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imagining figures of light, but by making
the darkness conscious.*

—Carl Jung

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THICH NHAT HANH

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Personal Transformation/Lotus, Journal for Personal Transformation (ISSN 1056-3954) is published five times a year (October, December, February, May, July) by Lotus Publishing, Inc., 4032 South Lamar Blvd. #500-137, Austin Texas 78704. (918)683-4560. Copyright 1996 by Lotus Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage retrieval systems without written permission of Lotus Publishing Inc. Lotus Publishing assumes no liability for any material published herein. All statements are the responsibility of the authors. Personal Transformation is the registered trademark of Lotus Publishing Inc. Annual Subscription Rates are: U.S. \$19.95; Canada and Mexico \$24.95; Other countries \$29.95. Single copies \$4.95; Canada \$6.00. Business office, Lotus Publishing, Muskogee, Oklahoma. Periodicals postage paid at Muskogee Oklahoma and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Personal Transformation, 4032 South Lamar Blvd. #500-137, Austin, Texas, 78704.

PRINTED IN THE USA.

ADVERTISING INFORMATION

800-775-6887 • 918-683-4560
Fax 918-683-2466

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

For address changes and questions, see page 16, or contact Lotus Customer Service 4032 South Lamar Blvd. #500-137 Austin, Texas 78704. Or call 800-775-6887

LIST RENTAL INFORMATION

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From the Publisher

*The tragedy of life
is what dies inside a
man while he lives.*
—Albert Einstein

Over the holidays, I learned of the deaths of a couple of friends. After the initial shock, I felt sad. Days later, I started exploring my sadness, wondering what it was that I was truly sad about. Was I sad because my friends were no longer here? Was I sad because I missed them? Was I afraid of death? Was I sad that nothing lasts, that everything changes? I continue to muse over these questions, as other realizations sink into my being. Dealing with death has a way of bringing us deeply into our own experience and into the significance of life.

Hearing tragic stories of the deaths of friends brings up a grief within me that is a messenger of how precious life is. My grief reminds me to live fully, lovingly, and to be conscious about how I spend my limited time on earth.

Seemingly untimely deaths bring up questions about quality of life, such as how would I live if I were healthy but had only six months to live. Unexplainable deaths remind me that life is a mystery and that living means dying. Sudden deaths also bring up questions that pertain to personal transformation.

Living full, rich lives is at the core of personal transformation. Discovering our inherent humanness and creativity and letting them be expressed in ways truest to our essence, as guided by our deepest intelligence, is the way to fulfillment. Growing in our sense of being connected to all of life, including the infinite, allows us to give our lives over to a deeper intelligence and live as we are designed to live. This is how we become the grand men and women we are meant to be. We on-goingly rebirth ourselves. Who we were yesteryear and who we are today die, so that we may breathe life into the possibilities of who we are becoming. We literally forsake old beliefs, visions, and experiences of who we were, so that we may be molded into ever finer expressions of our life essence.

To engage in personal transformation prevents the tragedy of our innermost selves dying while we are alive.

Welcome to Personal Transformation.



Rick NurrieStearns
Publisher



From the Editor

*Your vision will become clear only
when you look into your heart.*
—Carl Jung

Our understanding of consciousness evolves as we mature. Its simple definition, to become aware of, signals that something is hidden behind the veils of our unconsciousness. Becoming conscious is an aspect of our spiritual development. We speak of consciousness-raising, deepening consciousness, and higher consciousness. But what is it really? This issue explores consciousness and how it develops. Examining consciousness is like looking into a beautiful diamond. Every facet reveals a different view. Although experts illuminate different aspects of consciousness, they all link emerging consciousness with experiencing our connection with all of life.

Consciousness comes from the word *con-scire*, which literally means 'to know with.' Scott Peck, in book reviews, suggests that we have to ask, to know with what, and that the answer is God. He believes that as we mature in consciousness, we know with God, and begin to think with the mind of God. God is revealed through our unconscious if we are willing to open and become aware of its wisdom. He views the development of consciousness as the unconscious mind disclosing itself, so that we realize fully that our humanity is linked to our divinity.

Richard Moss defines consciousness as relationship. Growing in our capacity for relationship moves us from lower into higher states of consciousness. Consciousness increases as we become intimate with ourselves. He describes real intimacy as discovering how our minds work, becoming deeply comfortable with our bodies and our feeling nature, and profoundly accepting ourselves. Such intimacy is possible only by being opened by relationship with others. In that sense, higher consciousness is profound relationship, arising out of connection with and compassion for ourselves and others. From this we can see that the evolution of consciousness is the dawning recognition of the indivisible Oneness of this universe.

Jack Kornfield and Christina Feldman look through another lens. They discuss how our capacity to be aware enables us to connect with and use inner resources of energy, focus, and love that otherwise lie dormant. By exploring what it means to be aware, we learn how to be wholly present in each moment, with ourselves, and with all that each moment brings to us. They find the present moment to be our most profound and challenging teacher of consciousness. The present moment is a mirror, and in its reflection we learn how to see. Seeing deeply, we become aware of our undeniable connection with all life. Understanding this connectedness brings a sacredness to each moment.

Feeling at one with all of life, our lives become full and reverent. We are happiest and most fulfilled when we feel completely connected. That is what Abraham Maslow referred to as transcendence. Paul Pearsall has us look to oceanic culture where transcendence is an everyday immersion in daily life. Oceanic thought believes that there is no separation between the spiritual and the physical worlds. Our world is alive and conscious and must be dealt with accordingly. The key to happiness and well-being for everything and everyone is deep and complete respect, appreciation, and responsibility for the welfare of the planet.

When we are intimate with ourselves and the Divine, love naturally and effortlessly pours from our hearts. Sri Chinmoy beautifully reminds us how easy it is to give pure love to others when we feel that we and the rest of the world are totally and inseparably one. Where there is oneness, it is all pure love.

It is apparent that the way of consciousness is also the path of love. May it be so for us all.

Mary NurrieStearns
Mary NurrieStearns
Editor



Reflections



From Our Readers

SURPRISE RELATIONSHIP

In the fall of 1993, *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* published my Transformation story. Little did I know how this would change my life!

In July 1994, I received a letter forwarded to me from the editor of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*. It was written by a woman named Tova. She shared how my story inspired her and asked if I would correspond. I called her at home and we talked for about an hour sharing from the heart about our "paths" and learning. How long it had been and how refreshing it was to share so openly and honestly with a woman.

About two weeks later, I called Tova again. We talked for hours. It had never been as easy for me to communicate with a woman as it was with Tova. Six hours later at dawn's light, we called it a night. I went to sleep that morning sensing something subtle and new in me.

We continued to talk, write and share gifts for about a month. The distance between Boston and Austin could not hinder our growing connection. I called her in August and said, "I'll be flying in tomorrow night, can you pick me up?" She said she'd see me at the airport.

I wrote in my journal on the plane to Boston: "the closer I get to Boston, the more butterflies I have in my stomach. When I think about meeting this lady, my eyes become moist, and my heart becomes very heavy. I wonder what it will be like to see her. Tova, this woman who I, for some unknown reasons, opened myself to. Tova, this lady, who has cracked my walls, looked inside of me and helped me look at myself openly and honestly. I think of meeting her and get very emotional."

The two of us shared three days of peace and magic. I was brought to tears more than once while staring into her eyes. A week later on the phone, I asked her to marry me. She replied yes. Our fairy tale was coming true.

In spring of 1995, after many flights between Austin and Boston, we started our lives together in Austin. We have been together two years now and our relationship continues to blossom because of the commitment to grow as individuals, as well as with each other. It has been a lot of work, but our commitment and trust to each other allows us to enjoy a relationship that is awake, alive and growing with peace and happiness shining around us.—*Timothy John, Austin, Texas.*

A RESOURCE FOR TRANSFORMATION



Mary NurrieStearns LCSW

Psychotherapist, consultant, workshop leader, and editor of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*. Mary has over twenty-two years experience helping people to transform their personalities and to live with more peace, meaning and joy. She is committed to providing safe and experiential contexts for personal growth and healing that integrate body, mind, and spirit.

Mary offers a unique union of traditional psychotherapy with transpersonal psychology. She is a leading edge therapist in the field of personal transformation.

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LOVE IT

I absolutely love your magazine! Thanks for all the insight and inspiration!—*Glow Perez, Santa Barbara, California.*

WONDERFUL

I bought your magazine for the first time and thoroughly enjoyed it from cover to cover. You can be very proud; it is a wonderful magazine from the articles, to the artwork, to the retreats advertised.—*Karin Santos, Los Angeles, California.*

VERY MOVED

Hello! Please allow me to introduce myself, my name is Jeff Osborne. I obtained a "sample copy" of your publication, and I must tell you that I was very moved by the articles. I am currently "tip-toeing" down the road of personal transformation within myself, and I would love to subscribe to *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*, but I have not the funds to do so.

You see, I've gotten myself a bit of legal trouble, and I was previously in the Montana State Prison. However, due to overcrowding, I am now among another 250 inmates who were moved to a privately-run institution in Spur, Texas.

My legal troubles are immaterial here. I mention my situation only because it is what has propelled me in my quest to learn more about myself. I have awakened, at last, at 33 years of age, and behind me, I have realized many years of wrong living.

But, thanks to a lot of reading I've been doing on the subject of 'self,' I am realizing my own potential to transcend the casualties, which I have allowed to shape my life.

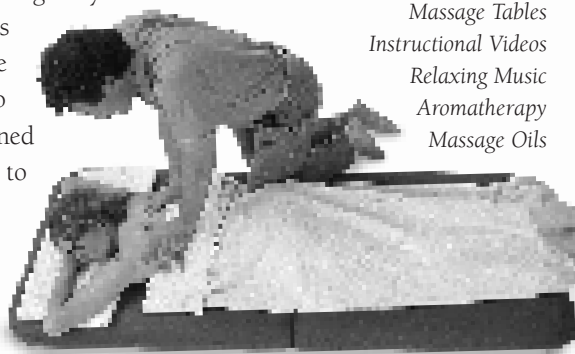
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right on the money for me, and I enjoyed it very much, as did a few friends. I wish that I could start some kind of class here, in which I could instill in people a reverence for life. I feel people are missing the Grand Idea of life, as I was missing it for 33 years.

I regret not being able to subscribe to your magazine, but thank you for the glimpse!—*Jeff Osborn, Spur, Texas.*

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jeff is now receiving a subscription to *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* paid for by the *PT Friends Fund*. The *PT Friends Fund* was established last year to furnish subscriptions of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* to sincere people in need.

Subscriptions are fulfilled on a first-come basis when monies are available. If you would like to contribute to this fund, send your donations to *PT FRIENDS FUND*, 4032 S Lamar Blvd #500-137, Austin, Texas 78704-7900.

MEMORIES AND SYMPATHY

I am left with my memories and fond thoughts of long time friend Melina Psaltis who passed away shortly after awakening.

Also our heathfelt sympathy goes out to the surviving family of subscriber Verona Bosanko and her three children who all died in a fire in Marysville, Washington.—*Publisher.*•

YOUR VOICE

Letters —
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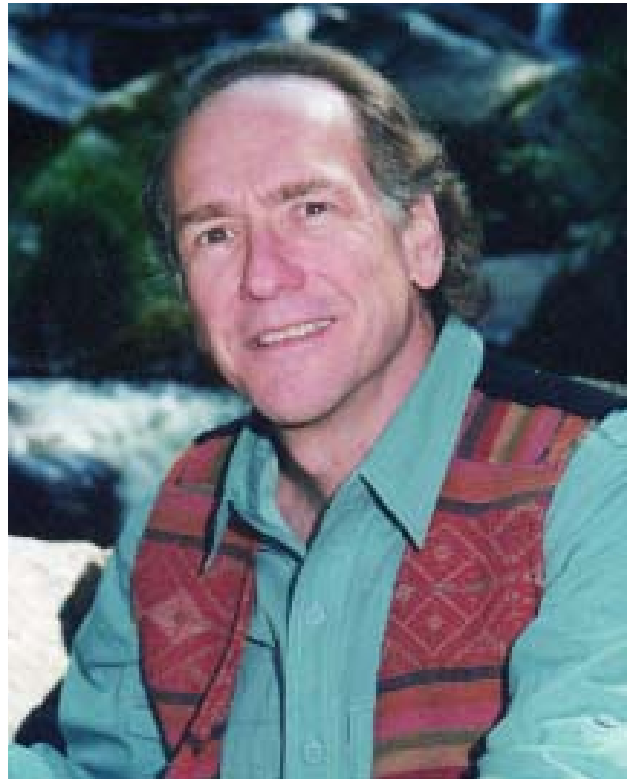
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Consciousness is Profound Relationship

R I C H A R D M O S S

Richard Moss received his Doctorate of Medicine in 1972. After a short general practice, he experienced life-changing realizations that led him to his true calling, the exploration of spiritual awakening and its integration into daily life. He is the author of "The Second Miracle," "The I That is We," and "The Black Butterfly." He works with groups, helping people throughout the world to touch their deeper essence and transform their lives. He lives with his wife and has three step-children in Oakhurst, California.

What is consciousness? Not as an academic consideration, but something down to earth for us as ordinary people. It's a big subject; ultimately it is *the* subject. After all, consciousness is the root of how we experience ourselves, the root of all conceptions we have about anything. Yet, when it comes right down to it, there is no universally agreed upon definition. So, in our daily living, when frequently and casually we bandy the word around, what do we really mean when we complain about someone's unconsciousness? Or if we say, "If only they (parents, teachers, employers, government leaders, and on and on) were more conscious, then (such and such) situation would be better." Or as the wonderful *New*



Dimensions Radio program says at the beginning of each broadcast, "Only through a change of consciousness can the world change."

I find it helps to speak of big things in simple ways. In fact, after fifty years of living, the definition that feels most expressive of what I have learned is *Consciousness is Relationship*.

Picture an amoeba propelling itself sluggishly in a pond. It inadvertently approaches the inlet from the local paper mill. The water is becoming too warm and growing acid. It reflexively changes direction to avoid the threat. A conscious act? Arguably, but it is nonetheless a demonstration of a degree of consciousness. But what is the heart of this consciousness? Is it in the capacity to react? Is it the ability to choose an alternative? It's easy to get lost in intellectualizing this issue. But if we use the simple idea that consciousness is relationship, the question becomes much clearer and the meaning for our lives becomes evident. The amoeba is in relationship to its environment. It has enough of a sense of its own beingness that it recognizes when this relationship is more or less nurturing, and within its

capacities attempts to fulfill its needs, or avoid threat.

If consciousness is relationship, then considering the evolution of consciousness from a “lower” to a “higher” state is really to ask about a growing capacity for relationship. But in terms that really matter to us as ordinary people, isn’t this really our growing capacity for intimacy? Yes intimacy, our capacity for emotional closeness, our capacity to feel connection or lack of connection. This is primarily intimacy with ourselves, a knowledge of how our minds work, an ever deepening comfort with our bodies and our feeling nature. More importantly, intimacy is acceptance, a profound acceptance of ourselves. And none of us can reach such acceptance without simultaneously being challenged and opened by relationship with others. Higher consciousness is profound relationship, a deep sense of connection with and compassion for other people and ultimately our world. For all the ways we intellectualize and mystify enlightenment, isn’t it true that those who we acknowledge as enlightened are individuals who bring us a deeper understanding of ourselves and a greater sense of relationship with each other?

All my life I have ached at human cruelty. What is it in us that suffers when we read of tribes or religious groups slaughtering each other, of parents abandoning children or worse? I get angry at some of the physical and emotional violence in television and movies because in depicting us as psychopathic testosterone-crazed animals, this “entertainment” seeks to exploit our weakest emotions, substituting intensity for meaning.

