

= Eckhart Tolle =

Eckhart Tolle ( / ˈɛkˌhɑːrt ˈtɒl/ ; German pronunciation : [ ˈɛkˌhaːt ˈtɒl ] , born Ulrich Leonard Tölle , February 16 , 1948 ) is a German @-@ born resident of Canada , best known as the author of *The Power of Now* and *A New Earth : Awakening to your Life 's Purpose* . In 2011 , he was listed by Watkins Review as the most spiritually influential person in the world . In 2008 , a New York Times writer called Tolle " the most popular spiritual author in the United States "

Tolle has said that he was depressed for much of his life until he underwent , at age 29 , an " inner transformation " . He then spent several years wandering " in a state of deep bliss " before becoming a spiritual teacher . Later , he moved to North America where he began writing his first book , *The Power of Now* , which was published in 1997 and reached the New York Times Best Seller lists in 2000 .

*The Power of Now* and *A New Earth* sold an estimated three million and five million copies respectively in North America by 2009 . In 2008 , approximately 35 million people participated in a series of 10 live webinars with Tolle and television talk show host Oprah Winfrey . Tolle is not identified with any particular religion , but he has been influenced by a wide range of spiritual works . He has lived in Vancouver , British Columbia since 1995 .

= = Early life and education = =

Born Ulrich Leonard Tölle in Lünen , a small town located north of Dortmund in the Ruhr Valley , Germany in 1948 , Tolle describes his childhood as unhappy , particularly his early childhood in Germany . His parents fought and eventually separated , and he felt alienated from a hostile school environment . Tolle also experienced considerable fear and anxiety growing up in post @-@ war Germany , where he would play in bombed @-@ out buildings . He later stated that pain " was in the energy field of the country " . At the age of 13 , he moved to Spain to live with his father . Tolle 's father did not insist that his son attend high school , so Tolle elected to study literature , astronomy and various languages at home .

At the age of 15 , Tolle read several books written by the German mystic Joseph Anton Schneiderfranken , also known as Bô Yin Râ . Tolle has said he responded " very deeply " to those books .

At the age of 19 , about 10 years before his " inner transformation " , Tolle moved to England and for three years taught German and Spanish at a London school for language studies . Troubled by " depression , anxiety and fear " , he began " searching for answers " in his life .

In his early twenties , Tolle decided to pursue his search by studying philosophy , psychology , and literature , and enrolled in the University of London . After graduating , he was offered a scholarship to do postgraduate research at Cambridge University , which he began in 1977 , and from which he dropped out soon after .

= = Inner transformation = =

One night in 1977 , at the age of 29 , after having suffered from long periods of depression , Tolle says he experienced an " inner transformation " . That night he awakened from his sleep , suffering from feelings of depression that were " almost unbearable , " but then experienced a life @-@ changing epiphany . Recounting the experience , Tolle says ,

I couldn't live with myself any longer . And in this a question arose without an answer : who is the ? I ? that cannot live with the self ? What is the self ? I felt drawn into a void ! I didn't know at the time that what really happened was the mind @-@ made self , with its heaviness , its problems , that lives between the unsatisfying past and the fearful future , collapsed . It dissolved . The next morning I woke up and everything was so peaceful . The peace was there because there was no self . Just a sense of presence or ? beingness , ? just observing and watching .

Tolle recalls going out for a walk in London the next morning , and finding that ? everything was

miraculous , deeply peaceful . Even the traffic . " The feeling continued , and he began to feel a strong underlying sense of peace in any situation . Tolle stopped studying for his doctorate , and for a period of about two years after this he spent much of his time sitting , ? in a state of deep bliss , " on park benches in Russell Square , Central London , " watching the world go by . ? He stayed with friends , in a Buddhist monastery , or otherwise slept rough on Hampstead Heath . His family thought him ? irresponsible , even insane . " Tolle changed his first name from Ulrich to Eckhart ; by some reports this was in homage to the German philosopher and mystic , Meister Eckhart . A 2012 interview article states that he saw the name Eckhart on one of a pile of books in a dream , and knew he had written the book ; soon after in real life he ran into a psychic friend who called him Eckhart out of nowhere , so Tolle changed his name .

