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# The Power of Now

A Guide to SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

By Eckhart Tolle

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## Foreword

BY RUSSELL E. DICARLO

Author of *Towards a New World*

*View* Blanketed by an azure sky, the orange-yellow rays of the setting sun can, at special times, gift us with a moment of such considerable beauty, we find ourselves momentarily stunned, with frozen gaze. The splendor of the moment so dazzles us, our compulsively chattering minds give pause, so as not to mentally whisk us away to a place other than the here-and-now. Bathed in luminescence, a door seems to open to another reality, always present, yet rarely witnessed.

Abraham Maslow called these "peak experiences," since they represent the high moments of life where we joyfully find ourselves catapulted beyond the confines of the mundane and ordinary. He might just as well have called them "peek' experiences. During these expansive occasions, we sneak a glimpse of the eternal realm of Being itself. If only for a brief moment in time, we come home to our True Self.

'Ah," one might sigh, "so grand ... if only I could stay here. But how do I take up permanent residence?"

During the past ten years, I have committed myself to finding out. 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 diverse group of individuals is joined by their commonly voiced insight that humanity is now taking a quantum leap forward in its evolutionary development. 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. When considered on a larger scale, they define societies.

It should be of little surprise that the world view which is emerging calls into question many of the things Western society holds to be true:

### **MYTH #1 Humanity has reached the pinnacle of its development.**

Esalen co-founder Michael Murphy, drawing upon comparative religious studies, medical science, anthropology, and sports, has made a provocative case that there are

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more advanced stages of human development. As a person reaches these advanced levels of spiritual maturity, extraordinary capacities begin to blossom - of love, vitality, personhood, bodily awareness, intuition, perception, communication, and volition.

First step: to recognize they exist. Most people do not. Then, methods can be employed with conscious intention.

### **MYTH #2 We are completely separate from each other, nature, and the Kosmos.**

This myth of "other-than-me" has been responsible for wars, the rape of the planet, and all forms and expressions of human injustice. After all, who in their right mind would harm another if they experienced that person as part of themselves? Stan Grof, in his research of nonordinary 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. Now this can't happen according to the known principles of physics and world view of traditional science. Yet the preponderance of evidence suggests that indeed it does.

### **MYTH #3 The physical world is all there is.**

Materialistically bound, traditional science assumes that anything that cannot be measured, tested in a laboratory, or probed by the five senses or their technological extensions simply doesn't exist. it's "not real." The consequence: all of reality has been collapsed into physical reality. Spiritual, or what I would call nonphysical, dimensions of reality have been run out of town.

This clashes with the "perennial philosophy," that philosophical consensus spanning ages, religions, traditions, and cultures, which describes different but continuous dimensions of reality. These run from the most dense and least conscious - what we'd call "matter" - to the least dense and most conscious, which we'd call spiritual. Interestingly enough, this extended, multidimensional model of reality is suggested by quantum theorists such as Jack Scarfetti who describes superluminal travel. Other dimensions of reality are used to explain travel that occurs faster than the speed of light - the ultimate of speed limits. Or consider the work of the legendary physicist,

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David Bohm, with his explicate (physical) and implicate (non-physical) multidimensional model of reality.

This is no mere theory - the 1982 Aspect Experiment in France demonstrated, that two once-connected quantum particles separated by vast distances remained somehow connected. If one particle was changed, the other changed - instantly. Scientists don't know the mechanics of how this faster-than-the-speed-of-light travel can happen, though some theorists suggest that this connection takes place via doorways into higher dimensions.

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 non physical dimensions of reality.

At core, this new world view involves seeing yourself, others, and all of life, not through the eyes of our small, earthly self that lives in time and is born in time. But rather through the eyes of the soul, our Being, the True Self. One by one, people are jumping to this higher orbit.

With his book, *The Power of Now*, Eckhart Tolle rightfully takes his place among this special group of world-class teachers. Eckhart's message: the problem of humanity is deeply rooted in the mind itself. Or rather, our misidentification with mind.