These portrayals are ugly and disturbing precisely because they depict regression to a more separated, non-relational consciousness. But when I read of the Hutu woman who hid a family of Tutsi in her home to protect them from being murdered by her own tribesmen saying simply, “I was brought up to believe that we are all human beings,” I am brought to tears. All my life, every time I’ve witnessed human kindness, observed the miracle of the conversion of a selfish, self-protective heart to compassion and generosity, I can hardly control the up-welling emotion.

These are tears of joy, the joy of recognition, the recognition of truth. Not merely human truth, human morals or ethics, but of human beings being obedient to a greater truth. This up-welling emotion is for me and for all of us the inner recognition of the real basis of higher consciousness—our felt connection with the other, the recognition of oneself in the other. The evolution of consciousness is the

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 14

Consciousness is a great privilege. But consciousness is also an obligation, the obligation to live in ever deepening relationship... The on-going invitation of life is to go beyond the threshold of our fears, beyond the boundaries or who or what we think we are. Instead of living from our smaller, contracted self which in seeking for security chooses to remain separate, we are forever being invited into our larger self which is already in profound relationship with all that is.

Eupsychia
v6n2 p23

Richard Moss new

dawning recognition of the indivisible Oneness of this universe, the relationship of all things to each other. The whole of what we call spirituality is this recognition ever seeking to awaken in us, and we are conscious people to the extent that we live this. Even the paranormal that for so long has fascinated us is really the demonstration of levels of relationship that we can't ordinarily recognize or influence.

To deepen intimacy with ourselves means we must be able to allow our innermost level of feeling, and this is very difficult. So much terrifies us, is more than we can bear, and faster than we know we have become the victims of our feeling, desperately seeking for some strategy to avoid suffering or obtain happiness. And strategies are legion—repression, denial, projection, blaming others, thinking, busyness, indeed anything, including at times even spiritual practices that by protecting us from feeling, bulwark our sense of separate self against life's ultimate intent to make us conscious of our relationship to all things.

But I have said nothing so far of God. Is God important in the evolution of consciousness? Here I am intentionally using the word God in a casual way, the way in which God is often so unthinkingly referred to and invoked by conventional religion. This usage of God is dangerous indeed. To pretend or to deceive ourselves into imagining that we have the slightest notion of the ultimate mystery that is God, that some specially gifted individuals can interpret God's intent, is to have allowed God to become a mental structure, a concept wielded by the ego for its own ends. At the very least it is to have tamed God, to have made God thinkable rather

than the Mystery that brings all conventional mental activity to a halt, that leaves us without words, that suddenly challenges the whole basis of our sense of separate self.

Deep intimacy with life, the capacity to allow full feeling requires faith. And faith requires God. But it is not the god conceivable to our ego self. Faith is our capacity for relationship to something that transcends rational understanding. Faith is not religious belief, but a radical intuition of something always prior to thought, feeling, or sensation. Faith is no more or less if we feel good or bad, fulfilled or crushed. As our faith deepens, so does our understanding of God. Not in the sense of rational comprehension, but rather in the sense of identity, of being more and more at-one with something unnameable, something infinitely creative, forever emergent. And it is precisely this relationship that grows inseparably with our deepening intimacy with ourselves and each other.

Consciousness is a great privilege. But consciousness is also an obligation, the obligation to live in ever deepening relationship. Anxiety is the signal that our thinking or behavior is closing us to a deeper sense of connection; we are isolating or withholding ourselves in some way, rather than joining with life. The on-going invitation of life is to go beyond the threshold of our fears, beyond the boundaries or who or what we think we are. Instead of living from our smaller, contracted self which in seeking for security chooses to remain separate, we are forever being invited into our larger self which is already in profound relationship with all that is. •

Kripalu new

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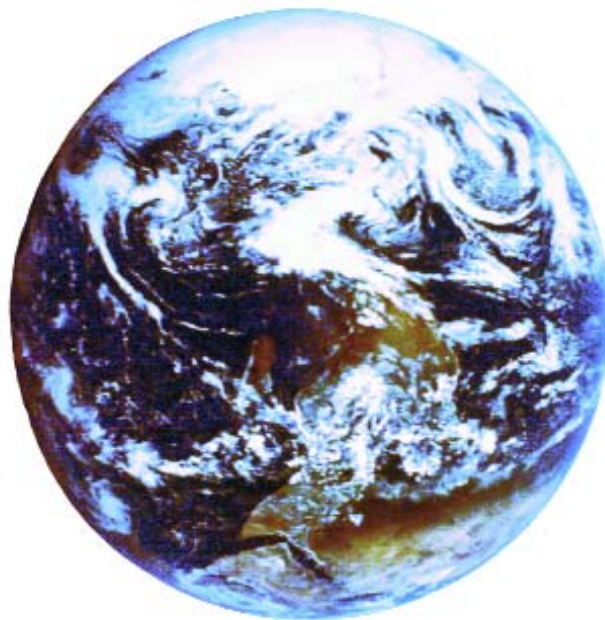
A World Awakening

TINA RASMUSSEN

It is so easy, in our world of mass media bombardment, to become overwhelmed with the “bad news” that seems to be heaped upon us from all over the globe. We see endless images of suffering and death, environmental destruction and impending doom, with only the rare story of something uplifting that happened. If we compare the mass media to a “global brain,” it’s clear that our collective brain has a serious problem with negative self-talk. As a society and as a world, we have developed a self-reinforcing, self-defeating, and self-perpetuating, negative self-image.

Even if we try to avoid this pummeling, newspaper machines are on every corner and grocery line, screaming out the latest disaster. Restaurants and airports are now crowded with televisions in every corner, preventing even a momentary escape or a minute of silence for us to go within to hear from the True Source that—yes, all is well.

So, in the spirit of “Appreciative Inquiry”—a new approach being used within a few progressive business organizations—this article will contribute to a positive future by focusing *solely* on what is working, and on a positive picture of what we aspire for the future to be.



For now, we will take our attention *off* the problems, and we will stop thinking about what needs to be fixed. Instead, we will focus on the good news of our world, with the belief that “what we focus on expands.”

GOOD NEWS IN BUSINESS

- Aaron Feurstein of Malden Mills was honored during President Clinton’s State of the Union Address, for keeping his 3,000 employees on the company payroll after a fire burned down his fabric mill. Feurstein kept paying employees’ salaries, first for one month, then two, then three, declaring “I consider our workers an asset, not an expense.” Feurstein’s actions have riveted the nation as an example of a company willing to take actions in the belief that corporations exist for reasons beyond making money for stockholders. *The Associated Press*, Winter 1996.

- The Walt Disney Company put integrity before profits in a recent decision. When Chinese officials expressed displeasure regarding release of the film “Kundun,” about the life of the Dalai Lama (who has called for Tibetan independence), Disney held firm in honoring its commitment to produce and distribute the film. This decision could cost Disney millions of dol-

lars, by jeopardizing the company's planned expansion into China, the world's most populous nation. *The Chicago Tribune*, November 1996.

- A recent *Business Week*/Harris poll of 1,004 adult Americans found that 95% of Americans reject the view that corporations' only role is to make money.

- Sony Corporation recently took a courageous step in disclosing the results of its confidential research on supernatural abilities in human beings. Sony announced that it will invest in this new field as a potential technology. *New Leaders Newsletter*, September/October 1996.

GOOD NEWS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

- After years of research, the Defense Ministers of the U.S., Russia, and Ukraine recently held a ceremony initiating use of one of the most effective means for reclaiming land contaminated by nuclear waste—sunflowers. These cheerful flowers, planted near Chernobyl, have been found to absorb radioactive components into their roots. They are then harvested and stored, or composted and mixed into cement of glass block for permanent storage. *The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation*.

- Ray Anderson, selected as Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst & Young, has publicly committed to making his \$800 million-a-year global carpet company completely sustainable by the year 2000. Anderson said, "Business and industry, the largest, wealthiest, most pervasive institution on earth, must take the lead in saving the earth from man-made collapse." *New Leaders Newsletter*, September/October 1996.

- Yosemite National Park, long a victim of overcrowding and dete-

Element Books new

riorating natural preservation, may be the first park to undertake major restructuring in order to reclaim its priceless beauty. A proposal is currently under consideration to replace high-polluting auto travel with buses and other forms of public transit to the Yosemite Valley. In addition, employee housing may be relocated outside the park, with existing structures being demolished to return the valley to its original grandeur. *The Yosemite Association*.

GOOD NEWS IN SOCIETY

- The last several years have literally reshaped the way Americans invest. Today, nearly \$1 of our every \$10 under management in an investment portfolio is involved in social investing—for a total of \$639 billion. *Co-op America 1996 Year-end Report*.

- An ongoing, national outcry against companies who use overseas sweatshops has followed the Kathie Lee Gifford clothing products scandal, prompting companies, in industries from apparel to toys, to reconsider their ethics in manufacturing. As a result, numerous companies have pulled out of Burma, a country notorious for using forced labor conditions in manufacturing facilities based there. Similar economic sanctions were responsible for changes we now see in South Africa. In addition, several progressive companies have devised creative methods to retain employment in developing countries, while providing education to former child laborers. *U.S. News*, December 1996, *Harvard Business Review*, September/October 1996.

- On January 23, 1997, thousands (possibly millions?) of people around the globe paused simulta-

neously at 12:35 Greenwich Mean Time for five minutes of meditation and prayer, a moment of unified global consciousness in honor of Gaia—the living earth. The time of this event was aligned with an exceedingly rare planetary alignment not seen since the Renaissance, possibly initiating the dawning of the Age of Aquarius. *The GaiaMind Project*.

- In a recent Gallup poll of 702 employed Americans, 54% of people *without* children said they would be willing to contribute part of their income to on-site child care. *Business Ethics*, November/ December 1996.

- In an effort to encourage voluntary simplicity and a spiritual focus during the holiday season, the United Methodist Church promoted the “Hundred Dollar Holiday,” which encouraged people to spend no more than a hundred dollars per family on presents, and to emphasize gifts of love, such as back rubs, doing chores for each other, or handmade gifts such as food. *The Greenmoney Journal*, Winter 1996.

- A 1996 Roper poll found that Americans believe key social goals can be reached simultaneously for a “win-win-win.” Sixty-six percent of those surveyed believe economic development, environmental protection, and health and happiness can all be achieved together. *Co-op America*, 1996 Year-end Report.

- The 1996 holiday season was slow for most retailers, despite low unemployment and high consumer confidence. The *Wall Street Journal* article wrote that “The biggest factor may be that after years of complaining about the materialism of Christmas, many shoppers are actually doing something about it.”•

Liferhythm new

Heart Seed
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Living in Sin

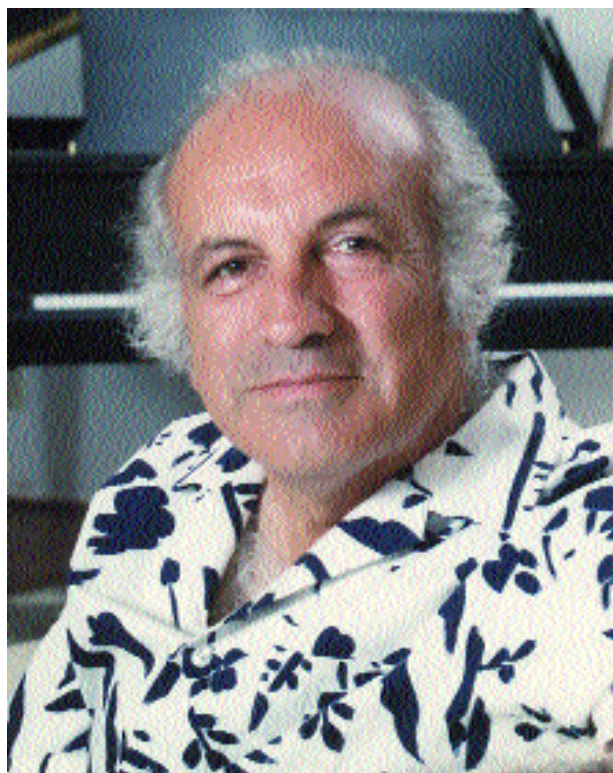
GEORGE JAIDAR

George Jaidar is a philosopher and author of "The Soul: An Owner's Manual." He is a spiritual ecologist and enjoys reclaiming old words that are misused or disused. He also loves rescuing terms and concepts which have become misunderstood by popular religion and conventional misconceptions. George lives in Ojai, California.

Sin has nothing to do with an externally imposed catalogue of offenses, usually contrived through a religious upbringing or enculturation. Such an errant view deserves to be ignored or abandoned by those who have graduated from or gone beyond religion to the more mature spiritual journey.

Would you believe that our present misconception of sin, at least in the West, is the result of the grievous error of a mistranslation? As a result of that mistranslation, we have for centuries lived with the error and its devious consequences.

Further, we have been deprived of the benefits that would have issued from a clear grasp of its originally intended meaning, which has been hidden even from most of those who rebelled against the concept and its



supporting institutions.

To get at this hidden meaning, we must become time-travellers in our religious history and find that word that was originally used in the earliest writings that were relied upon to create what came to be known as the New Testament. The earliest version we have was written in ancient Greek, and the Anglicized Greek word that was mistranslated was *hamartia*.

Hamartia derives from the ancient art and practice of archery, and it meant "to miss the mark." Underlying this meaning was the Greek mythic view of humans as arrows that are shot by the gods (or God) at the target of your *Arete*, most simply translated as your excellence or the fullest expression of your deepest and truest humanity.

It is human free will and hubris that allow us to interfere with this trajectory and thus to miss the mark!

So, to sin is only and always an act of omission, that is, to live without embarking on the journey to your *Arete*. So, it is safe to say that most people are living in sin—*hamartia*. •

Breathing to Change Your Life

MARY NURRIE STEARNS

Breath is not only essential to life, it is one of life's great miracles. The process of breathing is our fundamental movement. Inhalations and exhalations harness the energies of life and forge pathways into the deepest parts of our beings. With inhalations we take in life energy and with exhalations we release into the unknown. Breath has tremendous power. When we allow breath to be natural and deep, it enhances both our well-being and our mystical connection with the all.

Breathing fully corresponds to living fully. Although we are born with the capacity to breathe fully, few of us do as adults. Most of us lose the habit of natural breathing somewhere in childhood. All we have to do is watch the rhythmic rise and fall of a baby's belly to be reminded of how we once breathed and to be assured that we can restore our capability.

Chronic, shallow breathing reduces our production of energy, separates us from our feelings, and contributes to disharmony throughout our being. It may be that our poor breathing habits arise not only out of a lack of body awareness, but also out of an unconscious desire to not sense and feel into the interior of our deepest feelings and contradictions. Unfortunately,

restricting our experience of our inner life also prevents us from experiencing our essence and oneness with all of life.

Superficial breath brings about superficial experience. Breathing naturally, for even a few of the 15,000 breathes we take each waking day, is a huge step towards becoming aware of our own essential being. Simply stated, breath is a vehicle for health and spiritual growth. Our breathing opens or closes us to our inner healing powers and to our potential as human beings.

The diaphragm is fundamental to healthy breathing. However, most of us do not experience the full benefit of this great muscle. The tension that many of us carry in our abdominal muscles and organs impedes the movement of the diaphragm. These tensions are mostly caused by chronic stress, repressed emotions, and excessive negativity. We become trapped in a vicious cycle. Our tensions inhibit diaphragmatic breathing, and the resulting shallow breathing increases tension. We need to reverse the cycle. Correct breathing causes tension to dissolve, relaxes our bodies, and creates the space for deeply nourishing breath, the kind that creative life impulse is meant to breathe into us.

Uninhibited breath is crucial. We can re-activate healthy breathing with daily attention to our breath. One way is to focus on breath in meditation. Reciting a mantra during meditation, such as the following by Thich Nhat Hanh—*Breathing in, I calm body and mind. Breathing out, I smile*—sends a transforming message deep within our being. Another way is to practice diaphragmatic breathing. The Centered Breath Technique, developed by Michiko Rolek, ensures enhanced awareness of healthy breathing and skill in diaphragmatic breathing.

