

CHAPTER ONE



*The Flowering of
Human Consciousness*

EVOCATION

Earth, 114 million years ago, one morning just after sunrise: The first flower ever to appear on the planet opens up to receive the rays of the sun. Prior to this momentous event that heralds an evolutionary transformation in the life of plants, the planet had already been covered in vegetation for millions of years. The first flower probably did not survive for long, and flowers must have remained rare and isolated phenomena, since conditions were most likely not yet favorable for a widespread flowering to occur. One day, however, a critical threshold was reached, and suddenly there would have been an explosion of color and scent all over the planet—if a perceiving consciousness had been there to witness it.

Much later, those delicate and fragrant beings we call flowers would come to play an essential part in the evolution of consciousness of another species. Humans would increasingly be drawn to and fascinated by them. As the consciousness of human beings developed, flowers were most likely the first thing they came to value that had no utilitarian purpose for them, that is to say, was not linked in some way to survival. They provided inspiration to countless artists, poets, and mystics. Jesus tells us to contemplate the flowers and learn from them how to live. The Buddha is said to have given a "silent sermon" once during which he held up a flower and gazed at it. After a while, one of those present, a monk called Mahakasyapa, began to smile. He is said to have been the only one who had understood the sermon. According to legend, that smile (that is to say, realization) was handed down by twenty-eight successive masters and much later became the origin of Zen.

Seeing beauty in a flower could awaken humans, however briefly, to the beauty that is an essential part of their own innermost being, their true nature. The first recognition of beauty was one of the most significant events in the evolution of human consciousness. The feelings of joy and love are intrinsically connected to that recognition. Without our fully realizing it, flowers would become for us an expression in form of that which is most high, most sacred, and ultimately formless within ourselves. Flowers, more fleeting, more ethereal, and more delicate than the plants

out of which they emerged, would become like messengers from another realm, like a bridge between the world of physical forms and the formless. They not only had a scent that was delicate and pleasing to humans, but also brought a fragrance from the realm of spirit. Using the word "enlightenment" in a wider sense than the conventionally accepted one, we could look upon flowers as the enlightenment of plants.

Any life-form in any realm—mineral, vegetable, animal, or human—can be said to undergo "enlightenment." It is, however, an extremely rare occurrence since it is more than an evolutionary progression: It also implies a discontinuity in its development, a leap to an entirely different level of Being and, most important, a lessening of materiality.

What could be heavier and more impenetrable than a rock, the densest of all forms? And yet some rocks undergo a change in their molecular structure, turn into crystals, and so become transparent to the light. Some carbons, under inconceivable heat and pressure, turn into diamonds, and some heavy minerals into other precious stones.

Most crawling reptilians, the most earthbound of all creatures, have remained unchanged for millions of years. Some, however, grew feathers and wings and turned into birds, thus defying the force of gravity that had held them for so long. They didn't become better at crawling or walking, but transcended crawling and walking entirely.

Since time immemorial, flowers, crystals, precious stones,

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and birds have held special significance for the human spirit. Like all life-forms, they are, of course, temporary manifestations of the underlying one Life, one Consciousness. Their special significance and the reason why humans feel such fascination for and affinity with them can be attributed to their ethereal quality.

Once there is a certain degree of Presence, of still and alert attention in human beings' perceptions, they can sense the divine life essence, the one indwelling consciousness or spirit in every creature, every life-form, recognize it as one with their own essence and so love it as themselves. Until this happens, however, most humans see only the outer forms, unaware of the inner essence, just as they are unaware of their own essence and identify only with their own physical and psychological form.

In the case of a flower, a crystal, precious stone, or bird, however, even someone with little or no Presence can occasionally sense that there is more there than the mere physical existence of that form, without knowing that this is the reason why he or she is drawn toward it, feels an affinity with it. Because of its ethereal nature, its form obscures the indwelling spirit to a lesser degree than is the case with other life-forms. The exception to this are all newborn life-forms—babies, puppies, kittens, lambs, and so on. They are fragile, delicate, not yet firmly established in materiality. An innocence, a sweetness and beauty that are not

of this world still shine through them. They delight even relatively insensitive humans.

So when you are alert and contemplate a flower, crystal, or bird without naming it mentally, it becomes a window for you into the formless. There is an inner opening, however slight, into the realm of spirit. This is why these three "en-lightened" life-forms have played such an important part in the evolution of human consciousness since ancient times; why, for example, the jewel in the lotus flower is a central symbol of Buddhism and a white bird, the dove, signifies the Holy Spirit in Christianity. They have been preparing the ground for a more profound shift in planetary consciousness that is destined to take place in the human species. This is the spiritual awakening that we are beginning to witness now.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

Is humanity ready for a transformation of consciousness, an inner flowering so radical and profound that compared to it the flowering of plants, no matter how beautiful, is only a pale reflection? Can human beings lose the density of their conditioned mind structures and become like crystals or precious stones, so to speak, transparent to the light of consciousness? Can they defy the gravitational pull of materialism and materiality and rise above identification with form

that keeps the ego in place and condemns them to imprisonment within their own personality?

The possibility of such a transformation has been the central message of the great wisdom teachings of humankind. The messengers—Buddha, Jesus, and others, not all of them known—were humanity's early flowers. They were precursors, rare and precious beings. A widespread flowering was not yet possible at that time, and their message became largely misunderstood and often greatly distorted. It certainly did not transform human behavior, except in a small minority of people.

Is humanity more ready now than at the time of those early teachers? Why should this be so? What can you do, if anything, to bring about or accelerate this inner shift? What is it that characterizes the old egoic state of consciousness, and by what signs is the new emerging consciousness recognized? These and other essential questions will be addressed in this book. More important, this book itself is a transformational device that has come out of the arising new consciousness. The ideas and concepts presented here may be important, but they are secondary. They are no more than signposts pointing toward awakening. As you read, a shift takes place within you.