= = Career = =

After this period , former Cambridge students and people he had met by chance began to ask Tolle about his beliefs . He began working as a counselor and spiritual teacher . Students continued to come to him over the next five years . He relocated to Glastonbury , a major centre of alternative living . In 1995 , after having visited the West Coast of North America several times , he settled in Vancouver , British Columbia , where he met his wife to be , Kim Eng .

Tolle 's first book , *The Power of Now* , was first published in 1997 by Namaste Publishing . Only 3000 copies were published of the first edition . Tolle has stated , " I would personally deliver a few copies every week to some small bookstores in Vancouver ... Friends helped by placing copies of the book in spiritual bookstores farther afield " . The book was republished on a large scale by New World Library in 1999 . In 2000 , Oprah Winfrey recommended it in her magazine , *O* . In August 2000 it reached the New York Times Best Seller list for Hardcover Advice . After two more years , it was number one on that list . By 2008 , the book had been translated from English into 33 languages ; since then , it has been translated into Arabic . Tolle published his second book , *Stillness Speaks* , in 2003 . In July 2011 , *The Power of Now* appeared on the list for the 10 best selling Paperback Advice books for the 102nd time .

In 2005 , Tolle published his third book , *A New Earth* , which assumed the number one position on the New York Times Best Seller list several times between March and September 2008 . By the end of 2008 , it reached the list for the 46th time . The high sales of *A New Earth* in that year followed its selection by Oprah Winfrey for her book club in January . In the four weeks following the announcement , 3 @.@ 5 million copies of the book were shipped . Tolle partnered with her to produce a series of webinar sessions beginning in May 2008 . The weekly webinar sessions included discussions between Tolle and Winfrey , silent meditations , and questions from viewers via Skype . Each webinar focused on a specific chapter of *A New Earth* . The third webinar attracted more than 11 million viewers .

Tolle formed a company to sell products related to his teachings called Eckhart Teachings . He created a website called Eckhart Tolle TV , with streaming video of monthly group meditations and other videos . He gives speeches and workshops in English and occasionally in German or Spanish . He also travels for various speaking engagements , such as seminars and retreats . In a 2003 interview with the *Telegraph Magazine* , Tolle indicated that he had no intention of creating " a heavy commercial structure " , nor of setting up an ashram or centre . He believes one " could develop organically " and said " one needs to be careful that the organization doesn ' t become self @-@ serving " .

In September , he appeared with the Dalai Lama and other speakers at the Vancouver Peace Summit . His most recent book , *Guardians of Being* , is a picture book illustrated by Patrick McDonnell , the creator of the comic strip *Mutts* .

= = Teachings = =

Tolle writes in the introduction to his second book , *Stillness Speaks* :

" A true spiritual teacher does not have anything to teach in the conventional sense of the word ,

does not have anything to give or add to you , such as new information , beliefs , or rules of conduct . The only function of such a teacher is to help you remove that which separates you from the truth ... The words are no more than signposts . "

Tolle says that his book , *The Power of Now* , is " a restatement for our time of that one timeless spiritual teaching , the essence of all religions " . He writes that religions " have become so overlaid with extraneous matter that their spiritual substance has become almost completely obscured " , that they have become " to a large extent ... divisive rather than unifying forces " and become " themselves part of the insanity " .

Tolle writes that " the most significant thing that can happen to a human being [ is ] the separation process of thinking and awareness " and that awareness is " the space in which thoughts exist " . Tolle says that " the primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation but your thoughts about it " .

According to Tolle 's official website , " at the core of Tolle 's teachings lies the transformation of consciousness , a spiritual awakening that he sees as the next step in human evolution . An essential aspect of this awakening consists in transcending our ego @-@ based state of consciousness . This is a prerequisite not only for personal happiness but also for the ending of violent conflict endemic on our planet " .

In his book *A New Earth* , Tolle describes a major aspect of the human dysfunction as " ego " or an " illusory sense of self " based on unconscious identification with one 's memories and thoughts , and another major aspect he calls " pain @-@ body " or " an accumulation of old emotional pain " .