THE CENTERED BREATH TECHNIQUE

1 Lie on your back, sit, or stand comfortably upright. Place your hands on your abdomen to feel the breath motion with your fingertips. This increases your awareness and helps you monitor the process.

2 Exhale completely through your nose or mouth to relax your chest and empty your lungs of stale air. Now



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you are ready for an automatic, full inhalation.

3 Inhale slowly through your nose. Mentally direct your breath down into your lower abdomen. Your lungs will naturally fill from the bottom up. Experience your navel area expanding outward a bit.

4 Exhale evenly through your nose or mouth, pulling your abdomen inwards, toward your back.

5 Breathe in easily. Feel your abdomen expanding again.

6 Breathe out evenly. Let the air out smoothly. Notice the abdomen flattening inwards towards your back.

7 Focus on what you are doing by feeling the rise and fall of your abdomen. Now settle into a natural rhythm. The secret is to stay relaxed.

8 Continue to breathe this way for five to ten minutes. •

The Centered Breath Technique is from "Mental Fitness," by Michiko J. Rolek. Copyright 1996 by Michiko J. Rolek. Published by Weatherhill for \$14.95. The "Benefits of Natural Breathing" is from "The Tao of Natural Breathing" by Dennis Lewis, published by Mountain Wind Publishing for \$17.95. Another resource on breathing is "Conscious Breathing" by Gay Hendricks, published by Bantam for \$12.95. To order these books, call "PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION" Resources at 800-775-6887.

THE BENEFITS OF NATURAL BREATHING

"Natural breathing involves the whole body. Whole-body breathing has a number of benefits at both the physiological and psychological levels. At the physiological level it not only increases our intake of oxygen and helps to promote efficiency in the entire breathing mechanism, but it also helps—through the internal massage it provides—to revitalize all the cells, tissues, and organs of the body, and to clear the body of any toxins. At the psychological level, whole-body breathing helps us relax enough to begin to experience ourselves from the inside out, to discover an inner attention that can take in more accurate complete impressions of the whole of ourselves and our functioning. As this occurs—as our breath expands into hitherto unconscious parts of ourselves—our attitudes and emotions start to change and our self-image begins to release its stranglehold on our lives."

—Dennis Lewis, *"The Tao of Natural Breathing"*

Deepening My Practice

SABINA SCHULZE

A year and a half ago, just as spring arrived, my friend Stella died from breast cancer. It was the first death of a friend my age; she was 42. I visited with her a week before she passed on and was profoundly touched by the presence of death, that special darshan only a dying person can give, that great gift and reminder.

It seemed all my women friends were scheduling their first mammogram. My appointment came two weeks after Stella's death. For weeks afterward, I didn't hear anything from the x-ray lab, and naturally assumed my test was negative. But as I entered my office one day, the phone was ringing—my gynecologist asking if I had gone for my second mammogram yet. Right before this call, I had a very disturbing dream: I was traveling to an unknown destination in the company of a stranger and, when I disembarked from the ship, my luggage was lost. I awoke alarmed by the danger I sensed. The second x-ray confirmed the possibility of breast cancer.

A few days later I was in one of those surreal situations, clad in a hospital gown, my right breast on the



plate of the mammography machine, the radiologist inserted a guide wire leading to the suspected tumor area and drops of blood accumulated on my gown, the plate and the floor. Trying to disassociate from my body by reciting mantras, I was deeply grateful for the kindness of the radiologist, a specialist in breast cancer detection, sensing his compassion while he performed this torturous procedure.

I had embarked on the most frightening experience of my life. I followed my breath in and out. It was still there, and I was still there. That day I received the diagnosis: breast cancer. I felt the suffering of all people confronted with the harshness of a life-threatening disease. I was certain there were thousands of us going through the same turmoil at the same moment.

On the same day, in Germany, my mother was diagnosed with uterine cancer. My mother had given birth to me exactly eight years after she had been hung in an attempted family suicide in war-torn Europe. I felt the suffering of my lineage as I experienced a sense of remembering every moment of my existence—the turmoil of fleeing the east and spending my first year in

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refugee camps in West Germany, living without sufficient food or heat in a converted fortress during the harsh winter of Bavaria. I had lived with a sense of threat to my existence for a long time; now the threat of breast cancer was very real. I felt tremendous grief for all of us.

My mother underwent a hysterectomy, but required no further cancer treatment—a frightening event without life-changing consequences. On the other hand, I was to live with a fifty percent chance of recurrence at any time. No one would vouch for my life until I had survived five years without new tumor growth. Life, as I had known it, was over. The old self died that day and was not going to be magically restored. Everything had changed. More precisely, I was aware of the constant flux of events and that there was nothing I could hold onto, my health or my life. The meaning of impermanence became starkly clear.

Within the next month, I underwent three surgical procedures. I joined the sangha of millions of others facing the natural event of disease. Before this, my Vipassana practice was based on the wisdom of others. Now I recognized impermanence not only in my physical body, but also in mind states, time, emotions and beliefs. The most dreaded medical test result, lymph node invasion, became another fact to be examined and followed by appropriate action, chemotherapy.

For years I had heard about the importance of meditating on death, but it had been just another piece of ancient wisdom. Now I felt the powerful impact in my entire being of Buddha's words as he approached death:

Of all footprints, that of the Elephant is supreme. Of all mindfulness meditations, that on death is supreme.—Mahaparinirvana sutra

As the medical tests continued, trying to find out how far the cancer had advanced, I watched my rapid redefinition of self, almost like a constant parade: winner, loser, conqueror, victim, and so on. I vividly recall sitting in the hallway at St. Vincent's hospital waiting for the results from a bone scan which would determine if the cancer was stage II (treatable) or stage III (beyond the scope of chemotherapy). The waiting was exhausting; the only activity that helped was to simply watch. I watched inside and outside the body, becoming a true nangpa, or insider, as spoken of by Tibetan Buddhists, tracing the different sensations, changes in posture, breathing and muscle tension that certain types of information created in the body. I followed as the

information was judged by the mind, observing the illusion unfolding in every moment. I could see the whole loop: some words spoken by a doctor about my health, the body's response, the mind's interpretation, the immediate projection into the future. Only by returning to my breath, over and over again, could I distance myself and sometimes break the cycle, coming into the here and now.

The Buddhist practice of paying attention allowed me some measure of equanimity in situations, such as being in the oncologist's waiting room, surrounded by scared and defeated-looking fellow beings in various stages of the disease. Mindful attention helped as I changed from street clothes into the light blue paper gowns, or as the gurney moved me to the surgical prep room. I was mercilessly stripped of the world I knew, and paying attention to every moment provided a walking stick along unknown terrain.

Just as importantly, my partner, Ralph, and the sangha of friends from different spiritual backgrounds lovingly carried me through this time. They could be with illness, express their fears and sadness, while maintaining their sense of humor. I felt the energy of many prayers spoken for my recovery. And the remarkable bonding with my women friends as they saw me through baldness and weakness, offering hands-on healing sessions, drumming and singing for the restoration of my health and balance. They all provided a chance for me to experience wellness in illness.

When I was two months into the chemotherapy treatments, a friend invited me to sit with a recently-formed group in Santa Fe. As I approached the house of this Tibetan teacher, I was excited. I sensed that I had finally found a teacher to study with on a daily basis. I found a kind and knowledgeable teacher, and he too was living with cancer. He had been in remission for a few years, but understood all too well what I was going through during chemotherapy, making my remaining four months of treatment that much more manageable.

Well into the chemotherapy treatments, I realized how immensely valuable the first, intense month of this journey was, how the powerful impact shook me awake, and how the work of maintaining awareness really began with this wake-up call. The mind tries so desperately to create security. I watched myself feel safer after the treatment decisions were made because something powerful was being done.

But the lesson continued to be impermanence and unpredictability. In the years following treatment, I lost

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HJ Kramer new

The Spirit Link new

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my job, which had been extremely stressful and probably unhealthy for me. Then a home was offered us in the country. No TV reception, just enormous pink cliffs, birds of prey, and the Rio Chama thundering behind the house, a completely tranquil hermitage.

These days, I receive many calls from women who have just been diagnosed and are involved in the turmoil of initial decision-making. In town we have formed a support group for women with breast cancer, sharing experiences and information about helpful alternative adjuvant treatments.

My cancer is in remission, but I continue to treat it with healing herbs and acupuncture. On some level, it is always present. As Joseph Goldstein told me: "If you can maintain the keen awareness of death in everyday life, especially after your health is restored and the cancer in remission, that's your path for practice."

The threat of recurrence with metastatic breast cancer is very real. I am healed, but not cured. No one ever tells us we are cured, although the mind continues to get stuck in the illusion of well-being. Experiencing physical well-being, and knowing at the same time that it is an illusion, has helped me understand the illusory nature of reality. I watch the mind move back and forth between accepting things as they are and wanting a certain outcome. I watch how duality sneaks in and disturbs attention and equanimity. As time passes, the work of paying attention gets harder, the memories of the wake-up experience fade slightly, and impermanence needs to be greeted with the same respect each day. •

Death of My Son

C A R O L E S C H R A M M

My beloved Stephen died quietly and peacefully in my arms on August 27, 1993, exactly three months after his 27th birthday. Moments before, I told him how happy I was that he would soon see our Honey (our family's favorite Aunt, who, at age 87, had passed away months before). We all knew that Stephen was the favorite person in Honey's world, and now she would be there to welcome him into a new one. I saw a faint smile, a long sigh, and then my Stephen let go of his last painful breath and lay quiescent at last.

At that moment, I felt a sadness deeper than tears. Yet with a heart full of gratitude and love, I let go of his hand and turned him over to God's care and keeping—and sent Stephen on to the light. I thanked God for this gift of Stephen's presence in my life and for the blessings he brought to our family. Whatever God's purpose for Stephen's life had been, he had fulfilled it perfectly and completely, and it was time for him to move on away from us.

The grieving cycle for me had begun four years earlier when we learned that our Stephen was infected



with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. During that first bout with *Pneumocystis Pneumonia*, he lay in the Intensive Care Unit for two weeks, and we feared he would not survive. I begged, pleaded, and bargained with God for just a little more time with my son, desperately wanting to show him how much we all loved him. My wish was granted, and we were all given that opportunity.

It wasn't until much later that I came to the realization that the painful "long good-bye" can be a doubled-edged sword. Letting go—and doing it slowly—is the most pain, I believe, that a parent can endure. For although our children can send us to great heights of happiness and joy, that unconditional love and closeness we feel for them contains the seeds of our deepest sorrow and despair. Their triumphs and disappointments are felt so deeply within our own being, it's as if they were are own.

There is nothing extraordinary about our family. We have had our share of divorces, separations, alienations, misunderstandings, petty jealousies, and more than a few skeletons in our closets. What was remarkable,

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however, was how in facing the reality of what fate awaited one of our own, we all put aside our differences and pulled together to weave a fabric of love and compassion to embrace and cradle our Stephen. We encircled him, cared for him, and tried our best to nurture and protect him.

Most of this reaction was due to the kind of person Stephen was. Stephen was not a saint. He had many of the same faults we all succumb to, and if he had lived for 100 years, he would never have had a full-time job! But my young son was kind, sensitive and caring, always slow to judge others, and treated everyone with gentleness and respect. He taught all of us how to connect to each other, and that what is truly important in this world is Love. He taught me that to appreciate beauty in nature is God speaking to our souls. He radiated light like a candle expending itself.

My son's legacy to me is that I live life on a different, more intense level today, than before. Life is truly beautiful, a miracle, and we must not waste a single moment. Time with our loved ones is to be cherished above all else. Because, inevitably, someday we must all say good-bye.

Now as I write this, one year after Stephen's death, I realize that what is conveyed in these words might serve as inspiration and hope for those in similar circumstances. People are not alone in their feelings of fear, isolation and devastation in facing the consequences of this disease that regrettably societal influences have not fully accepted as just like any other form of dying. But I have been there. I have felt these emotions. And I have triumphed to pick up the pieces.

Yes, this is a story about Stephen, and about a mother's struggle to cope. But in a way, it is a story about all of us. We are all on a journey called life. Change and challenge can either destroy our peace and happiness, or they can become vehicles enkindling our growth. The choice is always ours.

This experience has crystallized a few observations about life that others have made. Some are simple and we've all heard them many times before. Through times of meditation and prayer, they have become a part of me.

When I first learned that Stephen had this disease called AIDS, I realized suddenly that what only happens to *them*, was happening to us. It was my first vague awareness of the fact that we are all in this together. What happens to another human being in some way happens to all of us. If we are open to it, we will see that we are all unique children of God, each with our

own special soul spirit.

Some people learn life's lessons easily. Stephen, for example, conducted his entire life by not judging others indiscriminately, and knowing that what happened to his neighbor also affected him. My son once confided in me that he felt he had been on this earth many times before, and this was the reason people were so drawn to him—as if they knew and latched onto his wisdom and experience. For me, I needed the equivalent of an atomic bomb dropped on me to hear this wake-up call!

It is true: We are our brother's keeper. In the Bible, it was Jesus who commanded us to "Love one another as I have loved you." Love isn't merely a feeling, but the actions of sharing, understanding, and compassion. True love doesn't care about what others think, but rather simply allows your loved one to be what and who they are—unconditionally, without judgment or reservation.

We are God's hands on this earth. He will guide and direct us; we only need to be willing and listen. This is why our family and friends are gifts to be cherished and tended like a flower garden. How often do we feel overwhelmed by everyday life's demands, only to neglect those closest to us? One simple act of kindness to another can have a "ripple effect" that could change the world.

A huge part of finding happiness is being aware of the many blessings in our lives. Simple basic things, like waking and realizing that you have been given a new day, the face of your beloved, the beautiful blue sky, the laughter of a baby. They were always there, but we were not looking. It must become a mental habit to look at "what's not wrong," rather than dwelling on "what is." In my case, I was losing a treasured son, yet I have three other beautiful children to love and cherish. With practice, counting blessings is a wonderful mind excursion.

The realization that life is constantly changing and transformation is occurring is very enlightened teaching. This is an important concept to come to terms with on our journey. If this were not true, none of us could ever grow. Someday we will all have to say good-bye to everything and everyone we love. As we unfold spiritually, one door closes and another opens. Physical death should not be feared, rather seen as another part of our spiritual journey back to God.

I still find it strange that a child of mine could have the ability to teach me so much about life. Twenty-nine years ago, when I looked at this tiny baby cradled in my arms, I never could have imagined how much power and influence he would have over all of us. •



Finding the Way

JACK KORNFIELD AND
CHRISTINA FELDMAN

Finding the way to authentic awakening presents us with an immense challenge. Naturally enough, we first listen to the voices of external authorities who seem to hold the answers to our questions. It becomes more confusing as we soon discover that the world abounds in a multitude of authorities who gladly and willingly offer us advice, solutions, and formulas. Our bookstores overflow with prescriptions on how to be happy, fulfilled, and liberated. In the beginning, we may listen and learn from the wisdom of other people's experience. We can be inspired by the example of teachers and sages of past and present.



Jack Kornfield is the author of "A Path with Heart" and "Buddha's Little Instruction Book." He founded and directs the Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California, where he resides. Christina Feldman is the author of "Women Awake." She is a Buddhist teacher who leads spiritual retreats around the world. She lives in South Devon, England.



At some point in the midst of our listening, a number of insights dawn upon us. We see that no single authority holds the hot line to truth, nor is there just one way to awakening. It may also become clear to us that what we hear are simply the different melodies through which the great spiritual traditions have expressed one essential harmony. It is this harmony that is significant and not the manner of its expression. The common elements of all who become wise are that they have learned to listen to this wisdom in their own hearts, to hear the underlying harmony, and to travel their own path.