This book's main purpose is not to add new information or beliefs to your mind or to try to convince you of anything, but to bring about a shift in consciousness, that is to

say, to awaken. In that sense, this book is not "interesting." Interesting means you can keep your distance, play around with ideas and concepts in your mind, agree or disagree. This book is about you. It will change your state of consciousness or it will be meaningless. It can only awaken those who are ready. Not everyone is ready yet, but many are, and with each person who awakens, the momentum in the collective consciousness grows, and it becomes easier for others. If you don't know what awakening means, read on. Only by awakening can you know the true meaning of that word. A glimpse is enough to initiate the awakening process, which is irreversible. For some, that glimpse will come while reading this book. For many others who may not even have realized it, the process has already begun. This book will help them recognize it. For some, it may have begun through loss or suffering; for others, through coming into contact with a spiritual teacher or teaching, through reading *The Power of Now* or some other spiritually alive and therefore transformational book—or any combination of the above. If the awakening process has begun in you, the reading of this book will accelerate and intensify it.

An essential part of the awakening is the recognition of the unawakened you, the ego as it thinks, speaks, and acts, as well as the recognition of the collectively conditioned mental processes that perpetuate the unawakened state.

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That is why this book shows the main aspects of the ego and how they operate in the individual as well as in the collective. This is important for two related reasons: The first is that unless you know the basic mechanics behind the workings of the ego, you won't recognize it, and it will trick you into identifying with it again and again. This means it takes you over, an imposter pretending to be you. The second reason is that the act of recognition itself is one of the ways in which awakening happens. When you recognize the unconsciousness in you, that which makes the recognition possible is the arising consciousness, is awakening. You cannot fight against the ego and win, just as you cannot fight against darkness. The light of consciousness is all that is necessary. You are that light.

OUR INHERITED DYSFUNCTION

If we look more deeply into humanity's ancient religions and spiritual traditions, we will find that underneath the many surface differences there are two core insights that most of them agree on. The words they use to describe those insights differ, yet they all point to a twofold fundamental truth. The first part of this truth is the realization that the "normal" state of mind of most human beings contains a strong element of what we might call dysfunction or even madness. Certain teachings at the heart of Hinduism perhaps come closest to seeing this dysfunction

as a form of collective mental illness. They call it *maya*, the veil of delusion. Ramana Maharshi, one of the greatest Indian sages, bluntly states: "The mind is *maya*."

Buddhism uses different terms. According to the Buddha, the human mind in its normal state generates *dukkha*, which can be translated as suffering, unsatisfactoriness, or just plain misery. He sees it as a characteristic of the human condition. Wherever you go, whatever you do, says the Buddha, you will encounter *dukkha*, and it will manifest in every situation sooner or later.

According to Christian teachings, the normal collective state of humanity is one of "original sin." *Sin* is a word that has been greatly misunderstood and misinterpreted. Literally translated from the ancient Greek in which the New Testament was written, to sin means to miss the mark, as an archer who misses the target, so to sin means to *miss the point* of human existence. It means to live unskillfully, blindly, and thus to suffer and cause suffering. Again, the term, stripped of its cultural baggage and misinterpretations, points to the dysfunction inherent in the human condition.

The achievements of humanity are impressive and undeniable. We have created sublime works of music, literature, painting, architecture, and sculpture. More recently, science and technology have brought about radical changes in the way we live and have enabled us to do and create things that would have been considered miraculous even two hundred years ago. No doubt: The human mind is highly

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intelligent. Yet its very intelligence is tainted by madness. Science and technology have magnified the destructive impact that the dysfunction of the human mind has upon the planet, other life-forms, and upon humans themselves. That is why the history of the twentieth century is where that dysfunction, that collective insanity, can be most clearly recognized. A further factor is that this dysfunction is actually intensifying and accelerating.

The First World War broke out in 1914. Destructive and cruel wars, motivated by fear, greed, and the desire for power, had been common occurrences throughout human history, as had slavery, torture, and widespread violence inflicted for religious and ideological reasons. Humans suffered more at the hands of each other than through natural disasters. By the year 1914, however, the highly intelligent human mind had invented not only the internal combustion engine, but also bombs, machine guns, submarines, flame throwers, and poison gas. Intelligence in the service of madness! In static trench warfare in France and Belgium, millions of men perished to gain a few miles of mud. When the war was over in 1918, the survivors looked in horror and incomprehension upon the devastation left behind: ten million human beings killed and many more maimed or disfigured. Never before had human madness been so destructive in its effect, so clearly visible. Little did they know that this was only the beginning.

By the end of the century, the number of people who

died a violent death at the hand of their fellow humans would rise to more than one hundred million. They died not only through wars between nations, but also through mass exterminations and genocide, such as the murder of twenty million "class enemies, spies, and traitors" in the Soviet Union under Stalin or the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust in Nazi Germany. They also died in countless smaller internal conflicts, such as the Spanish civil war or during the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia when a quarter of that country's population was murdered.

We only need to watch the daily news on television to realize that the madness has not abated, that it is continuing into the twenty-first century. Another aspect of the collective dysfunction of the human mind is the unprecedented violence that humans are inflicting on other life-forms and the planet itself—the destruction of oxygen-producing forests and other plant and animal life; ill-treatment of animals in factory farms; and poisoning of rivers, oceans, and air. Driven by greed, ignorant of their connectedness to the whole, humans persist in behavior that, if continued unchecked, can only result in their own destruction.

The collective manifestations of the insanity that lies at the heart of the human condition constitute the greater part of human history. It is to a large extent a history of madness. If the history of humanity were the clinical case history of a single human being, the diagnosis would have to be: chronic paranoid delusions, a pathological propensity

to commit murder and acts of extreme violence and cruelty against his perceived "enemies"—his own unconsciousness projected outward. Criminally insane, with a few brief lucid intervals.

Fear, greed, and the desire for power are the psychological motivating forces not only behind warfare and violence between nations, tribes, religions, and ideologies, but also the cause of incessant conflict in personal relationships. They bring about a distortion in your perception of other people and yourself. Through them, you misinterpret every situation, leading to misguided action designed to rid you of fear and satisfy your need for *more*, a bottomless hole that can never be filled.