Tolle often talks about the relevance of figures in intellectual or popular culture . In *A New Earth* , he quotes Descartes , Sartre , Nietzsche , Shakespeare and Albert Einstein . He has spoken of movies such as *Groundhog Day* , *American Beauty* , *The Horse Whisperer* , *Gran Torino* , *Titanic* , *Avatar* , *Being There* , and *Forrest Gump* , and musicians such as Mozart , The Beatles and The Rolling Stones . He arranged an album of music in 2008 entitled *Music to Quiet the Mind* including work composed by Erik Satie , Claude Debussy and The Beatles , and music by contemporary artists such as Deva Premal , Jeff Johnson , and Steve Roach .

= = = Influences = = =

According to a 2009 article in the *New York Times* , Tolle is " not identified with any religion , but uses teachings from Zen Buddhism , Sufism , Hinduism and the Bible " . Tolle has said : " I feel actually that the work I do is a coming together of the teaching ' stream ' , if you want to call it that , of [ Jiddu ] Krishnamurti and Ramana Maharshi . " Tolle himself has mentioned texts such as the *Tao Te Ching* , the *Bhagavad Gita* and other Hindu scriptures , the Buddhist scriptures , the Old Testament , the New Testament , and *A Course in Miracles* ; he has mentioned various individuals such as Zoroaster , Lao Tzu , Mahavira , Gautama Buddha , Heraclitus , Parmenides , Jesus , Epictetus , Marcus Aurelius , Rumi , Meister Eckhart , Hafiz , Rinzai Gigen , Ralph Waldo Emerson , Carl Gustav Jung ; and he has emphasized the mystical schools within religions such as Gnosticism in Christianity , Sufism in Islam , Hasidism and Kabbala in Judaism , Advaita Vedanta in Hinduism , and Zen and Dzogchen in Buddhism . He has met and spoken with Barry Long and Don Miguel Ruiz , and he wrote a foreword for *The Diamond in Your Pocket* by Gangaji .

= = = Reception = = =

In 2008 , an article in the *New York Times* referred to Tolle as " the most popular spiritual author in the [ United States ] " . In 2011 , the *Watkins Review* put him at number 1 in a list of " The 100 Most Spiritually Influential Living People " . By 2009 , total sales of *The Power of Now* and *A New Earth* in North America had been estimated at three million and five million copies respectively .

The books have received a wide range of praise and criticism . One book reviewer characterized *The Power of Now* as " awash in spiritual mumbo @-@ jumbo " , while another reviewer wrote , " Tolle 's clear writing and the obvious depth of his experience and insight set it apart " .

Some critics characterize Tolle 's books as unoriginal or derivative . A 2009 *New York Times* article

said he is " hardly the first writer to tap into the American longing for meaning and success " . Sara Nelson , the editor @-@ in @-@ chief of Publishers Weekly , said Tolle 's writings have been successful due to surging public interest in books that tell you how to be happier , more peaceful and more successful . James Robinson in The Observer called Tolle 's writings " a mix of pseudo @-@ science , New Age philosophy , and teaching borrowed from established religions " .

However , others praise his re @-@ working and synthesis of traditions . New Age writer William Bloom wrote that " Tolle is offering a very contemporary synthesis of Eastern spiritual teaching , which is normally so clothed in arcane language that it is incomprehensible " , thereby providing " a valuable perspective on Western culture " . Publisher Judith Kendra says , " The ideas [ that Tolle is ] talking about have been in existence for thousands of years in both Eastern texts and with the great Western mystics , but he 's able to make them understandable " . Musician Annie Lennox said " [ Tolle ] has some kind of special quality that I 've never encountered before " .

= = = Reception by Christian theologians = = =

Some Christian scholars criticize Tolle 's teachings , while others praise them .

James Beverley , Professor of Christian Thought and Ethics at evangelical Tyndale Seminary in Toronto , says that Tolle 's worldview " is at odds with central Christian convictions " and that " Tolle denies the core of Christianity by claiming there is no ultimate distinction between humans and God and Jesus " . John Stackhouse , a professor of theology and culture at evangelical Regent College in Vancouver , says that Tolle " gives a certain segment of the population exactly what they want : a sort of supreme religion that purports to draw from all sorts of lesser , that is , established religions " . Stackhouse has described Tolle as one of several spiritual teachers who " purport to have investigated the world 's religions ( quite a claim ) and found them wanting , who routinely subject those religions to withering criticism , and who then champion their own views as superior to all these alternatives " .