No one can travel our path for us; no one can substitute for us in our quest for awakening. In trusting that wisdom, joy, and awakening are our spiritual heritage, we must discover what awakens them in us. No one else can free us from the confusion, fear, and attachment that cast shadows of pain on our lives. In accepting this aloneness, we find it is not an aloneness of alienation or withdrawal. We are supported in our spiritual quest by all those of

past generations, of all cultures, who applaud and inspire our exploration. Our quest connects us with millions of contemporary companions who seek inner peace and freedom. In the willingness to know our own aloneness, we begin to discover a wisdom and compassion that connects us to all others.

There will be moments when we encounter feelings of despair, doubt, and inadequacy. We may wonder how to bridge the apparently uncrossable gap between confusion and clarity, holding and opening, limitation and freedom. In all moments of darkness, we need to remember that we are blessed with humanity's most precious gift—the capacity to be aware. It is a gift to rejoice in; the capacity to be aware is the power to be conscious, to be awake, and to transform. It is an immense power, enabling us to penetrate the veils of confusion that limit us, enabling us to connect with and use the inner resources of energy, focus, and love that lie dormant.

Exploring what it means to be aware, we learn how to be wholeheartedly present in each moment, present with ourselves, present with all that each moment brings to us. Connecting with the present moment we are able to set aside our anxiety about the future and with what we might gain or lose, have or become. We are able to free ourselves from our preoccupations with the past, our histories, and the burden of our regrets. Our awareness illuminates what is actually here, one moment at a time. And it is in this moment that we are able to learn and to open.

The present moment is the most profound and challenging teacher we will ever meet in our lives. It is a compassionate teacher; it extends to us no judgment, no censure, no measurement of success and failure. The present moment is a mirror, and in its reflection we learn how to see. Learning how to look into this mirror without deluding ourselves is the source of all wisdom. In this mirror we see what contributes to the confusion and discord in our lives and what contributes to harmony and understanding. We see the relationship between pain and its cause on a moment-to-moment level; we see the bond between love and its source. We see what it is that connects us and what it is that alienates us.

In this seeing we begin to learn from our own stories, what delights us and what saddens us. Listening inwardly and learning from our own stories, we see that we are in need not so much of experts to define our way, as of our own clear and direct inner attunement. Our stories reveal our path. In our listening we can understand what we need to let go of and what we need to develop if we are to live in the spirit of peace and freedom.

Our own stories differ only in superficial form and detail from the stories of all beings. There is no living being that does not share our yearning for liberation, to be free from fear and pain. Grief is grief, no matter the heart that endures it. Peace is peace, regardless of the heart that rejoices in it.

LIVING OUR TRUTH

How to make our lives an embodiment of wisdom and compassion is the greatest challenge spiritual seekers face. The truths we have come to understand need to find their visible expression in our lives. Our every thought, word, or action holds the possibility of being a living expression of clarity and love. It is not enough to be a possessor of wisdom. To believe ourselves to be custodians of truth is to become its opposite, is a direct path to becoming stale, self-righteous, or rigid. Ideas and memories do not hold liberating or healing power.

There is no such state as enlightened retirement, where we can live on the bounty of past attainments. Wisdom is alive only as long as it is lived; understanding is liberating only as long as it is applied. A bulging portfolio of spiritual experiences matters little if it does not have the power to sustain us through the inevitable moments of grief, loss, and change. Knowledge and achievements matter little if we do not yet know how to touch the heart of another and be touched.

We must be wary, however, of being entranced

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by idealism. Profound love, compassion, sensitivity, and awakening are the possibilities of spirituality that move and attract us. Yet we know that it is easier to love a thousand people in our thoughts than to fully love one person in actuality. It is not difficult to extend boundless acceptance and compassion to those who do not actively challenge us. We acknowledge that it is easy to be armchair philosophers, but then what do we do? Only in the midst of our concrete relationships and day-to-day living can we actually express our wisdom and demonstrate compassion.

We live in undeniable connectedness with all life. Every word we speak, every action we initiate creates a ripple upon this relationship. Understanding this connectedness brings a sacredness to each moment. There is no contact, no perception, no engagement that is inconsequential or insignificant. Each contact is an opportunity for deepening sensitivity and understanding. Our spirituality must touch every area of our lives. We live within our bodies; therefore we are sexual beings, and our sexuality is a vehicle for honoring and respecting the life of all beings. We live in relationship with one another; therefore we are social beings, and every relationship offers us the opportunity to learn how to give and receive with an open heart. We participate consciously or unconsciously in the structures that govern us, and we are political beings by virtue of this participation. Our wisdom empowers us to contribute to the creation of structures that respect the dignity and spirit of all beings. Our spirituality is visible and vital when it embraces every facet of our lives. •

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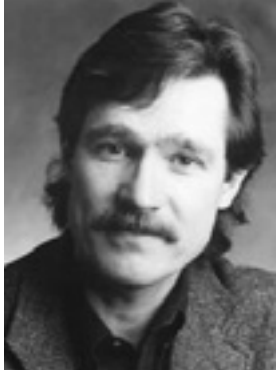


Deep Listening RESOLVES CONFLICT

B R I A N M U L D O O N

In the heat of battle, we don't often think kindly of the enemy. Although we may intellectually recognize that the other side is suffering, we harden our hearts to her tribulations, some of which we may have engendered and can readily justify. A hard heart is not always our best ally. It can blind us to the motives of our adversary and obscure our understanding of the reality in which she operates. It is not necessary that we agree or sympathize with our enemy, but it is foolish not to understand her. When we cut ourselves off from our natural tendency to feel compassion for others, including our enemy, we reduce our effectiveness because we insulate ourselves from valuable information. Conflict polarizes us, so it is not surprising that we rarely see the whole picture.

TONY STONE/DAVID HANOVER



Brian Muldoon co-founded one of the country's first private mediation firms. He has designed and taught courses in mediation, negotiation, and alternative dispute resolution. He brings a sense of compassion and humanity into an arena more familiar with beligerence and aggression. He lives and works in Chicago.



Compassion is not the same as sentimentality. Rather, it is the discipline to resonate with another person, to feel what she feels, to connect, to move beyond the limitations of our own prejudices and opinions. It guards us against hurting ourselves through our unwillingness to hurt others. But compassion does not mean that we should surrender to their desires or exhibit weakness. It simply means that we will not stop being human just because we are engaged in conflict.

Conflict takes place in an environment of mistrust. Compassion helps to restore some measure of basic trust so that some form of functional communication can take place. When that communication occurs, we usually will learn something essential for the resolution of the matter. We already know what *we* think. Compassion allows us to understand what *they* think, and why.

The way in which compassion is most commonly and usefully expressed in the midst of conflict is through listening. Not just the kind of *listening* we do while we are waiting to speak, but *real* listening. When our listening becomes as passionate as our speaking, we are then able to invoke the transformative power of silence. It is only in silence that real change takes place.

THE ALCHEMY OF LISTENING

Medieval alchemists regarded life as a process of refining and strengthening the soul as it moved closer to the divine. The soul was like iron. With the proper magic, it might become gold—precious and easily shaped into objects of beauty.

Adversaries tend to take positions that initially seem ironclad. Like two heavily armored knights, they circle one another, and the sound of metal against metal rings out in the arena of combat. A court alchemist watching their stiff and heavy-handed struggle from the shadows might wonder how to transform their iron protection into apparel of pliant gold. Caught by the regal brilliance of one another, might not the adversaries approach the controversy differently? Listening has the quality of the wizard's alchemy. It has the power to melt armor and to produce beauty in the midst of hatred. Writer Brenda Ueland, a friend of Carl Sandburg, described the transformative properties of listening in *Strength to Your Sword Arm*:

When we listen to people, there is an alternating current, and this recharges us so that we never get tired of each other. We are constantly being re-created. There is this little creative fountain inside us that begins to spring and cast up new thoughts and unexpected laughter and wisdom. If you are very tired, strained, have no solitude, run too many errands, talk to too many people, drink too many cocktails, this little fountain is muddled over and covered with a lot of debris. The result is you stop living from the center, the creative fountain, and you live from the periphery, from externals. That is why, when someone has listened to you, you go home rested and lighthearted. It is when people really listen to us, with quiet fascinated attention, that the little fountain begins to work again, to accelerate in the most surprising way.

One of the greatest gifts a parent can give a child is to listen. As every parent knows, most warnings

are forgotten and most advice is ignored, but the times we listen to our children—to their fears and problems and victories—are treasured moments that never seem to fade.

The parent who can listen to a child recognizes that birth is a lifelong experience. We are constantly emerging from an intangible womb, discovering hidden aspects of ourselves with each new interaction or challenge. When a parent listens with genuine interest to a child's cries of hunger, to his first words, to his frustration at school, the child receives a vitally important message: "I care. You matter."

This kind of acceptance is precious because it is so rare. The world can be a cold and hostile place, seeming to reject everything we value about ourselves. Listening creates an island of safety. As we mature, those who listen to us make it possible to explore that island. Those who hear us become our best friends, our lovers, our mates. They literally help bring who we are into being.

The need for listening is never greater than when we are in conflict. Long-distance charges go through the ceiling when a relationship sours. Endless community meetings follow the announcement that developers plan to build a high-rise or a half-way house near an established neighborhood. In times of conflict, lawyers and therapists prosper. Families and friends are drawn close.

Unfortunately, much of the listening we are afforded by others in times of conflict is of marginal value or is even destructive. Friends and family members often take advantage of our vulnerability by providing unsolicited opinions and projecting their own issues into the picture. Lawyers often prefer to strategize than to listen, which they often dismiss as mere "hand-holding." Everybody would rather give advice than allow us to come to it on our own. When someone is in trouble, the immediate reaction is to talk rather than listen.

When we are engaged by conflict, we naturally want to be heard. In dealing with our adversary, however, the need to be heard often becomes a struggle to convince the other person that we are "right." We want the adversary to cry "uncle" before we graciously make a concession. This is the point where conflict can most easily spin out of control. In our campaign to be right, it doesn't

occur to us that our energies might more effectively be spent by listening to our adversary, rather than in arguing. We are still influenced by a four-year-old child inside us who deals with conflict by putting his hands over his ears and shouting at his older siblings. We still secretly believe in the power of the tantrum.

Why is it essential that we become effective listeners to resolve conflict? It is because a change of heart is almost always required before a conflict can be put to rest. Something must shift to end the impasse. Arguing—the assertion of the superiority of our position—is not generally an effective way to change your adversary's thinking. Did arguing work the last time you couldn't agree with your husband about which movie to see? Did it work when your kids refused to go to bed? Did it work when your client questioned last month's bill? Did you really change his mind, or did someone simply give in?

An old adage counsels: "If in family matters it ever turns out that you are right, immediately apologize." There is always a price to be paid in establishing our moral superiority. There's nothing wrong with being right, but it's rarely worth the cost of getting someone else to cry "uncle." Being right is a private matter. It's enough that *you* know.

Listening is far more effective than arguing as a way to resolve conflict. Listening opens new routes past the impasse by creating a "place" for change to happen. A good listener is like an engineer dealing with a river that floods after a heavy rain. Only a fool would try to defeat gravity by attempting to push the river back upstream. The wise engineer makes gravity her friend. She builds a canal and holding ponds at the proper place and lets the water flow of its own accord.

Listening allows change to take place without forcing it. Any attempt to impose a solution is likely to be met with resistance. It is the nature of free will to remain free. Like gravity, free will instantly reacts to any attempt at coercion or manipulation. Listening respects the speaker's sovereignty. It is unnecessary to be defensive in the presence of genuine listening. Listening is one of the few human interactions that reduces rather than increases resistance. For confrontation or containment to be effective, it is often necessary that we also engage in

an active campaign of listening.

A good listener is an attentive companion as the speaker is led to her own conclusions. The mind shifts when the awareness that “something’s gotta give” is no longer blocked by the need to justify our feelings or actions. Once we stop being defensive, the mind is free to become creative. Change then happens naturally.

The challenge of listening to one’s adversary can be daunting. After all, many of the things that will be said are probably hostile and directed at the listener. But the light it sheds is worth the heat you’ll take.

Adversaries seldom convince one another of the merits of their own positions, but by listening they can convince each other of their good faith and constructive intentions. Once each party believes that the other is acting in good faith, the likelihood of finding a solution is greatly improved. Being heard means that I no longer need to fight to make my point. By listening, my adversary shows that she acknowledges my right to take a stand, even if I’m wrong. We cannot both listen to our adversary, and, at the same time, perceive the conflict in terms of winning and losing.

This is why bitter adversaries resist sitting down together. To listen to your enemy implies that you accept her right to have a voice. To have a voice assumes personhood and vitality. For the Israelis to meet directly with the Palestinian Arabs, for example, means that both already have recognized the legitimacy—the legal existence—of one another. The rest is details.

Keeping in mind that good listening is a rarity

Deep listening, listening that is patient and unhurried, provides an excellent vehicle for removing the emotional obstacles to dealing with the differences. Listening makes it possible to talk about solving a problem rather than simply maneuvering to undo one another.

even within families or among close friends, it is not surprising that we would strongly resist listening to our adversaries. Nevertheless, one of the most powerful tools of conflict resolution is the application of what I call “deep listening” to one’s opponent.

Listening doesn’t always mean that opposition can be eliminated, of course. Differences will remain, no matter how effective the listening. But deep listening, listening that is patient and unhurried, provides an excellent vehicle for removing the emotional obstacles to dealing with the differences. Listening makes it possible to talk about solving a problem rather than simply maneuvering to undo one another.

Of all the tools available to us in dealing with conflict, none is more important than attentive, intentional listening. Listening helps reduce resistance and opens our thinking to creative solutions. Listening not only clarifies the message, but changes both the messenger and the listener. Listening makes it possible for both sides to have a change of heart.

Listening doesn’t happen by itself. It takes a conscious decision and a willingness to release the distraction of “being right.”

In learning how to listen, we develop the virtues of patience and even humility. Ultimately, listening teaches us to resolve conflict by letting it resolve itself. •

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The Web of Life

D O N A L D O R R

Thomas Berry uses a very telling phrase: when we look at nature we should, he says, see “a community of subjects” rather than a set of objects to be used and exploited. In recent years, a growing number of people in the West have begun to rediscover what more traditional people never lost—a sense of being a part of a web of life, which includes not just other humans but also the animals and plants. This web of life nourishes us even when we scarcely advert to it. If we deliberately open ourselves to its energies, then we receive even more sustenance. Many people get great comfort and an enrichment of the quality of life from their relationship with a dog, a cat or a horse. For others, walking or sitting under trees can bring deep peace.

The web of living creatures is itself part of the cosmos or material universe. Indeed the boundary between living and inanimate beings is rather fluid—as is the boundary between conscious and non-conscious life. The time is past when reality could be neatly divided into *subjects* (humans) and *objects* (everything else in the world). Modern science lends a lot of credibility to the intuition of Teilhard de Chardin that the world is not an agglomeration of separate objects but a unified whole—and that all of what is called ‘matter’ has an inherent tendency towards that level of complexity which can sustain life and, eventually, consciousness. Scientists like James Lovelock take this a stage further when they speak of ‘the Gaia hypothesis’. This is the notion that life on the planet Earth as a whole can be seen as though it were a single living organism which carefully regulates its environment and its different parts to ensure its own survival.

We can dispose ourselves for this spiritual work, not by cutting ourselves off from the material world, but rather by opening ourselves up to nature and the universe. This means, of course, contemplating the beauty and mystery of life and of nature. But it also means *getting our hands dirty*—digging the ground and planting seeds, draining or irrigating land, shaping wood and moulding clay, weaving cloth and generating electricity. It is only when we are *grounded* in the Earth, both by work and by contemplation, that we can reach out to touch the stars and beyond. Then we are making available to the Spirit another *channel* to get through to us personally, to all the people of our world—and to the Earth itself. •

Donal Dorr is the author of “Remove the Heart of Stone,” “Option for the Poor,” and “The Social Justice Agenda.” This article is from “Divine Energy,” by Donal Dorr. Copyright 1996 by Donal Dorr. Printed with permission from Triumph Books.