It is important to realize, however, that fear, greed, and the desire for power are not the dysfunction that we are speaking of, but are themselves created by the dysfunction, which is a deep-seated collective delusion that lies within the mind of each human being. A number of spiritual teachings tell us to let go of fear and desire. But those spiritual practices are usually unsuccessful. They haven't gone to the root of the dysfunction. Fear, greed, and desire for power are not the ultimate causal factors. Trying to become a good or better human being sounds like a commendable and high-minded thing to do, yet it is an endeavor you cannot ultimately succeed in unless there is a shift in consciousness. This is because it is still part of the same dysfunction, a more subtle and rarified form of self-enhancement, of

desire for more and a strengthening of one's conceptual identity, one's self-image. You do not become good by trying to be good, but by finding the goodness that is already within you, and allowing that goodness to emerge. But it can only emerge if something fundamental changes in your state of consciousness.

The history of Communism, originally inspired by noble ideals, clearly illustrates what happens when people attempt to change external reality—create a new earth—without any prior change in their inner reality, their state of consciousness. They make plans without taking into account the blueprint for dysfunction that every human being carries within: the ego.

THE ARISING NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

Most ancient religions and spiritual traditions share the common insight—that our "normal" state of mind is marred by a fundamental defect. However, out of this insight into the nature of the human condition—we may call it the bad news—arises a second insight: the good news of the possibility of a radical transformation of human consciousness. In Hindu teachings (and sometimes in Buddhism also), this transformation is called *enlightenment*. In the teachings of Jesus, it is *salvation*, and in Buddhism, it is *the end of suffering*. *Liberation* and *awakening* are other terms used to describe this transformation.

The greatest achievement of humanity is not its works of art, science, or technology, but the recognition of its own dysfunction, its own madness. In the distant past, this recognition already came to a few individuals. A man called Gautama Siddhartha, who lived 2,600 years ago in India, was perhaps the first who saw it with absolute clarity. Later, the title Buddha was conferred upon him. *Buddha* means "the awakened one." At about the same time, another of humanity's early awakened teachers emerged in China. His name was Lao Tzu. He left a record of his teaching in the form of one of the most profound spiritual books ever written, the *Tao Te Ching*.

To recognize one's own insanity is, of course, the arising of sanity, the beginning of healing and transcendence. A new dimension of consciousness had begun to emerge on the planet, a first tentative flowering. Those rare individuals then spoke to their contemporaries. They spoke of sin, of suffering, of delusion. They said, "Look how you live. See what you are doing, the suffering you create." They then pointed to the possibility of awakening from the collective nightmare of "normal" human existence. They showed the way.

The world was not yet ready for them, and yet they were a vital and necessary part of human awakening. Inevitably, they were mostly misunderstood by their contemporaries, as well as by subsequent generations. Their teachings, although both simple and powerful, became distorted and

misinterpreted, in some cases even as they were recorded in writing by their disciples. Over the centuries, many things were added that had nothing to do with the original teachings, but were reflections of a fundamental misunderstanding. Some of the teachers were ridiculed, reviled, or killed; others came to be worshiped as gods. Teachings that pointed the way beyond the dysfunction of the human mind, the way out of the collective insanity, were distorted and became themselves part of the insanity.

And so religions, to a large extent, became divisive rather than unifying forces. Instead of bringing about an ending of violence and hatred through a realization of the fundamental oneness of all life, they brought more violence and hatred, more divisions between people as well as between different religions and even within the same religion. They became ideologies, belief systems people could identify with and so use them to enhance their false sense of self. Through them, they could make themselves "right" and others "wrong" and thus define their identity through their enemies, the "others," the "nonbelievers" or "wrong believers" who not infrequently they saw themselves justified in killing. Man made "God" in his own image. The eternal, the infinite, and unnameable was reduced to a mental idol that you had to believe in and worship as "my god" or "our god."

And yet . . . and yet . . . in spite of all the insane deeds perpetrated in the name of religion, the Truth to which

they point still shines at their core. It still shines, however dimly, through layers upon layers of distortion and misinterpretation. It is unlikely, however, that you will be able to perceive it there unless you have at least already had glimpses of that Truth within yourself. Throughout history, there have always been rare individuals who experienced a shift in consciousness and so realized within themselves that toward which all religions point. To describe that nonconceptual Truth, they then used the conceptual framework of their own religions.

Through some of those men and women, "schools" or movements developed within all major religions that represented not only a rediscovery, but in some cases an intensification of the light of the original teaching. This is how Gnosticism and mysticism came into existence in early and medieval Christianity, Sufism in the Islamic religion, Hasidism and Kabbala in Judaism, Advaita Vedanta in Hinduism, Zen and Dzogchen in Buddhism. Most of these schools were iconoclastic. They did away with layers upon layers of deadening conceptualization and mental belief structures, and for this reason most of them were viewed with suspicion and often hostility by the established religious hierarchies. Unlike mainstream religion, their teachings emphasized realization and inner transformation. It is through those esoteric schools or movements that the major religions regained the transformative power of the original teachings, although in most cases, only a small mi-

nority of people had access to them. Their numbers were never large enough to have any significant impact on the deep collective unconsciousness of the majority. Over time, some of those schools themselves became too rigidly formalized or conceptualized to remain effective.

SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

What is the role of the established religions in the arising of the new consciousness? Many people are already aware of the difference between spirituality and religion. They realize that having a belief system—a set of thoughts that you regard as the absolute truth—does not make you spiritual no matter what the nature of those beliefs is. In fact, the more you make your thoughts (beliefs) into your identity, the more cut off you are from the spiritual dimension within yourself. Many "religious" people are stuck at that level. They equate truth with thought, and as they are completely identified with thought (their mind), they claim to be in sole possession of the truth in an unconscious attempt to protect their identity. They don't realize the limitations of thought. Unless you believe (think) exactly as they do, you are wrong in their eyes, and in the not-too-distant past, they would have felt justified in killing you for that. And some still do, even now.