Our drifting awareness, our tendency to take the path of least resistance by being less than fully awake to the present moment, creates a void. And the time-bound mind, which has been designed to be a useful servant, compensates by proclaiming itself master. Like a butterfly flitting from one flower to another, the mind engages past experiences or, projecting its own made-for-television movie, anticipates what is to come. Seldom do we find ourselves resting in the oceanic depth of the here and now. For it is here - in the Now - where we find our True Self, which lies behind our physical body, shifting emotions, and chattering mind.

The crowning glory of human development rests not in our ability to reason and think, though this is what distinguishes us from animals. Intellect, like instinct, is merely a point along the way. Our ultimate destiny is to re-connect with our essential Being and express from our extraordinary, divine reality in the ordinary physical world, moment by moment. Easy to say, yet rare are those who have attained the further reaches of human development.

Fortunately, there are guides and teachers to help us along the way. As a teacher and guide, Eckhart's formidable power lies not in his adept ability to delight us with

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entertaining stories, make the abstract concrete, or provide useful technique. Rather, his magic is seated in his personal experience, as one who knows. As a result, there is a power behind his words found only in the most celebrated of spiritual teachers. By living from the depths of this Greater Reality, Eckhart clears an energetic pathway for others to join him.

And what if others do? Surely the world as we know it would change for the better. Values would shift in the flotsam of vanishing fears that have been funneled away through the whirlpool of Being itself. A new civilization would be born.

"Where's the proof of this Greater Reality?" you ask. I offer only an analogy: A battery of scientists can get together and tell you about all the scientific proof for the fact that bananas are bitter. But all you have to do is taste one, once, to realize that there is this whole other aspect to bananas. Ultimately, proof lies not in intellectual arguments, but in being touched in some way by the sacred within and without.

Eckhart Tolle masterfully opens us to that possibility.

Russell E. DiCarlo Author, *Towards a New World View: Conversations at the Leading Edge* Erie, Pennsylvania U.S.A. January 1998

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## INTRODUCTION

### 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. It feels now as if I am talking about some past lifetime or somebody else's life.

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. The most loathsome thing of all, however, was my own existence. What was the point in continuing to live with this burden of misery? Why carry on with this continuous struggle? I could feel that a deep longing for annihilation, for nonexistence, was now becoming much stronger than the instinctive desire to continue to live.

"I cannot live with myself any longer." This was the thought that kept repeating itself in my mind. Then suddenly I became aware of what a peculiar thought it was. `Am I one or two? 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 was so stunned by this strange realization that my mind stopped. I was fully conscious, but there were no more thoughts. Then I felt drawn into what seemed like a vortex of energy. It was a slow movement at first and then accelerated. I was gripped by an intense fear, and my body started to shake. I heard the words "resist nothing," as if spoken inside my chest. I could feel myself being sucked into a void. It felt as if the void was inside myself rather than outside. Suddenly, there was no more fear, and I let myself fall into that void. I have no recollection of what happened after that.

I was awakened by the chirping of a bird outside the window. I had never heard such a sound before. My eyes were still closed, and I saw the image of a precious diamond. Yes, if a diamond could make a sound, this is what it would be like. I



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opened my eyes. The first light of dawn was filtering through the curtains. Without any thought, I felt, I knew, that there is infinitely more to light than we realize. That soft luminosity filtering through the curtains was love itself. Tears came into my eyes. I got up and walked around the room. I recognized the room, and yet I knew that I had never truly seen it before. Everything was fresh and pristine, as if it had just come into existence. I picked up things, a pencil, an empty bottle, marveling at the beauty and aliveness of it all.

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 five 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 fiction 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. What was left then was my true nature as the ever-present I am: consciousness in its pure state prior to identification with form. Later I also learned to go into that inner timeless and deathless realm that I had originally perceived as a void and remain fully conscious. I dwelt in states of such indescribable bliss and sacredness that even the original experience I just described pales in comparison. A time came when, for a while, I was left with nothing on the physical plane. I had no relationships, no job, no home, no socially defined identity. I spent almost two years sitting on park benches in a state of the most intense joy.

But even the most beautiful experiences come and go. 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. At other times, it is somewhere in the background, like a distant melody.

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. You just can't feel it because your mind is making too much noise." That answer later grew into the book that you are holding in your hands.

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Before I knew it, I had an external identity again. I had become a spiritual teacher.