TONY STONE/ART WOLFE





Choose to be Happy

AN INTERVIEW WITH
SWAMI CHETANANANDA
BY MARY NURRIESTEARNS

Swami Chetanananda's philosophical reflections grow out of years of study, teaching, practice, and experience. Chetanananda is abbot of the Nityananda Institute, a spiritual community based in Portland, Oregon. He is the author of "The Breath of God," "The Logic of Love," "Songs from the Center of the Well," "Dynamic Stillness," and "Choose to be Happy." For more information about Swami Chetanananda or his books call Rudra Press at (800)876-7798.

In his wonderful book, “Choose to be Happy”, Swami Chetanananda shows us how to be happy in this age of anxiety. While it is impossible to control everything that happens, we have choice in how we respond and the spirit in which we choose to live. Happiness is not an external condition. It is a choice, and the way of happiness is to focus our efforts where the source of happiness resides, inside of ourselves.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: You say that connecting to the part of us that is truly alive is how we choose to be happy, and you refer to that truly alive part as a still point deep within. What do you mean by still point?

SWAMI CHETANANANDA: First of all, it's experiential. It's a place that you can actually go to and be in. The still point is the place where all experience, subjective and objective, merge into one infinite dynamic stillness. It is the place from which all cognition, perception, and experience unfold themselves. By its very nature, it is completely competent. It is pure potential. You find that place by being quiet.

Is the still point the place where, no matter what, we are happy?

Yes, because it's beyond every kind of experience. It's beyond having and not having, and it's beyond here and there. It is innately full of joy. You've experienced walking down the street, when for no good reason, you begin whistling or humming. The intrinsic joy that you experienced in that moment is ever present within you. For whatever reason, it pops out on its own once in a while. It's possible to live in that place all the time, even if you have a job, a car payment, and a mortgage. Further, it's my contention that if you don't live from that place, the job, the car payment, and the mortgage are terminal.

To be happy we have to accept that we have no control over most of what happens to us. You say that control is the greatest illusion of all. What then do we focus our attention on?

On yourself basically. There are three things that you need to do. First of all, train yourself to be open and then secondly, in that state of openness, be aware of the flow, of the interchange. From this awareness of flow, become aware of the interconnectedness of all of life and realize that the source of interconnectedness is dynamic stillness, that still place. Focus on openness, flow, and stillness. Every bit of it depends on you and not on anything else.

The answers you seek do not lie in the past; they lie precisely in the flow which is inside you now. The answers lie, as always, within you, at this moment, just as you are. The answers are not in the future; they're not in the past: they're here, now. And the moment you choose to embrace and connect to them, to your Self, and live from there, your future is transformed, your past, finished.

Spiritual practice comes down to something very simple: relax and be happy. Love your life. Love the life you have right now, not the life you hope to have or the one that someone else has. Love the life you have because, for starters, if you don't love it, nobody else will. And if you don't love it, it can't grow beyond where it is today.

What is openness?

A great deal of the input coming to us is never picked up by our conscious mind. Our attitudes and opinions of ourselves, of others, and of our potential, limit us and block the input and output that is the essence of the life process that we are. Our life process becomes structured on very limited lines. Openness is a state of mind, but it is also a state of being pure, free of tensions. Openness is a quiet mind and total participation in the moment. Participation in the moment has a physical reality to it, which is the flow. It is the interaction, the life process that we are, that is within us and that we are also within. That life process is bigger than we are. We do have control over something, ourselves. What we can't and don't have control over are the circumstances of our lives and the outcomes of our endeavors.

The fact that we don't have any deep control of outcome doesn't mean that we don't attempt to influence life.

We must. Even though everything is in God, and everything is up to God, we still have to do our duty. It is our life's work.

What kind of attitude do we adopt about effort?

Effort is the way in which we allow our essence to unfold and fulfill itself. Our effort is always focused inside. In everything that we do, we have the attitude that we want to do good work, out of appreciation for the incredible potential which is that power of life within us. If you have something magnificent in yourself, that dazzles and amazes you, you treat it with respect. Its innate nature is to shine out. We simply make it possible. We keep cleaning the lenses so that the light comes through clearly. That's our effort.

So we need to reset our priorities on these things that we can affect.

That's the point. When you live in a balanced place within yourself, from that still point in which balance is intrinsic, you're not entangled in tensions, and you see worldliness for what it is. It is tension and trauma, and at the same time a symphony that we are a part of. When you don't get overly focused on any particular event, you enjoy the flow of the whole.

If we don't want to be carried by the sway of events, we have to live from a deeper place.

If you want to live an authentic life, if you want to be alive, you can't get caught up in individual kinds of experiences. You have to have a big perspective; otherwise, you allow yourself to become a very small person. Trying to

become a big person is what we should be doing with our lives.

The way we become bigger persons is through inner work. Discuss inner work.

The inner work is to become open, which means opening your heart to everything you are and everything you see. You cultivate openness so that various tensions unwind from within you and rise up within the field of your experience. You remain open within yourself throughout.

It doesn't mean to negate certain experience.

No, I do not accept the idea that we strive for detachment. I don't think detachment is possible. We are in God; God is in us. There is nothing we can do to become separate. We want to see, seek, feel, and be aware of the fabric of life, not as an intellectual construct, but as a palpable experience. In this state of awareness, we are completely full, because the power of life which creates the whole universe is the power that is within us. This power is always within us, but people become entangled in tensions and biochemistry and forget.

In the book you said that most of our feelings are an expression of our biochemistry. What do you mean?

Hormones. Most of our attractions and our repulsions have to do with two things. Basically, human beings exist to do two things, eat and reproduce. We work on strategies that enable us to do so. A human's personality is an amorphous changeable event that forms up within the person in response to the needs to eat and reproduce. Much psychological analysis that we bring to bear on ourselves and on others has nothing to do with anything. Seeing the simplicity of our behaviors, we can take care of those things in simple ways. This eliminates confusion from our brains, which frees us to make better choices. The first and most important choice that you have to make is the choice to be happy, no matter what. After committing yourself to living a happy life, your thoughts and feelings, and the opportunities presenting themselves for these thoughts and feelings to be expressed are amazing.

Discuss further your concept of feelings as hormones.

I am more than the sum total of the chemicals that function in my body. But I do find that my reactions to my circumstances are in two simple categories—opportunities and threats to my needs to eat and reproduce, the basic themes of human response. What powers those responses is biochemical. What powers the biochemistry is creative potential. I want to go beyond the chemistry. I want to tame that chemistry and put it to work for me. I don't want to be the slave to it. I want it to serve me. I go to the core of feelings and reactions which is energetic. I pay attention to the energy, the channels by which the energy moves, and the place from which that energy arises within me that powers those feelings, that give them impulse, magnitude, and frequency.

What do we do with our feelings?

We transcend them. I don't think it's possible to be detached, so I am not saying that we should suppress or repress feelings. Whatever we suppress or repress comes back later. If we have a higher goal for our life, if we have a bigger perspective, we see our feelings in a broader context; we experience our reactions and focus our attention on a higher state of being. We transform those feelings into finer expressions of that higher state of being. Feelings become much more expansive. Instead of desires, we feel compassion; instead of boundaries, obligations, and responsibilities, we feel charity. You want to move from one domain to a finer one, establishing yourself in an experience of fullness and peace from within.

Struggling with feelings is normal, but you can be open and accept your feelings, and still have the goal of remaining established in that higher state. Those feelings get in step with the state you are identified with, change their own shape, and become a self-reinforcing part of that higher state, which is self-expressing.

Does this process alter the biochemistry of feelings?

In the process, feelings lose their power, and that biochemistry becomes like a flavor, not like a slave-driver. Feelings are no longer a hammer of force that drive you. They become flavor or texture, which blends itself into the whole field of your

experience. Because you are a finer person, those textures and flavors are a part of the joy of your life, not circumstances that toss you from one thing to the next.

That's the transformation that reduces anxiety and depression.

It dissolves anxiety and depression. If you experience tremendous power within yourself, what's to be anxious about? Anxiety is nothing but a mantra that most people practice all the time. I call it the mantra of stupidity. The mantra is, "What is going to happen to me?" The moment you ask the question, you shrink your perspective to the smallest possible framework. Whatever state that you live from becomes a self-reinforcing dynamic system. The particular state that you're in has energetic vibrations. All the vibrations in that state become feelings. Those feelings become thoughts, and those thoughts become actions. Those actions become self-reinforcing, interacting with others who put energy into it. The whole dynamic system constantly sustains itself.

Another aspect of inner work is allowing our inner vision to emerge. How do we discover our vision?

Through the same process that we are talking about. If we are more than the flesh that we drag around, if the power that animates us is what we really are, and if that power is amazing, then we want to develop the ability to feel that power, rather than living on the surface, responding to tensions and stupidity. We want to live from that power within us and allow that power to grow and express itself. Then the vision—who we are, what we need to do, where we need to go, what we need to say—starts to come out and we know. When we really contact life, we know.

We need virtue in order to follow our vision. What is virtue, and how do we develop it?

Virtue is the extension of our vision by giving of ourselves through service. Virtue is being there for the people we share our lives with, in whatever form is required.

Is this the arena where we practice honesty, keep our commitments, and become responsible for our emotions?

Yes. Discipline is key. Discipline enables us to enter to this complete state of openness.

In order to be virtuous, do we have to hold in our mind higher ideals, in order to act for the highest best interest of all concerned?

Yes. We don't live for ourselves alone. We have to live for the benefit of all human beings. We begin with our loved ones and our immediate family. When we walk through life with this idea, we don't get lost in pettiness. Virtue is having the discipline to live every day of your life for the benefit of all human beings.

How important is it for us to have a spiritual teacher?

If it were easy to be in that completely open state and you could do it on your own, why wouldn't everybody? The idea that you can be your own teacher is a delusion. He who has himself for a student has a fool for a teacher. Having a teacher is important. It is impossible for us to pry ourselves out of our own limited perspective. We cannot break out of our self-perpetuating negative feedback loops. It is impossible for us to generate the energy from within to experience that change of state. This isn't a change of intellectual perspective; this is an authentic change of state. To transform an ice cube into water, and then steam, involves a lot of energy. The sun is necessary for life on earth, and a teacher is necessary for spiritual growth in human beings.

You say that you don't talk about personal problems with your students.

There are about eighty people in residence here and another one hundred and fifty in the neighborhood. Because we live together on a daily basis, I'm in touch with people's problems, but I do not deal with people on the basis of their problems. I do not respond to problems in people. I relate to the deepest part of every person I share my life with. I do that, knowing that if we are both true in this process, I don't have to think about problems at all. The energy itself will heal the person, dissolve the tensions, and resolve the problems. The restrictions of today will not be the tensions six months from now. Why should I become entangled in something when I have total confidence in the process? I know

their problems will not be there later.

You also say that love and devotion to your spiritual teacher is important.

Not because the spiritual teacher needs to be loved or devoted to. We practice love and devotion for our teachers because that's the kind of person we need to be in order to grow as a human being. We need to be loyal. We need to be dedicated. We have to take our stand and be true to it. If we do that, deep roots from within us will begin to connect to our self and the total environment. From that, we draw great sustenance and transcend our little self. If you can't practice love and devotion, you will never be loyal to anybody or anything. Most importantly, you won't be true to yourself.

The experience of love and devotion beats us up.

Indeed, it's an essential part of the alchemy. When you aspire to a higher state, you are going to pass through the unraveling of traumas and tensions that you have accumulated or that have been dumped upon you. As that shell breaks from you, you have to keep going and remain connected to that highest part, which is love and devotion.

Mantras are valuable to inner work. What makes mantras useful, and which mantras do you recommend?

Mantra means to protect the mind. The repetition of a mantra overrides the mind. It is a conscious choice to focus on a set of syllables that have an intentional vibration, different from the vibration we carry within us ordinarily, which has symbolic meaning relating to the highest best interest of the whole. The vibration of a mantra is interconnected with the creative energy that is the essence of all form and experience. The value of using a mantra is that it is better to sit in meditation and be aware of the mantra you are repeating and its vibration, than it is to have your mind wander. It develops capacity to focus, and the extended repetition of some mantras literally changes the vibration of what you are. Think of the difference in the vibrations of anger, happiness, and sadness. By repeating a mantra, we can elevate the energy of any state of mind or emotion. Through the repetition of a mantra, we can literally become established in that higher state.

Which mantras do you recommend?

There are a number of mantras. One of the easiest to remember, as you're going about your day, is Om Namah Shivaya. This mantra works easily with the "in" breath and the "out" breath. It's not long and doesn't take a lot of concentration.

Your life becomes a temple of that which is sacred when you choose to live with love in this moment. You make your life sacred when you open yourself up and create, an environment in which Spirit can exist and become powerful and strong in you. And then the reason you meditate every day, is first to find the Spirit, the love in you that you live from every day, and then to find the love in every moment of every day.

The real issue is the degree to which we live in contemplation of the fundamental power of Life within us. This is the guiding principle. If we live from the Self, we will always be rich in what matters. If we live from the Self, what we do in the world will always be an expression of what it's productive for us to do, of that for which our Creative Energy was intended. When we're guided by love, what we do in the world is simply what we do. Then what we do in the world, and what we want from the world, involves balance, calmness, and virtue, rather than some type of quantifiable gain.

The highest discrimination is to become fully aware of the life processes that are within you and you are within. The essential dynamic stillness of the whole process becomes apparent. When you experience palpably that you are a manifestation of that highest creative power, which has made the whole universe, how is it possible that you can worry about anything? How is it possible that you can feel inadequate, when you see that you have that power within yourself?

In your book, you discuss the importance of surrender. What do we surrender?

Your thoughts, your feelings. You surrender the shell, in order that the depth in you can emerge and express itself. You surrender the little person inside of you so that the big person can step out.

Is the surrendering all within self? Do we surrender to life, circumstances, or other people?

We surrender all of the above. What is inside you and what is outside you is ultimately the same energy field. You accept your circumstances and rise to the highest state that is available to you as a human being at that moment.

We also surrender into uncertainty.

That's very important. I practice and teach Kundalini yoga. Kundalini yoga is at the core of Shakti philosophy. The goddess is Kali. Kali is complete uncertainty. Any spiritual practice is about coming to terms with the total uncertainty that is life.

Surrendering to uncertainty is a tall order.

Because we're always worried about "what is going to happen to me."

Life and change and uncertainty are all the same thing, and it is forever a positive thing. As a truly living human being, we are creating our life as we go along. That creation is our constant reaching into uncertainty, from a place of balance and stillness within, which allows uncertainty to express itself in a harmonious fashion.

You say that we best serve life by growing and that we grow by making our life an expression of real love. What is real love, and how is it manifested?

Real love is giving of yourself without expectation of any return. The simplest analogy is having children. Parents easily and naturally, in most cases, love their children and will do almost anything for them. Life constantly gives of itself. Life gives us our lives and doesn't require anything back. That giving is love. Love manifests in our lives through loyalty, service, and devotion, by being honest, having integrity, and taking responsibility for our own actions.

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Touching Mystery

S T E V E N H A R P E R

It was late August. The tundra had already begun to take on fall colors, and the nights were finally getting dark enough that the northern lights could put on a show. My two-month expedition across the Northwest Territories of Canada was coming to an end, and I was living with the Inuit community of Chesterfield Inlet on the upper region of Hudson Bay. Before I came north, I had seen what I had thought to be impressive northern light displays. I had read a number of books and the latest articles giving the scientific explanations of what and why. None of this prepared me for what I experienced.