In 2008 The Independent noted that " Tolle does have fans in academic , even Christian , circles " . Theologian Andrew Ryder wrote that " Tolle 's writing is based on his own experience and personal reflection . This makes his approach to the challenge of living in the present moment both practical and fresh " even though " he may not use the language of traditional Christian spirituality " .

Stafford Betty , teacher for Religious Studies at CSUB finds common ground between Tolle 's worldview and that of Christian mystics . He notes that " one of the key elements in Tolle 's teaching is that deep within the mind is absolute stillness in which one can experience ' the joy of Being ' " . Betty says that such a view is comparable to the view of contemporary Catholic monk Thomas Keating who wrote that " We rarely think of the air we breathe , yet it is in us and around us all the time . In similar fashion , the presence of God penetrates us , is all around us , is always embracing us , and it is delightful " . Betty also says that " for Mr. Tolle , God is in the world in a more radical way than for the Christian " and that Tolle 's theology " is only a footnote to the therapy he holds out to his audience " .

Roman Catholic priest and theologian Richard Rohr credits Tolle for helping to reintroduce ancient Christian mysticism to modern Christians : " Tolle is , in fact , rather brilliantly bringing to our awareness the older tradition ... [ which is ] both the ground and the process for breaking through to the theological contemplation of God , and acquired contemplation of Jesus , the Gospels , and all spiritual things . He is teaching process , not doctrine or dogma . He is teaching how to see and be present , not what you should see when you are present . Tolle is our friend , and not an enemy of the Gospel . There should be no conflict for a mature Christian . "

Anglican bishop Michael Ingham has said : " I don 't have any criticism of his message . I think the proper attitude to take with new spiritual movements is one of wait and see . "

= = Selected publications = =

= = = Books = = =

The Power of Now : A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment , New World Library , October , 1999 ISBN 1 @-@ 57731 @-@ 152 @-@ 3 ( HC ) ISBN 1 @-@ 57731 @-@ 480 @-@ 8 ( PB )

Practicing the Power of Now : Essential Teachings , Meditations , and Exercises from The Power of Now , New World Library , October 10 , 2001 ISBN 1 @-@ 57731 @-@ 195 @-@ 7 ( HC )

Stillness Speaks : Whispers of Now , New World Library , August 2003 ISBN 1 @-@ 57731 @-@ 400 @-@ X

A New Earth : Awakening to Your Life 's Purpose , Dutton , October 11 , 2005 ISBN 0 @-@ 525 @-@ 94802 @-@ 3

Milton 's Secret : An Adventure of Discovery through Then , When , and The Power of Now , Hampton Roads , 2008 ISBN 978 @-@ 1 @-@ 57174 @-@ 577 @-@ 4

Oneness With All Life : Inspirational Selections from A New Earth , Penguin Group , November 2008

Guardians of Being , New World Library , October 2009 ISBN 978 @-@ 1 @-@ 57731 @-@ 671 @-@ 8

== = DVDs == =

The Flowering of Human Consciousness : Everyone 's Life Purpose , Namaste Publishing , Inc . , 2001 ISBN 1 @-@ 59179 @-@ 154 @-@ 5

Practicing Presence : A Guide for the Spiritual Teacher and Health Practitioner , Eckhart Teachings , 2003 ISBN 1 @-@ 894884 @-@ 45 @-@ 0

Eckhart Tolle 's Findhorn Retreat : Stillness Amidst The World , New World Library , 2006 ISBN 1 @-@ 57731 @-@ 509 @-@ X

Finding Your Life 's Purpose , Eckhart Teachings , 2008 ISBN 1 @-@ 894884 @-@ 52 @-@ 3

The Doorway into Now , Eckhart Teachings , 2009 ISBN 1 @-@ 894884 @-@ 37 @-@ X