### **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, their challenging questions, and their readiness to listen. This book would not have come into existence without them. They belong to what is as yet a small but fortunately growing minority of spiritual pioneers: people who are reaching a point where they become capable of breaking out of inherited collective mind-patterns that have kept humans in bondage to suffering for eons.

I trust that this book will find its way to those who are ready for such radical inner transformation and so act as a catalyst for it. 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. I learned and received as much in those classes and sessions as the questioners. Some of the questions and answers I wrote down almost verbatim. 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. Sometimes, in the process of writing, an entirely new answer came that was more profound or insightful than anything I had ever uttered. Some additional questions were asked by the editor so as to provide further clarification of certain points.

You will find that from the first to the last page, the dialogues continuously alternate between two different levels.

On one level, I draw your attention to what is false in you. I speak of the nature of human unconsciousness and dysfunction as well as its most common behavioral manifestations, from conflict in relationships to warfare between tribes or nations. 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, I also show you

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how not to make that which is false in you into a self and into a personal problem, for that is how the false perpetuates itself.

On another level, I speak of a profound transformation of human consciousness - not as a distant future possibility, but available now - no matter who or where you are. You are shown how to free yourself from enslavement to the mind, enter into this enlightened state of consciousness and sustain it in everyday life.

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. Again and again, I endeavor to take you with me into that timeless state of intense conscious presence in the Now, so as to give you a taste of enlightenment. Until you are able to experience what I speak of, you may find those passages somewhat repetitive. 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. There may be other places in the text where you will do this naturally and spontaneously.

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. Just read on. Questions or objections may occasionally come into your mind as you read. 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.

Don't read with the mind only. Watch out for any "feeling response" as you read and a sense of recognition from deep within. I cannot tell you any spiritual truth that deep within you don't know already. All I can do is remind you of what you have forgotten. Living knowledge, ancient and yet ever new, is then activated and released from within every cell of your body.

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. Don't get attached to any words. They are only stepping stones, to be left behind as quickly as possible.

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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. To a large extent, therefore, their deeper meaning is no longer recognized and their transformative power lost. 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. I say to them: there is no need to go elsewhere for the truth. Let me show you how to go more deeply into what you already have.

Mostly, however, I have endeavored to use terminology that is as neutral as possible in order to reach a wide range of people. This book can be seen as a restatement for our time of that one timeless spiritual teaching, the essence of all religions. It is not derived from external sources, but from the one true Source within, so it contains no theory or speculation. 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. I know this is true."

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## 1. YOU ARE NOT YOUR MIND

### The Greatest Obstacle to Enlightenment

*Enlightenment - what is that?*

A beggar had been sitting by the side of a road for over thirty years. One day a stranger walked by. "Spare some change?" mumbled the beggar, mechanically holding out his old baseball cap. "I have nothing to give you," said the stranger. Then he asked: "What's that you are sitting on?" "Nothing," replied the beggar. "Just an old box. I have been sitting on it for as long as I can remember." "Ever looked inside?" asked the stranger. "No," said the beggar. "What's the point? There's nothing in there." "Have a look inside," insisted the stranger. The beggar managed to pry open the lid. With astonishment, disbelief, and elation, he saw that the box was filled with gold.

I am that stranger who has nothing to give you and who is telling you to look inside. Not inside any box, as in the parable, but somewhere even closer: inside yourself.

"But I am not a beggar," I can hear you say.

Those who have not found their true wealth, which is the radiant joy of Being and the deep, unshakable peace that comes with it, are beggars, even if they have great material wealth. They are looking outside for scraps of pleasure or fulfillment, for validation, security, or love, while they have a treasure within that not only includes all those things but is infinitely greater than anything the world can offer.

The word enlightenment conjures up the idea of some super-human accomplishment, and the ego likes to keep it that way, but it is simply your natural state of felt oneness with Being. It is a state of connectedness with something immeasurable and indestructible, something that, almost paradoxically, is essentially you and yet is much greater than you. It is finding your true nature beyond name and form. The inability to feel this connectedness gives rise to the illusion of separation, from yourself and from the world around you. You then perceive yourself, consciously or unconsciously, as an isolated fragment. Fear arises, and conflict within and without becomes the norm.