The new spirituality, the transformation of consciousness, is arising to a large extent outside of the structures of

the existing institutionalized religions. There were always pockets of spirituality even in mind-dominated religions, although the institutionalized hierarchies felt threatened by them and often tried to suppress them. A large-scale opening of spirituality outside of the religious structures is an entirely new development. In the past, this would have been inconceivable, especially in the West, the most mind-dominated of all cultures, where the Christian church had a virtual franchise on spirituality. You couldn't just stand up and give a spiritual talk or publish a spiritual book unless you were sanctioned by the church, and if you were not, they would quickly silence you. But now, even within certain churches and religions, there are signs of change. It is heartwarming, and one is grateful for even the slightest signs of openness, such as Pope John Paul II visiting a mosque as well as a synagogue.

Partly as a result of the spiritual teachings that have arisen outside the established religions, but also due to an influx of the ancient Eastern wisdom teachings, a growing number of followers of traditional religions are able to let go of identification with form, dogma, and rigid belief systems and discover the original depth that is hidden within their own spiritual tradition at the same time as they discover the depth within themselves. They realize that how "spiritual" you are has nothing to do with what you believe but everything to do with your state of consciousness. This,

in turn, determines how you act in the world and interact with others.

Those unable to look beyond form become even more deeply entrenched in their beliefs, that is to say, in their mind. We are witnessing not only an unprecedented influx of consciousness at this time but also an entrenchment and intensification of the ego. Some religious institutions will be open to the new consciousness; others will harden their doctrinal positions and become part of all those other man-made structures through which the collective ego will defend itself and "fight back." Some churches, sects, cults, or religious movements are basically collective egoic entities, as rigidly identified with their mental positions as the followers of any political ideology that is closed to any alternative interpretation of reality.

But the ego is destined to dissolve, and all its ossified structures, whether they be religious or other institutions, corporations, or governments, will disintegrate from within, no matter how deeply entrenched they appear to be. The most rigid structures, the most impervious to change, will collapse first. This has already happened in the case of Soviet Communism. How deeply entrenched, how solid and monolithic it appeared, and yet within a few years, it disintegrated from within. No one foresaw this. All were taken by surprise. There are many more such surprises in store for us.

THE URGENCY OF TRANSFORMATION

When faced with a radical crisis, when the old way of being in the world, of interacting with each other and with the realm of nature doesn't work anymore, when survival is threatened by seemingly insurmountable problems, an individual life-form—or a species—will either die or become extinct or rise above the limitations of its condition through an evolutionary leap.

It is believed that the life-forms on this planet first evolved in the sea. When there were no animals yet to be found on land, the sea was already teeming with life. Then at some point, one of the sea creatures must have started to venture onto dry land. It would perhaps crawl a few inches at first, then, exhausted by the enormous gravitational pull of the planet, it would return to the water, where gravity is almost nonexistent and where it could live with much greater ease. And then it tried again and again and again, and much later would adapt to life on land, grow feet instead of fins, develop lungs instead of gills. It seems unlikely that a species would venture into such an alien environment and undergo an evolutionary transformation unless it was compelled to do so by some crisis situation. There may have been a large sea area that got cut off from the main ocean where the water gradually receded over thousands of years, forcing fish to leave their habitat and evolve.

Responding to a radical crisis that threatens our very survival—this is humanity's challenge now. The dysfunction of the egoic human mind, recognized already more than 2,500 years ago by the ancient wisdom teachers and now magnified through science and technology, is for the first time threatening the survival of the planet. Until very recently, the transformation of human consciousness—also pointed to by the ancient teachers—was no more than a possibility, realized by a few rare individuals here and there, irrespective of cultural or religious background. A widespread flowering of human consciousness did not happen because it was not yet imperative.

A significant portion of the earth's population will soon recognize, if they haven't already done so, that humanity is now faced with a stark choice: Evolve or die. A still relatively small but rapidly growing percentage of humanity is already experiencing within themselves the breakup of the old egoic mind patterns and the emergence of a new dimension of consciousness.

What is arising now is not a new belief system, a new religion, spiritual ideology, or mythology. We are coming to the end not only of mythologies but also of ideologies and belief systems. The change goes deeper than the content of your mind, deeper than your thoughts. In fact, at the heart of the new consciousness lies the transcendence of thought, the newfound ability of rising above thought, of realizing a dimension within yourself that is infinitely more vast than

thought. You then no longer derive your identity, your sense of who you are, from the incessant stream of thinking that in the old consciousness you take to be yourself. What a liberation to realize that the “voice in my head” is not who I am. Who am I then? The one who sees that. The awareness that is prior to thought, the space in which the thought—or the emotion or sense perception—happens.

Ego is no more than this: identification with form, which primarily means thought forms. If evil has any reality—and it has a relative, not an absolute, reality—this is also its definition: complete identification with form—physical forms, thought forms, emotional forms. This results in a total unawareness of my connectedness with the whole, my intrinsic oneness with every “other” as well as with the Source. This forgetfulness is original sin, suffering, delusion. When this delusion of utter separateness underlies and governs whatever I think, say, and do, what kind of world do I create? To find the answer to this, observe how humans relate to each other, read a history book, or watch the news on television tonight.

If the structures of the human mind remain unchanged, we will always end up re-creating fundamentally the same world, the same evils, the same dysfunction.