TONY STONE/GEORGE LEPP

Steven Harper has led wilderness expeditions for over twenty years. He has taught for Colorado Outward Bound and National Outdoor Leadership School and founded Earthways Wilderness Journeys. He lives with his wife and son in Big Sur, California.



At one in the morning, I was up walking the gravel streets of Chesterfield Inlet with a few of my newly-made Inuit friends. As we walked out of the small settlement and across the tundra, the display of northern lights became richer in color and more intense in frequency. Even my Inuit friends, who had grown up accustomed to such exhibits of the cosmos, stopped to look up. Curtains of multicolored light rippled across the night sky. Each successive wave grew closer and intensified. At its crescendo, an undulating curtain shot across the expansive sky and came so low that I instinctively hit the ground fully expecting to be struck by the light itself. My Inuit friends were bent with laughter as I lay surprised on the ground looking up at the ongoing dance of light (though I noticed they, too, had been impressed). There on the cold tundra, humbled and laughing at myself, I felt in awe of the mystery of all life, of all existence. Overcome by a feeling of wholesome contentment, embraced by mystery, all became sacred.

The mystery of wilderness is exactly what draws so many of us to it, just as the wild that lies within draws many seekers inward. Through the eons, our human urge to explore has led us toward unknown frontiers to find the source of mystery. Mystery has the simultaneous ability to drive people to destruction with frustrated desire and also to provide a magic sparkle to life. Without mystery, the magic of life drops away. Paradoxically, as we search out answers to our mysteries, we must also be willing to accept and *embrace* mystery as it is. The Dutch philosopher Aart van der Leeuw best stated our dilemma when he said, “The mystery of life is not a

problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced.” Contentment and wholeness are dependent to some degree on our ability to be with and embrace mystery. It is a part of ourselves and a part of the natural world. Embracing mystery is not a blind acceptance of unanswered questions but, instead, a curious wonderment of that which is inexplicable—the mystery of it all.

In the civilized environment, we are surrounded by human-made, human-explainable things. When we enter the natural environment of wilderness, we are met with the inexplicable wonders of nature. While the biological and physical sciences have successfully answered many of our questions in regard to the natural world, the fundamental questions still remain unanswered. Even if these basic questions were answered, most of the answers would only bring with them more questions. The wilderness environment puts us back in touch with the magic of life and the enlivening sparkle that goes with it. The wonder of it all brings a wholesome respect and reverence for all life. When felt deeply, all becomes sacred.

I believe the contentment I felt that August day was not about finding answers, but about finding that I could, for a moment, live with all the magic of mystery for exactly what it is, nothing more, nothing less. Most of us have had those rare moments when all our “stories” about life and the universe fall through, and we are touched by raw feeling. We allow the fullness of reality to touch us, without shielding the self with questions. While I value questions, I also see that we can easily use them to protect or remove ourselves from direct answers. Life is “a reality to be experienced.” One of the geniuses of modern times, Albert Einstein, gave us these wise words:

The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed. It was the experience of mystery—even if mixed with fear—that engendered religion.

Living in wilderness, we are close to the awe-

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BECOMING CONSCIOUS OF FEELINGS

NATHANIEL BRANDEN

We are not born with an ego or a sense of self. Both emerge and evolve over time. Essential to the process is the discovery of separateness—grasping boundaries, learning where we end and the world begins. Among other aspects of growth, this pertains to the unfolding of our emotional life. For example, an infant, whose psychological identity is still in an early stage of development, experiences feelings and emotions before it is able to grasp that they are its own: the distinction between self and others has not fully been made. When it is able clearly to make that differentiation and to know that these feelings and emotions belong to me—it is I who am experiencing this—it takes an important step toward the full experience of selfhood.

TONY STONE



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This stage has been characterized as the formation of an "emotional self," which comes after an earlier stage in which the infant learns to distinguish its body as a separate entity in the world—the formation of a "body self," the foundation of all subsequent development.

However, every step of development entails both new powers and new dangers. (For example, the ability to reason makes possible the ability to rationalize.) The danger once a child learns to recognize emotions as its own is that *it is now capable of blocking, disowning, and repressing emotions experienced as threatening.* The ability to say "This is me (or mine)" entails the ability to say "This is *not* me (or *not* mine)." Fear, rage, pain, sexuality—all can be cast out of awareness to protect the child's equilibrium and make life bearable. The door is thus open to the possibility of emotional self-alienation.

An emotion, in this context, refers to a psychophysiological response to some thought or perception. Thus it is both a mental and a physical event. It reflects an appraisal, typically subconscious, of the thought or perception to which we are responding. That is, it reflects an evaluation of the beneficial or harmful relationship of that thought or perception to ourselves. The value response involved will be on the order of "for me or against me," "good for me or harmful," "to be pursued or to be avoided."

Once an emotion arises, it tends to follow a natural course of its own: it is experienced, it is expressed in some form of bodily behavior, and it is discharged, to be replaced by some other emotion. This is the normal progression. When the process is blocked by denial or repression, unresolved tensions remain in the body—the emotion is dammed up, as it were—even if conscious awareness of the emotion has been extinguished or was never permitted to occur.

Of course, not every emotion need be acted on. An emotion carries within it the impulse to perform some particular action (if only the action of remaining perfectly still), but emotion and action are different and distinct categories, and such impulses need not be obeyed blindly and uncritically. Sexual desire need not be translated into an act of sex. An angry impulse to strike someone need not be translated into an actual blow.

What we do require for our well-being, however, especially in the case of emotions that are more than superficial and momentary, is that we experience and *acknowledge them*—sometimes examine and reflect on them.

Whether our values and value judgments in any given situation are correct or mistaken and whether it is appropriate and possible to act on our feelings or not, our emotions do reflect the meaning that reality has for us at that time. So they need to be taken seriously. One does not destroy an emotion by refusing to feel it or acknowledge it; one merely disowns a part of oneself.

Our emotions are determined not merely by our values and beliefs in the abstract, but also by our specific mental and physical state in a given moment. For example, if we are feeling healthy, vibrant, and effective, and receive a piece of bad news, we will not like it, but nonetheless may remain cheerful and optimistic. On the other hand, if we receive the same news on a day when we are feeling weak, exhausted, or feverish, we may respond with an emotion of panic or depression. In either event, emotions inform us what things mean to us *if only in the moment*. Thus, to cease to know what we feel is to cease to experience the significance persons and events have for us. And this means in important respects *to be cut off from our*

own context—which is a form of unconsciousness.

How does this unconsciousness become built into our “operating system”? At the psychological level, one can more or less automatize the process of jerking one’s mental focus away from emotions felt to be disturbing. At the physical level, this unconsciousness is induced by two means. One is restricting the breathing, reducing the intake of oxygen. For example, if we are suddenly frightened or startled, we typically breathe in sharply and freeze—stop breathing. We may characteristically block on the inhale or block on the exhale, depending on the particular emotion we are fighting. When repressing anger, for instance, we tend to block on the exhale. Every parent has noticed instances of a child suppressing crying by holding the breath. These responses too can become automatized, so that one is no longer aware of them. The second means by which repression is implemented physically is contracting the muscles that would be mobilized were the emotion fully felt *and expressed*.

For example, people who block a lot of anger often have tightly contracted forearms, which would be used to strike were the anger fully released physically. Muscles repeatedly tensed against feeling eventually become chronically contracted. The contraction becomes part of one’s physical structure. This is the body “armor” of which Wilhelm Reich wrote.

Today there are many forms of body therapy, most of which trace their roots to the work of Reich, that have as their aim freeing the body structure, freeing the breathing, so that the capacity to

It is a mark of wisdom and maturity to understand that we have the power to be a non-judgmental witness to our emotions, thoughts, and memories without being controlled by them or driven to act in self-destructive ways.

experience emotion deeply is regained. What is important to understand is that this process is also a *freeing-up of consciousness*. When we repress emotion, we repress the value significance of events in the affected area, and thus we hamper our ability to think. Contrary to the notion that thought and emotion are intrinsic adversaries, the ability to feel deeply and without distortion supports the ability to think clearly, because one has access to pertinent information.

When parents convey that certain emotions are “unacceptable,” they are teaching unconsciousness as the price of the child’s retaining parental love and approval. A little boy falls and hurts himself and is told sternly by his father, “Men don’t cry.” First the little boy learns not to *show* when he is in pain and later, as the repression deepens, not to *know* when he is in pain. A little girl expresses anger at her brother or some other family member and is told by her mother, “It’s terrible to feel that way. You don’t *really* feel it.” And the little girl’s capacity to feel anger is not extinguished but merely buried beneath awareness, later in life to wreak

bewildering havoc when it erupts in seemingly inexplicable contexts. A child bursts into the house, full of joy and excitement, and is told by an irritated parent, “What’s wrong with you? Why must you make so much noise? Are you *crazy*?” And the child slowly absorbs the tragic notion that equates growing up with giving up the ability to experience excitement, which is one of a child’s most sacred possessions.

We know that emotionally remote and inhibited parents—parents estranged from their own inner

lives—tend to produce emotionally remote and inhibited children, not inevitably, perhaps, but very commonly. This is achieved not only by the parents' overt communications, but also by the example they set. Their behavior implicitly announces to the child what is "proper," "appropriate," "socially acceptable," and what is not. And it is very easy for the child to internalize such messages.

If parents accept the notion of such things as "evil thoughts" or "evil emotions" and infect their child with this belief, a child may tie his or her self-esteem to having the "right" thoughts and feelings. This is a sure formula for inducing terror of one's inner life and motivation, to censor that which does not "fit"—to protect oneself with a shield of unconsciousness.

For too many children, the early years of life contain many frightening and painful experiences. Perhaps a child has parents who never respond to her need to be touched, held, and nurtured, who constantly scream at him or at each other, who deliberately evoke fear and guilt as a means of exercising control, who swing between over solicitude and callous remoteness, who subject him to lies and mockery, who are neglectful and indifferent, who continually criticize and rebuke her, who overwhelm him with bewildering and contradictory injunctions, who present her with expectations that take no cognizance of her knowledge, needs, or interests, who subject him to physical violence, who sexually molest her, or who discourage his efforts at self-assertion. The child may experience his or her fear, pain, or anger as incapacitating. And so, in order to survive and be able to function, the child learns *psychic numbing*. Unobstructed contact with his or her inner state

If we are willing to stay fully present to our emotions without denial or disowning, the result typically is not the collapse of reason but the emergence of more lucid awareness. In other words, feel deeply to think clearly.

feels unbearable and dangerous. *Consciousness* feels unbearable and dangerous.

The fear, pain, and anger are not permitted to be recognized, experienced, expressed, and thus discharged. Instead, they are frozen into the body, barricaded behind walls of muscular and physiological tension. And a pattern is installed that will occur again and again when he or she is threatened by an emotion that disturbs the equilibrium of numbness.

Not only negative feelings are repressed. Repression as a pattern of response tends to embrace more and more of the emotional life. When one is given an anesthetic in preparation for surgery, it is not merely the capacity to experience pain that is suspended; the experience of pleasure goes also—because what is blocked is the capacity to experience *feeling*. Similarly with emotional repression.

Naturally, such repression is a matter of degree. In some individuals, it is more profound and pervasive than in others. But what remains true for everyone is that to diminish one's capacity to experience pain is to diminish also one's capacity to experience pleasure.

For many people, a string of sentence stems such as the following—with their corresponding completions—is quite enough to precipitate an eruption of buried feelings:

Mother (Father) was always—
 With Mother (Father) I felt—
 One of the things I wanted from Mother (Father) and didn't get was—
 Mother (Father) gave me a view of myself as—
 I can remember feeling hurt when—
 I can remember feeling afraid when—
 I can remember feeling angry when—
 One of the things I learned to do to survive was—

Reading this list, a reader who has no experience with sentence completion work might imagine that providing endings is very difficult. I am sometimes asked, “Suppose I don’t remember?” One does not need to remember. One needs only to provide endings for each stem that will grammatically complete the sentence, inventing if one gets stuck, because that freedom to invent opens the door to the possibility of providing endings that are true and meaningful.

Setting aside the technical issues in dealing with deep repression, one practice is more basic and valuable than any other in the everyday practice of living consciously, so far as our emotions are concerned. That is *the art and discipline of sustained self-observation coupled with non judgmental self-acceptance*. This consists of observing one’s immediate state, noticing whatever is there to be noticed, without demanding that anything be different than it is—just witnessing, just being aware, without resisting or denying or disowning or condemning, breathing gently, breathing gently, breathing deeply—desiring nothing but to be consciously present to the immediate moment. With consistent practice, this process allows one to peel away layers of denial and disowning and to release submerged emotion.

When as adults we allow our defenses to be overcome, when we permit ourselves to experience our feelings and the memories sometimes drawn up in their wake, the result can initially be frightening. We may feel ourselves assailed by terror, pain, rage. It takes courage and discipline to stay present in such moments, resisting the temptation to shut down again and flee into unconsciousness. If we do stay present and conscious, we have the opportuni-

We must experience and acknowledge—and sometimes examine and reflect on—our emotions for the sake of our well-being. If we bring more consciousness to what we do when we are angry—we will see that other options exist.

ty to learn and grow, but the first steps are always the hardest. It is a mark of wisdom and maturity to understand that we have the power to be a non judgmental witness to our emotions, thoughts, and memories without being controlled by them or driven to act in self-destructive ways.

Clearly, we need to learn impulse control. Clearly, we cannot follow emotions blindly. Our intelligence and judgment is needed to know when it is appropriate to act on our feelings. But at the same time, we should recognize that it is an error to cast reason and emotion as adversaries. What may appear as a conflict between them is in actuality a conflict between two ideas (or sets of ideas), one of which is not conscious and manifests only on the level of emotion. And it is not a foregone conclusion which idea is right. Sometimes our emotions reflect distorted perceptions and interpretation, but sometimes emotions reflect a deeper and more accurate assessment of reality.

We have all, at times, acted on our conscious judgment against our feelings, and our feelings turned out to be right. We have all, at times, acted on our feelings against our conscious judgment, and our feelings turned out to be wrong. We do not follow emotions unthinkingly, but neither do we ignore or repress them. We strive to understand their meaning—to learn from them. We strive for alignment of thought and feeling. We strive for integration. But without the power of consciousness brought to our emotional life, without respectful self-observation, integration is not possible. •

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The Illusion of Separateness

P A U L P E A R S A L L

If you don't put that stone back where it belongs, we'll never get this truck started," said the Hawaiian man to his visitor from the mainland. His guest had found the stone on the beach while fishing. Taken by its beauty, he had slipped it into his backpack. Now, as the sun sank below the horizon and the palm trees leaned in dark silhouette over the ocean, an early evening shower gently hit the windshield. The Hawaiian and his friend reluctantly prepared to leave, but despite several turns of the key, the old pickup truck was silent.

TONY STONE/KAZ MORE



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I don't get it, said the visitor. "What does one little stone have to do with your old truck not starting?" The Hawaiian reached outside, held his hand palm up, and said, "Feel these tears? The gods are crying because they don't want the *pobaku* (stone) to leave its home. It does not belong to you. You are breaking its *lokahi* (unity) with the land. Put it back, and the gods will let us leave."

"You crazy Hawaiian," laughed the visitor. He had heard this kind of talk from his friend before and often teased him about it. Not wanting to offend him, he tossed the stone onto the ground. "Start her up," he laughed. "The stone's home." The Hawaiian man smiled and shook his head. "Watch. I'll try it for you, but it won't start." He turned the key, but a soft hum was the only sound. The visitor reached over and turned the key himself, and still the truck would not start.

"You must put the stone back where you got it," said the Hawaiian more firmly. "Do it with respect and apologize for disturbing it." The visitor could see deep concern in his friend's eyes.

"You can't be serious," he grumbled as he jumped out of the truck, picked up the stone, carried it several yards down the beach, and placed it where he had found it. "There, stone," he said with scorn, "you're home. So let us go home." The rain intensified, and the visitor was soaked as he climbed

back in the truck.