I love the Buddha's simple definition of enlightenment as "the end of suffering." There is nothing superhuman in that, is there? Of course, as a definition, it is

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incomplete. It only tells you what enlightenment is not: no suffering. But what's left when there is no more suffering? The Buddha is silent on that, and his silence implies that you'll have to find out for yourself. 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. Despite this precaution, the majority of Buddhists still believe that enlightenment is for the Buddha, not for them, at least not in this lifetime.

*You used the word Being. Can you explain what you mean by that?*

Being is the eternal, ever-present One Life beyond the myriad forms of life that are subject to birth and death. However, Being is not only beyond but also deep within every form as its innermost invisible and indestructible essence. This means that it is accessible to you now as your own deepest self, your true nature. But don't seek to grasp it with your mind. Don't try to understand it. You can know it only when the mind is still. When you are present, when your attention is fully and intensely in the Now, Being can be felt, but it can never be understood mentally. To regain awareness of Being and to abide in that state of "feeling-realization" is enlightenment.

*When you say Being, are you talking about God? If you are, then why don't you say it?*

The word God has become empty of meaning through thousands of years of misuse. I use it sometimes, but I do so sparingly. 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. Or they argue against it, as if they knew what it is that they are denying. 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.

Neither God nor Being nor any other word can define or explain the ineffable reality behind the word, so the only important question is whether the word is a help or a hindrance in enabling you to experience That toward which it points. Does it

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point beyond itself to that transcendental reality, or does it lend itself too easily to becoming no more than an idea in your head that you believe in, a mental idol?

The word Being explains nothing, but nor does God. Being, however, has the advantage that it is an open concept. It does not reduce the infinite invisible to a finite entity. It is impossible to form a mental image of it. Nobody can claim exclusive possession of Being. It is your very essence, and it is immediately accessible to you as the feeling of your own presence, the realization I am that is prior to I am this or I am that. So it is only a small step from the word Being to the experience of Being.

*What is the greatest obstacle to experiencing this reality?*

Identification with your mind, which causes thought to become compulsive. 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. This incessant mental noise prevents you from finding that realm of inner stillness that is inseparable from Being. It also creates a false mind-made self that casts a shadow of fear and suffering. We will look at all that in more detail later.

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. At one with life in its manifested aspect, the world, as well as with your deepest self and life unmanifested - at one with Being. Enlightenment is not only the end of suffering and of continuous conflict within and without, but also the end of the dreadful enslavement to incessant thinking. What an incredible liberation this is!

Identification with your mind creates an opaque screen of concepts, labels, images, words, judgments, and definitions that blocks all true relationship. It comes between you and yourself, between you and your fellow man and woman, between you and nature, between you and God. 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. You may believe it to be true, but you no longer know it to be true. A belief may be comforting. Only through your own experience, however, does it become liberating.

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Thinking has become a disease. Disease happens when things get out of balance. For example, there is nothing wrong with cells dividing and multiplying in the body, but when this process continues in disregard of the total organism, cells proliferate and we have disease.

Note: The mind is a superb instrument if used rightly. Used wrongly, however, it becomes very destructive. To put it more accurately, it is not so much that you use your mind wrongly - you usually don't use it at all. It uses you. This is the disease. You believe that you are your mind. This is the delusion. The instrument has taken you over.

*I don't quite agree. 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.*

Just because you can solve a crossword puzzle or build an atom bomb doesn't mean that you use your mind. Just as dogs love to chew bones, the mind loves to get its teeth into problems. That's why it does crossword puzzles and builds atom bombs. You have no interest in either. Let me ask you this: can you be free of your mind whenever you want to? Have you found the "off" button?

*You mean stop thinking altogether? No, I can't, except maybe for a moment or two.*

Then the mind is using you. You are unconsciously identified with it, so you don't even know that you are its slave. It's almost as if you were possessed without knowing it, and so you take the possessing entity to be yourself. The beginning of freedom is the realization that you are not the possessing entity - the thinker. Knowing this enables you to observe the entity. The moment you start watching the thinker, a higher level of consciousness becomes activated. You then begin to realize that there is a vast realm of intelligence beyond thought, that thought is only a tiny aspect of that intelligence. You also realize that all the things that truly matter - beauty, love, creativity, joy, inner peace - arise from beyond the mind. You begin to awaken.