A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH

The inspiration for the title of this book came from a Bible prophecy that seems more applicable now than at any other time in human history. It occurs in both the Old and the New Testament and speaks of the collapse of the existing world order and the arising of “a new heaven and a new earth.”¹ We need to understand here that heaven is not a location but refers to the inner realm of consciousness. This is the esoteric meaning of the word, and this is also its meaning in the teachings of Jesus. Earth, on the other hand, is the outer manifestation in form, which is always a reflection of the inner. Collective human consciousness and life on our planet are intrinsically connected. *“A new heaven” is the emergence of a transformed state of human consciousness, and “a new earth” is its reflection in the physical realm.* Since human life and human consciousness are intrinsically one with the life of the planet, as the old consciousness dissolves, there are bound to be synchronistic geographic and climatic natural upheavals in many parts of the planet, some of which we are already witnessing now.

whenever we encounter it in our lives will connect us with the formless and timeless dimension within ourselves, that which is beyond thought, beyond ego. It may be the stillness that pervades the world of nature, or the stillness in your room in the early hours of the morning, or the silent gaps in between sounds. Stillness has no form—that is why through thinking we cannot become aware of it. Thought is form. Being aware of stillness means to be still. To be still is to be conscious without thought. You are never more essentially, more deeply, yourself than when you are still. When you are still, you are who you were before you temporarily assumed this physical and mental form called a person. You are also who you will be when the form dissolves. When you are still, you are who you are beyond your temporal existence: consciousness—unconditioned, formless, eternal.



Your Inner Purpose

As soon as you rise above mere survival, the question of meaning and purpose becomes of paramount importance in your life. Many people feel caught up in the routines of daily living that seem to deprive their life of significance. Some believe life is passing them by or has passed them by already. Others feel severely restricted by the demands of their job and supporting a family or by their financial or living situation. Some are consumed by acute stress, others by acute boredom. Some are lost in frantic doing; others are lost in stagnation. Many people long for the freedom and expansion that prosperity promises. Others already enjoy the relative freedom that comes with prosperity and discover that even that is not enough to endow their lives with meaning. There is no substitute for finding true purpose.

But the true or primary purpose of your life cannot be found on the outer level. It does not concern what you do but what you are—that is to say, your state of consciousness.

So the most important thing to realize is this: Your life has an inner purpose and an outer purpose. Inner purpose concerns Being and is primary. Outer purpose concerns doing and is secondary. While this book speaks mainly of your inner purpose, this chapter and the next will also address the question of how to align outer purpose and inner purpose in your life. Inner and outer, however, are so intertwined that it is almost impossible to speak of one without referring to the other.

Your inner purpose is to awaken. It is as simple as that. You share that purpose with every other person on the planet—because it is the purpose of humanity. Your inner purpose is an essential part of the purpose of the whole, the universe and its emerging intelligence. Your outer purpose can change over time. It varies greatly from person to person. Finding and living in alignment with the inner purpose is the foundation for fulfilling your outer purpose. It is the basis for true success. Without that alignment, you can still achieve certain things through effort, struggle, determination, and sheer hard work or cunning. But there is no joy in such endeavor, and it invariably ends in some form of suffering.

AWAKENING

Awakening is a shift in consciousness in which thinking and awareness separate. For most people it is not an event but a process they undergo. Even those rare beings who experience a sudden, dramatic, and seemingly irreversible awakening will still go through a process in which the new state of consciousness gradually flows into and transforms everything they do and so becomes integrated into their lives.

Instead of being lost in your thinking, when you are awake you recognize yourself as the awareness behind it. Thinking then ceases to be a self-serving autonomous activity that takes possession of you and runs your life. Awareness takes over from thinking. Instead of being in charge of your life, thinking becomes the servant of awareness. Awareness is conscious connection with universal intelligence. Another word for it is Presence: consciousness without thought.

The initiation of the awakening process is an act of grace. You cannot make it happen nor can you prepare yourself for it or accumulate credits toward it. There isn't a tidy sequence of logical steps that leads toward it, although the mind would love that. You don't have to become worthy first. It may come to the sinner before it comes to the saint, but not necessarily. That's why Jesus associated with all kinds of people, not just the respectable ones. There is nothing you can do about awakening. Whatever you do

will be the ego trying to add awakening or enlightenment to itself as its most prized possession and thereby making itself more important and bigger. Instead of awakening, you add the *concept* of awakening to your mind, or the mental image of what an awakened or enlightened person is like, and then try to live up to that image. Living up to an image that you have of yourself or that other people have of you is inauthentic living—another unconscious role the ego plays.

So if there is nothing you can do about awakening, if it has either already happened or not yet happened, how can it be the primary purpose of your life? Does not purpose imply that you can do something about it?

Only the first awakening, the first glimpse of consciousness without thought, happens by grace, without any doing on your part. If you find this book incomprehensible or meaningless, it has not yet happened to you. If something within you responds to it, however, if you somehow recognize the truth in it, it means the process of awakening has begun. Once it has done so, it cannot be reversed, although it can be delayed by the ego. For some people, the reading of this book will initiate the awakening process. For others, the function of this book is to help them recognize that they have already begun to awaken and to intensify and accelerate the process. Another function of this book is to help people recognize the ego within them whenever it tries to regain control and obscure the arising awareness.

For some, the awakening happens as they suddenly become aware of the kinds of thoughts they habitually think, especially persistent negative thoughts that they may have been identified with all of their lives. Suddenly there is an awareness that is aware of thought but is not part of it.

What is the relationship between awareness and thinking? Awareness is the space in which thoughts exist when that space has become conscious of itself.

Once you have had a glimpse of awareness or Presence, you know it firsthand. It is no longer just a concept in your mind. You can then make a conscious choice to be present rather than to indulge in useless thinking. You can invite Presence into your life, that is to say, make space. With the grace of awakening comes responsibility. You can either try to go on as if nothing has happened, or you can see its significance and recognize the arising of awareness as the most important thing that *can* happen to you. Opening yourself to the emerging consciousness and bringing its light into this world then becomes the primary purpose of your life.

"I want to know the mind of God," Einstein said. "The rest are details." What is the mind of God? Consciousness. What does it mean to know the mind of God? To be aware. What are the details? Your outer purpose, and whatever happens outwardly.

So while you are perhaps still waiting for something significant to happen in your life, you may not realize that the most significant thing that can happen to a human being

has already happened within you: the beginning of the separation process of thinking and awareness.