Even before the visitor was seated, the Hawaiian turned the key—still the truck would not start. He looked at his friend with more pity than impatience, then removed the key from the ignition and placed his hand on his friend's shoulder. The visitor could see he was not joking. There were tears in his friend's eyes.

"Please go back and apologize again. But say it only if you feel it and mean it. If you don't, we will be here a very, very long time—maybe longer than you can imagine. Even if they find us and tow my truck, nothing good will come of this. You must show your respect for everything here. You may leave this island, but you will always be a part of it, just like that stone. Leave your respect and take the *aloha* of this place in your heart, not in your pack."

The visitor was deeply moved by his friend's sincerity and felt his own tears mix with the rain on his face. He walked slowly to the stone, knelt down, and said without the slightest embarrassment in his voice, "I am very sorry. I didn't understand. Please forgive me. I hope to come back again and see you." At just that moment, he felt the wind blow his hair. The rain slowed and stopped. In the distance, he heard the old truck's engine grind and start.

"*Hele mai!* (come!)," beckoned the Hawaiian man. "But don't forget to say good-bye to the *pobaku*. It will miss you until your return."

DISEASE AND DISCONNECTION

The story of the *pobaku* is true. The Hawaiian man is one of my closest friends. I know firsthand that his old truck never failed to start before this incident, and that it has started reliably without repair ever since. For my Hawaiian friend, the concept of oneness called *lokahi* is much more than a metaphor or new-age philosophy. It is a real, fundamental, and powerful daily-life principle that, when violated, has negative consequences. When respected, it results in great joy and well-being.

For the disenchanted Western culture, the earth and everything on it are here for our "use," or exploitation. So urgently do we live on our planet, using her resources, that the heat generated by our hectic ride is dangerously raising the temperature of



her atmosphere. Western culture is one of control and possession, more than unity and attachment. In Oceanic culture, there is no separation between the spiritual and the physical worlds. Our world is alive and sentient and must be dealt with in that way. Nothing can be owned or controlled, and deep and complete respect, appreciation, and responsibility for the welfare of the planet is a key to happiness and well-being for everything and everyone.

Western medicine is now learning that all illness and unhappiness is ultimately related to disconnection. Reverend Chris Williamson points out that people who wish to make spiritual progress do not attend more self-enhancement seminars or retire to monasteries to contemplate, they get into and maintain meaningful relationships. *Interdependence*, not independence, is the way of the island cultures.

In a different realm, psychoneuroimmunology is documenting how, whenever we behave in ways that separate us from other people or things, we suffer physically and emotionally: our immune system weakens, our heart becomes walled off from the rest of our body, and our spirit becomes lonely

and despairing. To the Polynesian, “self-healing” is not possible because all illness is a matter of relationship breakdown, not individual failure. Self-healing is an illusion of the isolation of the West and the more introspective self-focus of the East.

THE FIRST NEED

We are happiest and most fulfilled when we feel completely connected. Western psychologist Abraham Maslow wrote about “transcendence” as the highest human need. He saw this need as coming into play only when lower individual needs such as self-esteem and self-actualization were fulfilled. Oceanic thought turns Maslow’s hierarchy upside down. It teaches that transcending the self to be and feel totally connected with life is our *basic* drive, and that all other needs are predicated on knowing and behaving in accordance with this central life motive.

To transcend in Polynesia is not to excel, succeed, outshine, surmount, or go beyond. It is to surrender, share, sacrifice, and go within the entire system of the world in order to give of oneself for



the good of the whole and to feel the immense pleasure that comes from such unity. Oceanic thought is not *hierarchical*, but *harmonious*.

Modern psychologists have done research to show that this harmony-over-hierarchy view is accurate. They have documented how at the most important times in our life we are governed by the need for unity. You can probably think of countless examples of transcendent selflessness. Parents run into burning homes to save their children and martyrs like Mahatma Gandhi fast for the sake of others. Despite the cynical skepticism of developmental evolutionists who suggest that altruistic behavior is only selfish gene-protection, I suggest that we respond to a much more profound and sacred, entrenched need to transcend the self, to see ourselves in others, and to live by and for the principle of *lokahi*.

When tourists come to Maui, Hawaii, they want to see the whales who return to the warm waters there every winter. As they wait on the beach to see these giants play, they yell, drink, eat, and splash loudly in the ocean. As soon as someone cries out,

“Look, a whale!” there are squeals of delight, but then the entire beach falls silent as a huge tail slaps the water with vibrations so strong they shake the sand. Even after the whale moves on, there is silence and whispering about the magnificence of what was just experienced. It takes several minutes before there is a return to the hubbub of beach play. For just a moment, the basic need to feel connection with the majesty of nature takes precedence over all else and fills the observers with a healthy, connected pleasure more basic than mere self-enjoyment.

Lokahi, the expression of joyful unity, has three facets: personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal connection.

PERSONAL CONNECTION: UNITY WITH THE SELF

There is a difference between the pleasure of self-awareness and the isolation of self-absorption. One key aspect of *lokahi* is to be fully aware of your own body, even as you connect with the earth and bodies around you. Living by the pleasure prescrip-

tion requires being fully aware of our body's language, but remaining free of arrogant self-glorification.

Polynesians refer to the bones, blood, and other tissues as the *unihipili*, or lower self. In this case, "lower" does not mean lesser, but refers to the location. The *unihipili* is as revered as the "higher" systems of the mind and the outside world because it is a part and manifestation of sharing life with all of these systems. The Polynesian way is not mind-over-body but mind, body, and world as one. The pleasure prescription involves seeing the body not as something to be perfected, strengthened, and molded, but as a conduit between the world and the soul. It teaches that we should pay attention to our body, but not show it off. It teaches that we do not *have* a body but, as is true of our unity with nature, we *are* our body.

Our physical body talks to us all the time, sending messages of health, happiness, and needs for remedial attention. Unfortunately, we often try to numb these messages with antacids, headache medications, and bowel regulators. Psychologist Gary Schwartz at the University of Arizona has spent ten years studying the importance of attending to the feedback from our body systems. He describes television commercials as ways of telling you how to turn off your body's language: "The message was: 'Eat all you want. If you get a stomach ache, don't change your behavior and listen to your body. Instead, take Alka-Seltzer...' We are being taught to say, 'Darn you, stomach, don't you interfere with my behavior.'" He has shown that those who ignore their body, cut themselves off from its sensations—be they good or painful, or try to keep their body language inside and not be aware of it and share it with others, are much more likely to have weak hearts and lowered immunity.

Oceanic teaching tells us to listen to our body, just as we listen to the thunder and the wind. It teaches that all signals from nature are lessons and that nature talks to us through our body's multiple senses. Our seventh sense helps us listen to our body with a "faculty for feeling" far beyond our five basic senses and even our sixth psychic sense. The seventh sense is responsive to the natural energy that is the poetic language of all natural processes,

and our body is one of its key transmitters. When your body "speaks," it is your seventh sense trying to get your attention. Our seventh sense does not just receive. It is constantly trying to send us messages about which way to go in life.

To live more in sync with our bodies, Gary Schwartz proposes what he calls the *ACE* theory, which stands for Attend, Connect, and Express. To "attend" means to be constantly aware of the body's messages as signals for positive action and life change, rather than symptoms of breakdown to be masked or repaired. To "connect" means to understand the body's signs as reaction to the nature of our existence as inseparable from everyone and everything, and warnings that we may be separating from our world, not just personal experiences. To "express" means to talk to yourself and others about how your body is working and feeling, rather than following "the show must go on" philosophy of self-denial. When we attend, connect, and express our physical feelings, we free our seventh sense to do its job of leading us away from the illnesses of isolation toward the hardiness of connected well-being.

INTERPERSONAL CONNECTION: UNITY WITH OTHERS

We all need periods of being alone. They give us the opportunity to contemplate and reflect. But isolation makes us sick and may even kill us. Isolation is not the absence of people around us; it is a feeling of being lonely and disconnected, somehow left outside the "whole," even when we are among others.

Without the nourishment of social support, a lonely heart hardens and breaks. Like an unwatered flower, it literally atrophies and dies. A study of 2,320 male survivors of heart attacks showed that, more than cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and other well-known health risk factors, *loneliness* was the leading predictor of early death. The lonely had four times the chance of dying from their heart attack than the more socially connected.

Modern research in PNI (psychoneuroimmunology) continues to show that connection increases longevity and the lack of it shortens life. A

study of 7,000 people in Alameda County, California, revealed that early death was much more likely for those who had poor social interactions and social support systems. Western scientists skeptical of a “soft” variable such as *lokahi* or connection offer the “chicken-and-the-egg” rebuttal in response to these studies. Perhaps, they said, loneliness and isolation are a *result* of being sick and not the cause. Using advanced statistical techniques, however, the researchers were able to show that loneliness was indeed the cause, and not the effect, of disease. Another major study of the impact of loneliness on early death done in Tecumseh, Michigan, confirmed these findings.

Oceanic people do not consider *lokahi* as just another way to avoid premature death, but as the way to healthy pleasure in life. They are not surprised that “connected” people live longer and healthier because they know that such persons enjoy the natural, built-in protection of shared joy. Again, the Polynesian elders are surprised that it has taken modern science so long to “prove” what they already believed: unity feels good because it is good for you.

Psychoneuroimmunologists are beginning to discover exactly how loneliness isolates and closes off the heart. When we are stressed by the helpless and hopeless feelings of loneliness, blood levels of hydrocortisone, a hormone secreted under stress, are much higher. Loneliness is also associated with low concentrations of high-density lipoproteins (HDL), the healthy type of cholesterol that protects against heart disease, weakened immunity, and lowered levels of hormones essential to heart muscle strength. When our social relationships are weak, our heart becomes physically weaker, too. “Weak social ties cause weak heart strings,” one *kabuna* said.

You may be surprised to know that most people in the United States who have their first heart attack before the age of 50 do not have any of the major risk factors—smoking, high blood pressure, or obesity. Most, however, will have experienced loneliness. Western medicine can never effectively deal with heart disease, our leading killer, without taking into account the pleasure of connection and

the dangers of social distance.

TRANSPERSONAL CONNECTION: UNITY WITH EVERYTHING

Polynesians do not live in *lokahi* with their natural environment because they were or are incapable of changing their environment to suit their needs or lacked the wisdom to master and use it wisely. Their hundreds-of-years-old fish farms and aqueducts testify to their skills as ecological managers. They do not seek loving connection with nature solely because of their holistic and reverent attitude toward nature (although that attitude is profound and pervasive). Polynesians strive to live in harmony with respect toward nature because, as one man put it, “We go beyond ourselves by totally being ourselves with everything. We don’t seek some extraordinary mystical experience outside ourselves—we just sit in the ocean and be ourselves with it. That’s how we connect with God.”

The word *transcendence* is often used in modern psychology, most particularly by transpersonal psychologists. In psychology, transcendence frequently refers to a dimension beyond ordinary experience. The Oceanic approach to transcendence accepts it as an every-day immersion in all that daily life has to offer. Polynesian transcendence sees God not as “up there” or “out there” but as “of” everyone and everything. It is not a personal goal, but a shared way of daily living.

The Polynesian transcendence that brings healthy pleasure is not a search for personal enlightenment, but taking the time to be with someone we love. It is not a new-age technique, but an interpersonal tenderness in living. It is less about going to the mountain-top to seek wisdom, and more about walking hand-in-hand along a sleepy mountain path with someone to share in the glory of the present moment as the ultimate gift of nature. •

*From “The Pleasure Prescription,” by Paul Pearsall.
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Temples in Our Hearts

T H E D A L A I L A M A

Despite many material advances on our planet, humanity faces many, many problems, some of which are actually of our own creation. And to a large extent it is our mental attitude—our outlook on life and the world—that is the key factor for the future—the future of humanity, the future of the world, and the future of the environment. Many things depend on our mental attitude, both in the personal and public spheres. Whether we are happy in our individual or family life is, in a large part, up to us. Of course, material conditions are an important factor for happiness and a good life, but one's mental attitude is of equal or greater importance.

IMAGE: BANS/ROBERT KRISTOFER

The Dalai Lama of Tibet is loved and respected worldwide as a man of peace. In 1989 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. He lives in exile in India.



On a visit to the great monastery at Montserrat in Spain, I met a Benedictine monk. He came especially to see me—and his English was much poorer than mine, so I felt more courage to speak to him. After lunch, we spent some time alone, face to face, and I was informed that this monk had spent a few years in the mountains just behind the monastery. I asked him what kind of contemplation he had practiced during those years of solitude. His answer was simple: “Love, love, love.” How wonderful! I suppose that sometimes he also slept. But during all those years he meditated simply on love. And he was not meditating on just the word. When I looked into his eyes, I saw evidence of profound spirituality and love—as I had during my meetings with Thomas Merton.

These two encounters have helped me develop a genuine reverence for the Christian tradition and its capacity to create people of such goodness. I believe the purpose of all the major religious traditions is not to construct big temples on the outside, but to create temples of goodness and compassion *inside*, in our hearts. Every major religion has the potential to create this.

It is my belief that if prayer, meditation, and contemplation—which is more discursive and analytic—are combined in daily practice, the effect on the practitioner’s mind and heart will be all the greater. One of the major aims and purposes of religious practice for the individual is an inner transformation from an undisciplined, untamed, unfocused state of mind toward one that is disciplined, tamed, and balanced. A person who has perfected the faculty of single-pointedness will definitely have a greater ability to attain this objective. When meditation becomes an important part of your spiritual life, you are able to bring about this inner transformation in a more effective way.

Once this transformation has been achieved, then in following your own spiritual tradition, you will discover that a kind of natural humility will arise in you, allowing you to communicate better with people from other religious traditions and cultural backgrounds. You are in a better position to appreciate the value and preciousness of other traditions because you have seen this value from within your own tradition. People often experience feelings of exclusivity in their religious beliefs—a feeling that one’s own path is the only true path—which can create a sense of apprehension about connecting with others of different faiths. I believe the best way to counter that force is to experience the value of one’s own path through a meditative life, which will enable one to see the value and preciousness of other traditions.

In order to develop a genuine spirit of harmony from a sound foundation of knowledge, I believe it is very important to know the fundamental differences between religious traditions. And it is possible to understand the fundamental differences, but at the same time recognize the value and potential of each religious tradition. In this way, a person may develop a balanced and harmonious perception. Some people believe that the most reasonable way to attain harmony and solve problems relating to religious intolerance is to establish one universal religion for everyone. However, I have always felt that we should have different religious traditions because human beings possess so many different mental dispositions: one religion simply cannot satisfy the needs of such a variety of people. If we try to unify the faiths of the world into one religion, we will also lose many of the qualities and richness of each particular tradition. Therefore, I feel it is better, in spite of the many quarrels in the name of religion, to maintain a variety of religious traditions. Unfortunately, while a diversity of religious traditions is more suited to serve the needs of the diverse mental dispositions among humanity, this diversity naturally possesses the potential for conflict and disagreement as well. Consequently, people of every religious tradition must make an extra effort to try to transcend intolerance and misunderstanding and seek harmony. •

From “The Good Heart,” by The Dalai Lama. Copyright 1996 by The World Community for Christian Meditation. Printed with permission from Wisdom Publications.

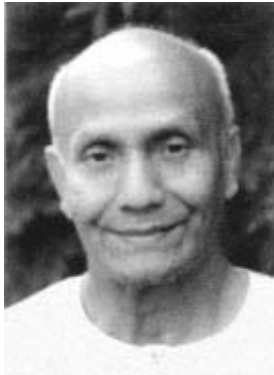


The Power of Love

S R I C H I N M O Y

Love is a pure and radiant flame. When we follow the path of love, we find our spiritual life, our inner life, most fulfilling. Nothing can be greater than love. Love is life, and life itself is spontaneous nectar and delight. If love means possessing someone or something, then that is not real love; that is not pure love. If love means giving and becoming one with everything, with humanity and Divinity, then that is real love. Real love is our total oneness with the object loved and with the possessor of love. Who is the possessor of love? God.