### **[Freeing yourself from your mind](#)**

*What exactly do you mean by "watching the thinker"?*

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,



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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. Continuous monologues or dialogues.

You have probably come across "mad" people in the street incessantly talking or muttering to themselves. Well, that's not much different from what you and all other "normal" people do, except that you don't do it out loud. The voice comments, speculates, judges, compares, complains, likes, dislikes, and so on. The voice isn't necessarily relevant to the situation you find yourself in at the time; it may be reviving the recent or distant past or rehearsing or imagining possible future situations. Here it often imagines things going wrong and negative outcomes; this is called worry. 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. So you see and judge the present through the eyes of the past and get a totally distorted view of it. It is not uncommon for the voice to be a person's own worst enemy. Many people live with a tormentor in their head that continuously attacks and punishes them and drains them of vital energy. It is the cause of untold misery and unhappiness, as well as of disease.

The good news is that you can free yourself from your mind. This is the only true liberation. You can take the first step right now. Start listening to the voice in your head as often as you can. 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.

When you listen to that voice, listen to it impartially. That is to say, do not judge. Do not judge or condemn what you hear, for doing so would mean that the same voice has come in again through the back door. You'll soon realize: there is the voice, and here I am listening to it, watching it. This I am realization, this sense of your own presence, is not a thought. It arises from beyond the mind.

So when you listen to a thought, you are aware not only of the thought but also of yourself as the witness of the thought. A new dimension of consciousness has come in. As you listen to the thought, you feel a conscious presence - your deeper self - behind or underneath the thought, as it were. The thought then loses its power over you and quickly subsides, because you are no longer energizing the mind through identification with it. This is the beginning of the end of involuntary and

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compulsive thinking. 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. When these gaps occur, you feel a certain stillness and peace inside you. This is the beginning of your natural state of felt oneness with Being, which is usually obscured by the mind. With practice, the sense of stillness and peace will deepen. In fact, there is no end to its depth. You will also feel a subtle emanation of joy arising from deep within: the joy of Being.

It is not a trancelike state. Not at all. There is no loss of consciousness here. The opposite is the case. If the price of peace were a lowering of your consciousness, and the price of stillness a lack of vitality and alertness, then they would not be worth having. In this state of inner connectedness, you are much more alert, more awake than in the mind-identified state. You are fully present. It also raises the vibrational frequency of the energy field that gives life to the physical body.

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. And yet this is not a selfish but a selfless state. It takes you beyond what you previously thought of as "your self." That presence is essentially you and at the same time inconceivably greater than you. What I am trying to convey here may sound paradoxical or even contradictory, but there is no other way that I can express 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. Just become intensely conscious of the present moment. This is a deeply satisfying thing to do. 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. This is the essence of meditation. 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. Be totally present. 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. Or when you get into your car, after you close the door, pause for a few seconds and observe the flow of your breath. Become aware of a silent but powerful sense of presence. There is one certain

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criterion by which you can measure your success in this practice: the degree of peace that you feel within.

So the single most vital step on your journey toward enlightenment is this: learn to disidentify from your mind. 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**

*Isn't thinking essential in order to survive in this world?*

Your mind is an instrument, a tool. It is there to be used for a specific task, and when the task is completed, you lay it down. As it is, I would say about 80 to 90 percent of most people's thinking is not only repetitive and useless, but because of its dysfunctional and often negative nature, much of it is also harmful. Observe your mind and you will find this to be true. It causes a serious leakage of vital energy.

This kind of compulsive thinking is actually an addiction. What characterizes an addiction? Quite simply this: you no longer feel that you have the choice to stop. It seems stronger than you. It also gives you a false sense of pleasure, pleasure that invariably turns into pain.

*Why should we be addicted to thinking?*

Because you are identified with it, which means that you derive your sense of self from the content and activity of your mind.

Because you believe that you would cease to be if you stopped thinking. As you grow up, you form a mental image of who you are, based on your personal and cultural conditioning. We may call this phantom self the ego. It consists of mind activity and can only be kept going through constant thinking. 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.