Many people who are going through the early stages of the awakening process are no longer certain what their outer purpose is. What drives the world no longer drives them. Seeing the madness of our civilization so clearly, they may feel somewhat alienated from the culture around them. Some feel that they inhabit a no-man's-land between two worlds. They are no longer run by the ego, yet the arising awareness has not yet become fully integrated into their lives. Inner and outer purpose have not merged.

A DIALOGUE ON INNER PURPOSE

The following dialogue condenses numerous conversations I have had with people who were looking for their true life purpose. Something is true when it resonates with and expresses your innermost Being, when it is in alignment with your inner purpose. This is why I am directing their attention to their inner and primary purpose first.

I don't know exactly what it is, but I want some change in my life. I want expansion; I want to be doing something meaningful and, yes, I want prosperity and the freedom that comes with it. I want to do something significant, something that makes a difference in the world. But if you asked me what exactly I want, I would have to say that I don't know. Can you help me find my life purpose?

Your purpose is to sit here and talk to me, because that's where you are and that's what you are doing. Until you get up and do something else. Then, that becomes your purpose.

So my purpose is to sit in my office for the next thirty years until I retire or get laid off?

You are not in your office now, so that's not your purpose. When you do sit in your office and do whatever you do, then that is your purpose. Not for the next thirty years, but for now.

I think there is some misunderstanding here. For you, purpose means what you are doing now; for me it means having an overall aim in life, something big and significant that gives meaning to what I do, something that makes a difference. Shuffling papers in the office is not it. I know that.

As long as you are unaware of Being, you will seek meaning only within the dimension of doing and of future, that is to say, the dimension of time. And whatever meaning or fulfillment you find will dissolve or turn out to have been a deception. Invariably, it will be destroyed by time. Any meaning we find on that level is true only relatively and temporarily.

For example, if caring for your children gives meaning to your life, what happens to that meaning when they don't need you and perhaps don't even listen to you anymore? If helping others gives meaning to your life, you depend on others being worse off than yourself so that your life can

continue to be meaningful and you can feel good about yourself. If the desire to excel, win, or succeed at this or that activity provides you with meaning, what if you never win or your winning streak comes to an end one day, as it will? You would then have to look to your imagination or memories—a very unsatisfactory place to bring some meager meaning into your life. “Making it” in whatever field is only meaningful as long as there are thousands or millions of others who don’t make it, so you need other human beings to “fail” so that your life can have meaning.

I am not saying here that helping others, caring for your children, or striving for excellence in whatever field are not worthwhile things to do. For many people, they are an important part of their outer purpose, but outer purpose alone is always relative, unstable, and impermanent. This does not mean that you should not be engaged in those activities. It means you should connect them to your inner, primary purpose, so that a deeper meaning flows into what you do.

Without living in alignment with your primary purpose, whatever purpose you come up with, even if it is to create heaven on earth, will be of the ego or become destroyed by time. Sooner or later, it will lead to suffering. If you ignore your inner purpose, no matter what you do, even if it looks spiritual, the ego will creep into *how* you do it, and so the means will corrupt the end. The common saying “The road to hell is paved with good intentions” points to this

truth. In other words, not your aims or your actions are primary, but the state of consciousness out of which they come. Fulfilling your primary purpose is laying the foundation for a new reality, a new earth. Once that foundation is there, your external purpose becomes charged with spiritual power because your aims and intentions will be one with the evolutionary impulse of the universe.

The separation of thinking and awareness, which lies at the core of your primary purpose, happens through the negation of time. We are not speaking here, of course, of the use of time for practical purposes, such as making an appointment or planning a trip. We are not speaking of clock time, but of psychological time, which is the mind’s deep-seated habit of seeking the fullness of life in the future where it cannot be found and ignoring the only point of access to it: the present moment.

When you look upon what you do or where you are as the main purpose of your life, you negate time. This is enormously empowering. The negation of time in what you do also provides the link between your inner and outer purposes, between Being and doing. When you negate time, you negate the ego. Whatever you do, you will be doing extraordinarily well, because the doing itself becomes the focal point of your attention. Your doing then becomes a channel through which consciousness enters this world. This means there is quality in what you do, even in the most simple action, like turning the pages in the phone

book or walking across the room. The main purpose for turning the pages is to turn the pages; the secondary purpose is to find a phone number. The main purpose for walking across the room is to walk across the room; the secondary purpose is to pick up a book at the other end, and the moment you pick up the book, that becomes your main purpose.

You may remember the paradox of time we mentioned earlier: Whatever you do takes time, and yet it is always now. So while your inner purpose is to negate time, your outer purpose necessarily involves future and so could not exist without time. But it is always secondary. Whenever you become anxious or stressed, outer purpose has taken over, and you lost sight of your inner purpose. You have forgotten that your state of consciousness is primary, all else secondary.

Would living like this not stop me from looking to achieve something great? My fear is that I will remain stuck with doing little things for the rest of my life, things that are of no consequence. I'm afraid of never rising above mediocrity, never daring to achieve anything great, not fulfilling my potential.

The great arises out of small things that are honored and cared for. Everybody's life really consists of small things. Greatness is a mental abstraction and a favorite fantasy of the ego. The paradox is that the foundation for greatness is honoring the small things of the present moment instead of pursuing the idea of greatness. The present moment is al-

ways small in the sense that it is always simple, but concealed within it lies the greatest power. Like the atom, it is one of the smallest things yet contains enormous power. Only when you align yourself with the present moment do you have access to that power. Or it may be more true to say that *it* then has access to you and through you to this world. Jesus was referring to this power when he said, "It is not I but the Father within me who does the works." And "I can of my own self do nothing."¹ Anxiety, stress, and negativity cut you off from that power. The illusion that you are separate from the power that runs the universe returns. You feel yourself to be alone again, struggling against something or trying to achieve this or that. But why did anxiety, stress, or negativity arise? Because you turned away from the present moment. And why did you do that? You thought something else was more important. You forgot your main purpose. One small error, one misperception, creates a world of suffering.

