, improve it, or remove myself from it?" If so, you take appropriate action. But make sure you don't start to run "mental movies," project yourself into the future, and so lose the Now. If there is no action you can take, and you cannot remove yourself from the situation either, then use the situation to make you go more deeply into surrender, more deeply into the Now, more deeply into Being. Do not confuse surrender with an attitude of "I can't be bothered anymore" or "I just don't care anymore." If you look at it closely, you will find that such an attitude is tainted with negativity in the form of hidden resentment and so is not surrender at all but masked resistance.

FROM MIND ENERGY TO SPIRITUAL ENERGY

If you say it is by surrendering, the question remains: ?How?? Start by acknowledging that there is resistance. Negativity, unhappiness, or suffering in whatever form means that there is resistance, and resistance is always unconscious. You say that you are conscious of your unhappy feelings, but the truth is that you are identified with them and keep the process alive through compulsive thinking. When you do, the energy that you emanate and which then runs your life is of a much higher vibrational frequency than the mind energy that still runs our world the energy that created the existing social, political, and economic structures of our civilization, and which also continuously perpetuates itself through our educational systems and the media. Unlike mind energy, it does not pollute the earth, and it is not subject to the law of polarities, which dictates that nothing can exist without its opposite, that there can be no good without bad. Those who run on mind energy, which is still the vast majority of the Earth's population, remain unaware of the existence of spiritual energy.

SURRENDER IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

When you say ?no? to a person or a situation, let it come not from reaction but from insight, from a clear realization of what is right or not right for you at that moment. I don't mean dropping the reaction just verbally by saying ?Okay, you are right,? with a look on your face that says, ?I am above all this childish unconsciousness.? That's just displacing the resistance to another level, with the egoic mind still in charge, claiming superiority. Having said that, ?doing nothing? when you are in a state of intense presence is a very powerful transformer and healer of situations and people. So the ego exists in a continuous resistance-mode and plays counterfeit roles to cover up your ?weakness,? which in truth is your power. You'll become vulnerable.? What the ego doesn't know, of course, is that only through the letting go of resistance, through becoming ?vulnerable,? can you discover your true and essential invulnerability.

TRANSFORMING ILLNESS INTO ENLIGHTENMENT

We are talking about your life this instant not the conditions or circumstances of your life, not what I call your life situation. As you know, underneath the various conditions that make up your life situation, which exists in time, there is something deeper, more essential: your Life, your very Being in the timeless Now. As there are no problems in the Now, there is no illness either. The belief in a label that someone attaches to your condition keeps the condition in place, empowers it, and makes a seemingly solid reality out of a temporary imbalance. By focusing on this instant and refraining from labeling it mentally, illness is reduced to one or several of these factors: physical pain, weakness, discomfort, or disability. You do not surrender to the idea of ?illness.? Allow the suffering to force you into the present moment, into a state of intense conscious presence. If you have a major illness, use it for enlightenment.

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

So whenever any kind of disaster strikes, or something goes seriously ?wrong? illness, disability, loss of home or fortune or of a socially de?ned identity, break-up or a close relationship, death or su?ering of a loved one, or your own impending death know that there is another side to it, that you are just one step away from something incredible: a complete alchemical transmutation of the base metal of pain and su?ering into gold.

TRANSFORMING SUFFERING INTO PEACE

I read about a stoic philosopher in ancient Greece who, when he was told that his son had died in an accident, replied, ?I knew he was not immortal.? Is that surrender? If you abide in this state of acceptance, you create no more negativity, no more su?ering, no more unhappiness. Whenever you are unable to do that, whenever you miss that chance either because you are not generating enough conscious presence to prevent some habitual and unconscious resistance pattern from arising, or because the condition is so extreme as to be absolutely unacceptable to you then you are creating some form of pain, some form of su?ering. Now here is your second chance at surrender: If you cannot accept what is outside, then accept what is inside. Surrender to the grief, despair, fear, loneliness, or whatever form the su?ering takes. When your pain is deep, all talk of surrender will probably seem futile and meaningless anyway. When your pain is deep, you will likely have a strong urge to escape from it rather than surrender to it. There are many pseudo escapes work, drink, drugs, anger, projection, suppression, and so on but they don't free you from the pain. If they are unconscious, they may even feel compelled to attack or hurt you in some way, or you may hurt them in an unconscious projection of your pain. Give all your attention to the feeling, not to the person, event, or situation that seems to have caused it. Since it is impossible to get away from the feeling, the only possibility of change is to move into it; otherwise, nothing will shift. At ?rst, it may seem like a dark and terrifying place, and when the urge to turn away from it comes, observe it but don't act on it. Keep putting your attention on the pain, keep feeling the grief, the fear, the dread, the loneliness, whatever it is. Full attention is full acceptance, is surrender. Facing deep pain, allowing it to be, taking your attention into it, is to enter death consciously. Then die to the past every moment, and let the light of your presence shine away the heavy, time-bound self you thought of as ?you.?

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

✧ ✧ There are many accounts of people who say they have found God through their deep suffering, and there is the Christian expression "the way of the cross," which I suppose points to the same thing. They found God through surrender, through total acceptance of what is, into which they were forced by their intense suffering. Since resistance is inseparable from the mind, relinquishment of resistance surrender is the end of the mind as your master, the impostor pretending to be "you," the false god. It means that the worst thing in your life, your cross, turns into the best thing that ever happened to you, by forcing you into surrender, into "death," forcing you to become as nothing, to become as God because God, too, is no-thing. This suffering is inflicted not by God but by humans on themselves and on each other as well as by certain defensive measures that the Earth, which is a living, intelligent organism, is going to take to protect herself from the onslaught of human madness. However, there is a growing number of humans alive today whose consciousness is sufficiently evolved not to need any more suffering before the realization of enlightenment.