To the ego, the present moment hardly exists. Only past and future are considered important. This total reversal of the truth accounts for the fact that in the ego mode the mind is so dysfunctional. It is always concerned with keeping the past alive, because without it - who are you? It constantly projects itself into the future to ensure its continued survival and to seek some kind of release or fulfillment there. It says: "One day, when this, that, or the other happens, I am going to be okay, happy, at

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peace." Even when the ego seems to be concerned with the present, it is not the present that it sees: It misperceives it completely because it looks at it through the eyes of the past. Or it reduces the present to a means to an end, an end that always lies in the mind-projected future. Observe your mind and you'll see that this is how it works.

The present moment holds the key to liberation. But you cannot find the present moment as long as you are your mind.

*I don't want to lose my ability to analyze and discriminate. I wouldn't mind learning to think more clearly, in a more focused way, but I don't want to lose my mind. The gift of thought is the most precious thing we have. Without it, we would just be another species of animal.*

The predominance of mind is no more than a stage in the evolution of consciousness. We need to go on to the next stage now as a matter of urgency; otherwise, we will be destroyed by the mind, which has grown into a monster. I will talk about this in more detail later. Thinking and consciousness are not synonymous. Thinking is only a small aspect of consciousness. Thought cannot exist without consciousness, but consciousness does not need thought.

Enlightenment means rising above thought, not falling back to a level below thought, the level of an animal or a plant. In the enlightened state, you still use your thinking mind when needed, but in a much more focused and effective way than before. You use it mostly for practical purposes, but you are free of the involuntary internal dialogue, and there is inner stillness. 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. No-mind is consciousness without thought. Only in that way is it possible to think creatively, because only in that way does thought have any real power. Thought alone, when it is no longer connected with the much vaster realm of consciousness, quickly becomes barren, insane, destructive.

The mind is essentially a survival machine. Attack and defense against other minds, gathering, storing, and analyzing information - this is what it is good at, but it is not at all creative. All true artists, whether they know it or not, create from a place of no-mind, from inner stillness. The mind then gives form to the creative impulse or insight. Even the great scientists have reported that their creative breakthroughs came at a time of mental quietude. 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

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of the creative act itself."1 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. There is clearly an intelligence at work that is far greater than the mind. How can a single human cell measuring 1/1,000 of an inch across contain instructions within its DNA that would fill 1,000 books of 600 pages each? The more we learn about the workings of the body, the more we realize just how vast is the intelligence at work within it and how little we know. When the mind reconnects with that, it becomes a most wonderful tool. It then serves something greater than itself.

### **Emotion: The Body's Reaction to Your Mind**

*What about emotions? I get caught up in my emotions more than I do in my mind.*

Mind, in the way I use the word, is not just thought. It includes your emotions as well as all unconscious mental-emotional reactive patterns. Emotion arises at the place where mind and body meet. It is the body's reaction to your mind - or you might say, a reflection of your mind in the body. For example, an attack thought or a hostile thought will create a build-up of energy in the body that we call anger. The body is getting ready to fight. The thought that you are being threatened, physically or psychologically, causes the body to contract, and this is the physical side of what we call fear. Research has shown that strong emotions even cause changes in the biochemistry of the body. These biochemical changes represent the physical or material aspect of the emotion. 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.

The more you are identified with your thinking, your likes and dislikes, judgments and interpretations, which is to say the less present you are as the watching consciousness, the stronger the emotional energy charge will be, whether you are aware of it or not. If you cannot feel your emotions, if you are cut off from them, you will eventually experience them on a purely physical level, as a physical problem or symptom. A great deal has been written about this in recent years, so we don't need to go into it here. A strong unconscious emotional pattern may even manifest as an external event that appears to just happen to you. For example, I have observed that people who carry a lot of anger inside without being aware of it and without expressing it are more likely to be attacked, verbally or even physically, by other

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angry people, and often for no apparent reason. They have a strong emanation of anger that certain people pick up subliminally and that triggers their own latent anger.

If you have difficulty feeling your emotions, start by focusing attention on the inner energy field of your body. Feel the body from within. This will also put you in touch with your emotions. We will explore this in more detail later.

*You say that an emotion is the mind's reflection in the 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. If there is an apparent conflict between them, the thought will be the lie, the emotion will be the truth. Not the ultimate truth of who you are, but the relative truth of your state of mind at that time.