Through the present moment, you have access to the power of life itself, that which has traditionally been called "God." As soon as you turn away from it, God ceases to be a reality in your life, and all you are left with is the mental *concept* of God, which some people believe in and others deny. Even belief in God is only a poor substitute for the living reality of God manifesting every moment of your life.

Would complete harmony with the present moment not imply the cessation of all movement? Doesn't the existence of any goal

imply that there is a temporary disruption in that harmony with the present moment and perhaps a reestablishment of harmony at a higher or more complex level once the goal has been attained? I imagine that the sapling that pushes its way through the soil can't be in total harmony with the present moment either because it has a goal: It wants to become a big tree. Maybe once it has reached maturity it will live in harmony with the present moment.

The sapling doesn't want anything because it is at one with the totality, and the totality acts through it. "Look at the lilies of the field, how they grow" said Jesus, "they toil not, neither do they spin. Yet even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."² We could say that the totality—Life—wants the sapling to become a tree, but the sapling doesn't see itself as separate from life and so wants nothing for itself. It is one with what Life wants. That's why it isn't worried or stressed. And if it has to die prematurely, it dies with ease. It is as surrendered in death as it is in life. It senses, no matter how obscurely, its rootedness in Being, the formless and eternal one Life.

Like the Taoist sages of ancient China, Jesus likes to draw our attention to nature because he sees a power at work in it that humans have lost touch with. It is the creative power of the universe. Jesus goes on to say that if God clothes simple flowers in such beauty, how much more will God clothe you. That is to say, that while nature is a beautiful expression of the evolutionary impulse of the universe,

when humans become aligned with the intelligence that underlies it, they will express that same impulse on a higher, more wondrous level.

So be true to life by being true to your inner purpose. As you become present and thereby total in what you do, your actions become charged with spiritual power. At first there may be no noticeable change in *what* you do—only the *how* changes. Your primary purpose is now to enable consciousness to flow into what you do. The secondary purpose is whatever you want to achieve through the doing. Whereas the notion of purpose before was always associated with future, there is now a deeper purpose that can only be found in the present, through the denial of time.

When you meet with people, at work or wherever it may be, give them your fullest attention. You are no longer there primarily as a person, but as a field of awareness, of alert Presence. The original reason for interacting with the other person—buying or selling something, requesting or giving information, and so on—now becomes secondary. The field of awareness that arises between you becomes the primary purpose for the interaction. That space of awareness becomes more important than what you may be talking about, more important than physical or thought objects. The human *Being* becomes more important than the things of this world. It does not mean you neglect whatever needs to be done on a practical level. In fact, the

doing unfolds not only more easily, but more powerfully when the dimension of Being is acknowledged and so becomes primary. The arising of that unifying field of awareness between human beings is the most essential factor in relationships on the new earth.

Is the notion of success just an egoic illusion? How do we measure true success?

The world will tell you that success is achieving what you set out to do. It will tell you that success is winning, that finding recognition and/or prosperity are essential ingredients in any success. All or some of the above are usually by-products of success, but they are not success. The conventional notion of success is concerned with the outcome of what you do. Some say that success is the result of a combination of hard work and luck, or determination and talent, or being in the right place at the right time. While any of these may be determinants of success, they are not its essence. What the world doesn't tell you—because it doesn't know—is that you cannot *become* successful. You can only *be* successful. Don't let a mad world tell you that success is anything other than a successful present moment. And what is that? There is a sense of quality in what you do, even the most simple action. Quality implies care and attention, which come with awareness. Quality requires your Presence.

Let's say that you are a businessperson and after two years of intense stress and strain you finally manage to come out

with a product or service that sells well and makes money. Success? In conventional terms, yes. In reality, you spent two years polluting your body as well as the earth with negative energy, made yourself and those around you miserable, and affected many others you never even met. The unconscious assumption behind all such action is that success is a future event, and that the end justifies the means. But the end and the means are one. And if the means did not contribute to human happiness, neither will the end. The outcome, which is inseparable from the actions that led to it, is already contaminated by those actions and so will create further unhappiness. This is karmic action, which is the unconscious perpetuation of unhappiness.

As you already know, your secondary or outer purpose lies within the dimension of time, while your main purpose is inseparable from the Now and therefore requires the negation of time. How are they reconciled? By realizing that your entire life journey ultimately consists of the step you are taking at this moment. There is always only this one step, and so you give it your fullest attention. This doesn't mean you don't know where you are going; it just means this step is primary, the destination secondary. And what you encounter at your destination once you get there depends on the quality of this one step. Another way of putting it: What the future holds for you depends on your state of consciousness now.

When doing becomes infused with the timeless quality

of Being, *that* is success. Unless Being flows into doing, unless you are present, you lose yourself in whatever you do. You also lose yourself in thinking, as well as in your reactions to what happens externally.

What exactly do you mean when you say, "You lose yourself"?

The essence of who you are is consciousness. When consciousness (you) becomes completely identified with thinking and thus forgets its essential nature, it loses itself in thought. When it becomes identified with mental-emotional formations such as wanting and fearing—the primary motivating forces of the ego—it loses itself in those formations. Consciousness also loses itself when it identifies with acting and reacting to what happens. Every thought, every desire or fear, every action or reaction, is then infused with a false sense of self that is incapable of sensing the simple joy of Being and so seeks pleasure, and sometimes even pain, as substitutes for it. This is living in forgetfulness of Being. In that state of forgetfulness of who you are, every success is no more than a passing delusion. Whatever you achieve, soon you will be unhappy again, or some new problem or dilemma will draw your attention in completely.

How do I go from realizing what my inner purpose is to finding out what I am supposed to do on the outer level?