TONY STONE/TAMARA REYNOLDS



Sri Chinmoy is a renowned spiritual leader, poet, artist, composer, and author. He conducts twice-weekly peace meditations at the United Nations. He has devoted his life to the pursuit of world peace. He operates more than 200 peace meditations centers throughout the world. He currently lives in Queens, New York.



Whom are we loving? We are loving the Supreme in each individual. When we love the body, we bind ourselves; when we love the soul, we free ourselves. It is the soul in the individual, the Supreme in each human being, that we have to love.

You can consciously give pure love to others if you feel that you are giving a portion of your life-breath when you talk to them or think of them. This life-breath you are offering just because you feel that you and the rest of the world are totally and inseparably one. When there is oneness, it is all pure love.

THE PATH OF THE HEART

Divine love is the quickest way to realize the Highest. The mind has played its role. Now the world is crying for the wealth of the heart, which is love. If we follow the path of the heart, we will see that deep within the heart the soul abides. True, the light of the soul permeates the whole body, but there is a specific place where the soul resides most of the time, and that is in the heart. The spiritual heart is located in the center of the chest. If we want to establish a free access to our soul, we have to focus our attention, our concentration, on the heart. This is the center of pure love and oneness.

You can reach the spiritual heart through concentration and meditation. If you want to do this, every day for a few minutes you should concentrate on the heart and nowhere else. You have to feel that you do not have a head, you do not have legs, you do not have arms; you have only the heart. When you stay in the mind, life can seem like a dry piece of wood. But when you stay in the heart, life can be turned into a sea of pure love and bliss. If you can keep your consciousness in the heart, you will gradually begin to experience a spontaneous feeling of oneness. When you cultivate the spiritual soil of the heart, you will find growing there spontaneous love for God and spontaneous oneness with God's creation.

RAMESH AND GOPAL

Once there was a young boy named Ramesh, who was a very good student. His parents were not only rich, but also extremely kind.

At school, the students used to bring food from home to eat during lunch hour. One day Ramesh realized that his friend Gopal had not eaten anything for lunch for a few days. Ramesh went to his friend and asked why he had not brought anything to eat with him. Gopal said, "My mother could not give me anything. She said we had nothing at home."

Ramesh said, "Do not worry. I will share with you."

"No, I cannot take your food," replied Gopal.

"Of course you can," insisted Ramesh. "My parents give me much more food than I need." Finally, Gopal agreed, and for a few weeks the two boys shared Ramesh's lunch.

One day, Gopal stopped coming to school. Ramesh was concerned. When he asked the teacher why his friend was not coming anymore, the teacher told him, "He comes from a poor family. His parents cannot afford to pay the school fees. Therefore, he can no longer come to school."

Ramesh felt sad for his friend. When school was over, he took down Gopal's address from his teacher and went to Gopal's house. Ramesh begged his friend to come back to school, saying that he would ask his parents to pay the fee. Gopal's parents were deeply moved by his kindness, and Gopal

Power of Love

Continued from page 63

again started going to school.

Gopal's father was an old man. In a few years' time, he died. The family became totally poverty-stricken, and Ramesh supported them with his own money. When Gopal's sister was stricken with a serious disease, the family could not afford the hospital bills. Again, Ramesh helped them out. In every way, he was the friend and guardian of Gopal's family.

Both Ramesh and Gopal completed high school and went to college. One day, Gopal said to Ramesh, "To say that my heart is all gratitude to you is an understatement. I love you more than I love my own life."

Ramesh answered him, "My friend, if you love me, that is more than enough for me. You do not have to love me more than your own life."

Gopal said, "But I do, and I want to prove it." Then he opened his penknife and cut his own arm. Naturally, he began bleeding. Gopal placed a few drops of blood at the feet of Ramesh.

Ramesh cried, "What are you doing, what are you doing?" He touched the cut on Gopal's arm and placed a few drops of blood on his own heart, saying: "This is the right place for your life-blood. I give you my earthly treasure in the form of material wealth. You give me your heart's love, which is Heavenly wealth beyond all measure. •

*A moment's love
Can and shall
Make the world perfect.*

From "The Wings of Joy," by Sri Chinmoy. Copyright 1997 by Sri Chinmoy. Printed with permission from Fireside/Simon and Schuster, Inc.

Mystery

Continued from page 48

some, incomprehensible, uncontrollable forces of nature. The "stripping down" to a more fundamental lifestyle, and the direct contact we have with both nature and mystery, is humbling. The experience of a lightning storm, an avalanche, or the magnificent beauty of a cascading waterfall gives us a natural perspective on our place in the world. Our culture, with its fear-based reaction to mystery and wilderness, can afford a less pretentious stance, a simple acknowledgment of our shortcomings, and a basic respect for the living and non-living things of nature. Humble pie may be just the diet for our cultural indigestion. Rene Dubos has this human-wilderness perspective.

Humanized environments give us confidence because nature has been reduced to the human scale, but the wilderness, in whatever form, almost compels us to measure ourselves against the cosmos. It makes us realize how insignificant we are as biological creatures and invites us to escape from the daily life into the realms of eternity and infinity.

Interestingly enough, the very word *humble* is derived from the Greek word *humus*, which means soil or ground. So, in a sense, to be humble is to be close to the soil or earth. *Humble*, *humus*, *homage*, *human*, and *humane* all come from the same root word, meaning earth. Quite literally, we can humbly pay homage to the humus from which we humans came. In other words, with modesty, we can regain respect for our soil—our

earth. With our hands and feet well "grounded" in the soil of this earth, we can experience a primal union with the earth and reinhabit our true home. To be humbled by the mystery of wild nature is never to be quite the same.

Mystery and, certainly, humility are not virtues that contemporary culture supports. For example, we get F's for not knowing, and humility is often mistaken for weakness. Wilderness, on the other hand, supports and cultivates a taste for embracing and even finding strength in mystery and humility. I am reminded of the Zen teacher who encourages his students to cultivate "don't know" mind—an unassuming mind that is surprised and fresh each moment even with the ordinary and everyday, an alive mind that is simultaneously empty and full of creative possibility—perhaps true mystical experience.

Do you want to transform your life? My recommendation is a simple one: Go out in the wilds, take off your shoes, sink your feet well into the ground, and be touched by mystery. •

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Book Reviews



B A R B A R A N E I G H B O R S D E A L

The two books reviewed in this issue are written by people with remarkably different backgrounds, vocationally and spiritually, yet who come to some remarkably similar observations. Christian psychiatrist Scott Peck, following a more “outward” path, and Rabbi Shoni Labowitz, explorer of an ancient Jewish “inward” way, find themselves pointing to the same destination, a mystic oneness with God.

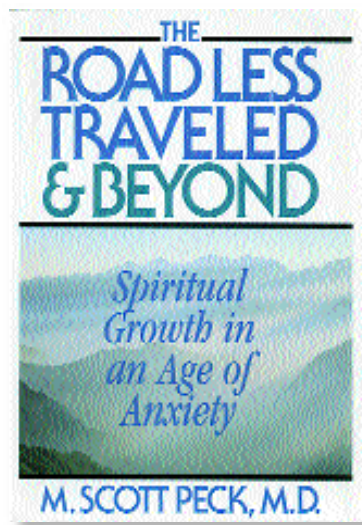
***The Road Less Traveled & Beyond: Spiritual Growth in an Age of Anxiety.* By M. Scott Peck, M.D. Simon & Schuster, 1997. 314 pages. Hardbound.**

Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck, known for such pioneering quests into psychology, spirituality, and personal growth as *The Road Less Traveled*, *People Of The Lie*, and *The Different Drum* has here collected what he calls a synthesis of all his published work. The book comes in response to his awareness of his own mortality and health challenges, and is, perhaps, a testament to his life work. It is divided into three sections: “The Case Against Simplism,” “Wrestling with the Complexity of Everyday Life,” and “The Other Side of Complexity.”

Peck calls the failure to think and simplistic thinking one of the greatest dilemmas faced by both individuals and by society. The first part of

the book examines simplistic thinking, and its many expressions including assumptions, stereotypes, and labeling, and says that to be fully human we are obligated to use critical thinking. Peck’s exploration of the value of paradox in developing the ability to think with integrity is useful: “If you want to think with integrity, and are willing to bear the pain involved, you will inevitably encounter paradox. The Greek word *para* means ‘by the side of, beside, along side, past, beyond.’ *Doxa* means opinion. Thus, a *paradox* is a ‘statement contrary to common belief, or one that seems contradictory, unbelievable, or absurd, but may actually be true in fact.’ If a concept is paradoxical, that in itself should suggest that it smacks of integrity and has the ring of truth. Conversely, if a concept is not in the least paradoxical, you may suspect that it has failed to integrate some aspect of the whole.”

In an exploration of consciousness, Peck proposes that thinking well leads to becoming more conscious, and greater consciousness leads to better problem solving. He raises an interesting question that woos many religious adventurers and mystics, St. Paul among them, (“Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus...”) as he examines the word *conscious*: “...*con-scire*, which literally means ‘to know with.’ What a strange derivation! To know with? To know with what? I suggest that the answer is to know with



J F K University
v6n2p69

Enlightenments/Dead Doctors
new

Zen Mountain
v6n2p79

Reviews

God... I believe that God reveals Herself to us through our unconscious if we are willing to be open to it and become conscious of its wisdom... If we become conscious enough, we can actually begin to think with the mind of God. The development of consciousness is thus, among other things, a process of the conscious mind opening itself to the unconscious in order to be congruent with the mind of God."

With increasing consciousness comes increased ability to choose among complex options. This is the theme developed in the second section of the book. A myriad of personal life choices are discussed, including taking responsibility, submission, vocation, choosing a stance of gratitude, the choice to die gracefully, to embrace emptiness. Organizational life choices are also examined; there are some valuable tools here to make groups more effective. The concluding chapter of this section raises choices about society, presenting each choice in the context of a great paradox: "If we more closely examine the complexities of citizenship and look at society realistically, inevitably we will be confronted by a number of paradoxes. Whenever you take into consideration the multiple dimensions of any situation, and if no pieces of reality are missing from the picture, you probably will be looking at a paradox. In other words, virtually all truth is paradoxical, and nowhere is this more evident than in the task of making our choices about society."

In the final section, "The Other Side of Complexity," Peck affirms that "in the end, all things point to God." He investigates the concept of God as process rather than enti-

Reiki Plus
from
v6n2p69

Wishing Well
v6n2p25

Shizuka Hills
v6n2p69

JSM Publishing
new

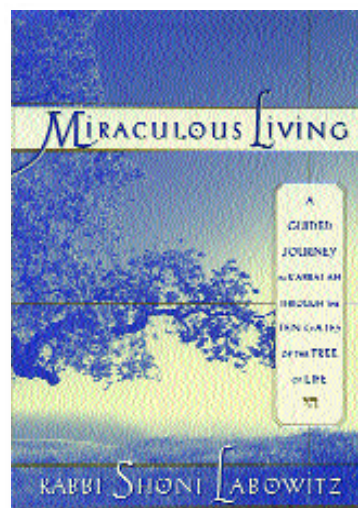
Reviews

ty, and describes four stages of spiritual growth: the Chaotic, Antisocial; the Formal, Institutional; the Skeptic, Individual; and the Mystical Communal. In a section on Kenosis, he echoes a passage from his first book, and public reaction to it: "God wants us to learn and develop in this life and, I believe, actually nurtures us in doing so. But when I went on to suggest that God ultimately wants us to evolve toward becoming God—like God—that statement caused a great deal of theological indigestion..." and suggests that emptying ourselves of self is the key to the infilling of God. We are here for glory, that is, the splendor of God's life in us, and for co-creation, in creating and manifesting the God we vision. "So we come to a crescendo of paradox. On the one hand, God is unquestionably our creator. On the other, in choosing the kind of God we believe in, we are, in a sense, creating God, not only for ourselves, but also for others who will see God reflected in our beliefs, our actions, and in our very spirit."

The book is loaded with instructive illustrations, stories, and case histories, many of which will be familiar to Peck's long-time readers. Old stories and new serve to bring to life many of Peck's convictions about thinking, conscious-

ness, learning, choices, and spirituality.

Miraculous Living: A Guided Journey in Kabbalah Through the Ten Gates of the Tree of Life. By Rabbi Shoni Labowitz. Simon & Schuster, 1996. 334 pages, Hardbound.



There is folded in the heart of every religion a whisper of a hidden way, the possibility of a journey that leads far deeper than ritual and doctrine—the way of the mystic. Rabbi Shoni Labowitz guides the reader through the ten gates of the Tree of Life, as suggested by the Kabbalah, a treasured text in mystical Judaism. She calls that tree "...an ancient template for living a powerful, joyous, sacred life."

The book is greatly enriched by Rabbi Labowitz's own translations and elaborations of the Hebrew texts, and by her quotations from the mystic writings preserved by other world religions, including wisdom attributed to the Buddha, Lao Tzu, Chogyam Trungpa, Hazrat Inayat Khan, and others. These quotations alone make the book a treasure, and the Rabbi's strikingly beautiful and motivational short essays are more gems in the treasure chest.

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Reviews

The legend of the Tree of Life is shared in this way: "In the beginning of time there was a Tree that grew in Eden. This Tree bore ten branches, and each branch was touched by a particular power of God. When the mystics meditated on the symbols of this Tree, they saw each of the ten branches open to reveal one of the Ten Heavenly Gates. Each gate led to a path that connected the powers of heaven with the powers of earth, and the powers of God with the powers of each human being. Walking through the gates and pathways of the Tree, the mystics entered the worlds of miraculous splendors that unraveled the beauty and wonders of nature and added joy, meaning, and purpose to their lives. The Tree that grew in Eden is a divine model of the pattern by which we too can live our lives. By approaching the ancient wisdom of the Tree, we too can enter worlds of splendor and joy, tap into the Divine pattern, and turn our most treasured dreams into wondrous reality."

This is a practical book, that is, a book that can be practiced. The ten gates of the Tree of Life to be explored are Intention, Wisdom, Understanding, Compassion, Strength, Harmony, Success, Glory, Creativity, and Nobility. Each gate is illumined with seven readings and a meditation, and the reader is encouraged to contemplate the readings, and practice the meditation.

Rabbi Labowitz teaches that in journeying "through the gates of the Tree of Life, you will feel the miraculous benefits of living a life touched by God. What you will learn is what you have already known yet needed to remember, that you are one with God and one with all life."•

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Interview

Continued from page 46

As we continue to grow, you say that we become purposeless, and that a purposeless life is inspired life.

When you are not limited by your own personal direction and the obvious egotism involved in that, you are free to allow that growth taking place within you to manifest fully its own fruit. That fruit is an internal state of equanimity and joy that is unsurpassable, and it is a real power to do good for other human beings.

Purposeless life is not a passive condition.

Purposelessness is not an inert condition. There is vitality and action in it as well. It is not an action which is ego-driven or self-serving. It is action which is compassionate. It is an action which is a manifestation of love. To become purposeless, we focus on allowing that deepest state from within us to manifest its own power and guide us in our life, so that our vision of our life is not limited by our past history, our ego, or tensions. An inspired life comes from a place within us, which is the finest and most powerful place in a human being. •

McClintock

v6n2p11



Peace and Happiness Now

T H I C H N H A T H A N H

If you think that peace and happiness are somewhere else and you run after them, you will never arrive. It is only when you realize that peace and happiness are available here in the present moment that you will be able to relax. In daily life, there is so much to do and so little time. You may feel pressured to run all the time. Just stop! Touch the ground of the present moment deeply, and you will touch real peace and joy.

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TONY STONE/CHRISTOPH BURKE