Conflict between surface thoughts and unconscious mental processes is certainly common. 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. To watch an emotion in this way is basically the same as listening to or watching a thought, which I described earlier. The only difference is that, while a thought is in your head, an emotion has a strong physical component and so is primarily felt in the body. You can then allow the emotion to be there without being controlled by it. You no longer are the emotion; you are the watcher, the observing presence. If you practice this, all that is unconscious in you will be brought into the light of consciousness.

*So observing our emotions is as important as observing our thoughts?*

Yes. Make it a habit to ask yourself: What's going on inside me at this moment? That question will point you in the right direction. But don't analyze, just watch. Focus your attention within. Feel the energy of the emotion. If there is no emotion present, take your attention more deeply into the inner energy field of your body. It is the doorway into Being.

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. It wants to take you over, and it usually succeeds - unless there is enough presence in you. If you are pulled into unconscious identification with the emotion through lack of presence, which is normal, the

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emotion temporarily becomes "you." Often a vicious circle builds up between your thinking and the emotion: they feed each other. The thought pattern creates a magnified reflection of itself in the form of an emotion, and the vibrational frequency of the emotion keeps feeding the original thought pattern. 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.

Basically, all emotions are modifications of one primordial, undifferentiated emotion that has its origin in the loss of awareness of who you are beyond name and form. Because of its undifferentiated nature, it is hard to find a name that precisely describes this emotion. "Fear" comes close, but apart from a continuous sense of threat, it also includes a deep sense of abandonment and incompleteness. 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. In fact, the harder the mind struggles to get rid of the pain, the greater the pain. 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. You will not be free of that pain until you cease to derive your sense of self from identification with the mind, which is to say from ego. The mind is then toppled from its place of power and Being reveals itself as your true nature.

Yes, I know what you are going to ask.

*I was going to ask: What about positive emotions such as love and joy?*

They are inseparable from your natural state of inner connectedness with Being. Glimpses of love and joy or brief moments of deep peace are possible whenever a gap occurs in the stream of thought. 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. Suddenly, there is inner stillness. And within that stillness there is a subtle but intense joy, there is love, there is peace.

Usually, such moments are short-lived, as the mind quickly resumes its noise-making activity that we call thinking. Love, joy, and peace cannot flourish until you have freed yourself from mind dominance. But they are not what I would call emotions. They lie beyond the emotions, on a much deeper level. So you need to become fully conscious of your emotions and be able to feel them before you can feel

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that which lies beyond them. 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. As such, they have no opposite. This is because they arise from beyond the mind. Emotions, on the other hand, being part of the dualistic mind, are subject to the law of opposites. This simply means that you cannot have good without bad. 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. Pleasure is always derived from something outside you, whereas joy arises from within. The very thing that gives you pleasure today will give you pain tomorrow, or it will leave you, so its absence will give you pain. And what is often referred to as love may be pleasurable and exciting for a while, but it is an addictive clinging, an extremely needy condition that can turn into its opposite at the flick of a switch. Many "love" relationships, after the initial euphoria has passed, actually oscillate between "love" and hate, attraction and attack. Real love doesn't make you suffer. How could it? It doesn't suddenly turn into hate, nor does real joy turn into pain. 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. These are aspects of your true nature, which is usually obscured by the mind. Even within a "normal" addictive relationship, there can be moments when the presence of something more genuine, something incorruptible, can be felt. But they will only be glimpses, soon to be covered up again through mind interference. It may then seem that you had something very precious and lost it, or your mind may convince you that it was all an illusion anyway. The truth is that it wasn't an illusion, and you cannot lose it. It is part of your natural state, which can be obscured but can never be destroyed by the mind. Even when the sky is heavily overcast, the sun hasn't disappeared. It's still there on the other side of the clouds.

*The Buddha says that pain or suffering arises through desire or craving and that to be free of pain we need to cut the bonds of desire.*

All cravings are the mind seeking salvation or fulfillment in external things and in the future as a substitute for the joy of Being. As long as I am my mind, I am those cravings, those needs, wants, attachments, and aversions, and apart from them there is no "I" except as a mere possibility, an unfulfilled potential, a seed that has not yet sprouted. In that state, even my desire to become free or enlightened is just another craving for fulfillment or completion in the future. So don't seek to become free of



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