The outer purpose varies greatly from person to person, and no outer purpose lasts forever. It is subject to time and

then replaced by some other purpose. The extent to which dedication to the inner purpose of awakening changes the external circumstances of your life also varies greatly. For some people, there is a sudden or gradual break with their past: their work, living situation, relationships—everything undergoes profound change. Some of the change may be initiated by themselves, not through an agonizing decision-making process but by a sudden realization or recognition: This is what I have to do. The decision arrives ready-made, so to speak. It comes through awareness, not through thinking. You wake up one morning and you know what to do. Some people find themselves walking out of an insane work environment or living situation. So before you discover what is right for you on the external level, before you discover what works, what is compatible with the awakening consciousness, you may have to find out what is not right, what no longer works, what is incompatible with your inner purpose.

Other kinds of change may suddenly come to you from without. A chance meeting brings new opportunity and expansion into your life. A long-standing obstacle or conflict dissolves. Your friends either go through this inner transformation with you or drift out of your life. Some relationships dissolve, others deepen. You may get laid off from your job, or you become an agent for positive change at your workplace. Your spouse leaves you, or you reach a

new level of intimacy. Some changes may look negative on the surface but you will soon realize that space is being created in your life for something new to emerge.

There may be a period of insecurity and uncertainty. What should I do? As the ego is no longer running your life, the psychological need for external security, which is illusory anyway, lessens. You are able to live with uncertainty, even enjoy it. When you become comfortable with uncertainty, infinite possibilities open up in your life. It means fear is no longer a dominant factor in what you do and no longer prevents you from taking action to initiate change. The Roman philosopher Tacitus rightly observed that "the desire for safety stands against every great and noble enterprise." If uncertainty is unacceptable to you, it turns into fear. If it is perfectly acceptable, it turns into increased aliveness, alertness, and creativity.

Many years ago, as a result of a strong inner impulse, I walked out of an academic career that the world would have called "promising," stepping into complete uncertainty; and out of that, after several years, emerged my new incarnation as a spiritual teacher. Much later, something similar happened again. The impulse came to give up my home in England and move to the West Coast of North America. I obeyed that impulse, although I didn't know the reason for it. Out of that move into uncertainty came *The Power of Now*, most of which was written in California and British Columbia while I didn't have a home of my own. I had

virtually no income and lived on my savings, which were quickly running out. In fact, everything fell into place beautifully. I ran out of money just when I was getting close to finishing writing. I bought a lottery ticket and won \$1,000, which kept me going for another month.

Not everybody, however, will have to go through drastic change in their external circumstances. At the other end of the spectrum you have people who stay exactly where they are and keep doing whatever they are doing. For them, only the *how* changes, not the *what*. This is not due to fear or inertia. What they are doing already is a perfect vehicle for consciousness to come into this world, and it needs no other. They too bring into manifestation the new earth.

Shouldn't this be the case for everybody? If fulfilling your inner purpose is being at one with the present moment, why should anybody feel the need to remove themselves from their current work or living situation?

Being at one with what *is* doesn't mean you no longer initiate change or become incapable of taking action. But the motivation to take action comes from a deeper level, not from egoic wanting or fearing. Inner alignment with the present moment opens your consciousness and brings it into alignment with the whole, of which the present moment is an integral part. The whole, the totality of life, then acts through you.

What do you mean by the whole?

On the one hand, the whole comprises all that exists. It

is the world or the cosmos. But all things in existence, from microbes to human beings to galaxies, are not really separate things or entities, but form part of a web of interconnected multidimensional processes.

There are two reasons why we don't see this unity, why we see things as separate. One is perception, which reduces reality to what is accessible to us through the small range of our senses: what we can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. But when we perceive without interpreting or mental labeling, which means without adding thought to our perceptions, we can actually still sense the deeper connectedness underneath our perception of seemingly separate things.

The other more serious reason for the illusion of separateness is compulsive thinking. It is when we are trapped in incessant streams of compulsive thinking that the universe really disintegrates for us, and we lose the ability to sense the interconnectedness of all that exists. Thinking cuts reality up into lifeless fragments. Extremely unintelligent and destructive action arises out of such a fragmented view of reality.

However, there is an even deeper level to the whole than the interconnectedness of everything in existence. At that deeper level, all things are one. It is the Source, the unmanifested one Life. It is the timeless intelligence that manifests as a universe unfolding in time.

The whole is made up of existence and Being, the manifested and the unmanifested, the world and God. So when you become aligned with the whole, you become a conscious part of the interconnectedness of the whole and its purpose: the emergence of consciousness into this world. As a result, spontaneous helpful occurrences, chance encounters, coincidences, and synchronistic events happen much more frequently. Carl Jung called synchronicity an "acausal connecting principle." This means there is no causal connection between synchronistic events on our surface level of reality. It is an outer manifestation of an underlying intelligence behind the world of appearances and a deeper connectedness that our mind cannot understand. But we can be conscious participants in the unfolding of that intelligence, the flowering consciousness.

Nature exists in a state of unconscious oneness with the whole. This, for example, is why virtually no wild animals were killed in the tsunami disaster of 2004. Being more in touch with the totality than humans, they could sense the tsunami's approach long before it could be seen or heard and so had time to withdraw to higher terrain. Perhaps even that is looking at it from a human perspective. They probably just found themselves moving to higher terrain. Doing *this* because of *that* is the mind's way of cutting up reality; whereas nature lives in unconscious oneness with the whole. It is our purpose and destiny to bring a new

dimension into this world by living in conscious oneness with the totality and conscious alignment with universal intelligence.

Can the whole use the human mind to create things or bring about situations that are in alignment with its purpose?

Yes, whenever there is inspiration, which translates as "in spirit," and enthusiasm, which means "in God," there is a creative empowerment that goes far beyond what a mere person is capable of.



A New Earth

Astronomers have discovered evidence to suggest that the universe came into existence fifteen billion years ago in a gigantic explosion and has been expanding ever since. Not only has it been expanding, but it is also growing in complexity and becoming more and more differentiated. Some scientists also postulate that this movement from unity to multiplicity will eventually become reversed. The universe will then stop expanding and begin to contract again and finally return to the unmanifested, the inconceivable nothingness out of which it came—and perhaps repeat the cycles of birth, expansion, contraction, and death again and again. For what purpose? "Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing?" asks physicist Stephen Hawking,