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THE POWER OF **NOW**

A GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

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The Power of Now

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FOREWORD

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

Abraham Maslow called these “peak experiences,” since they represent the high moments of life where we joyfully find ourselves catapulted beyond the confines of the mundane and ordinary. He might just as well have called them “peek” experiences. During these expansive occasions, we sneak a glimpse of the eternal realm of Being itself. If only for a brief moment in time, we come home to our True Self. “Ah,” one might sigh, “so grand . . . if only I could stay here. But how do I take up permanent residence?” During the past ten years, I have committed myself to finding out. During my search, I have been honored to engage in dialogue with some of the most daring, inspiring and insightful “paradigm pioneers“ of our time: in medicine, science, psychology, business, religion/spirituality, and human potential. This diverse group of individuals is joined by their commonly voiced insight that humanity is now taking a quantum leap forward in its evolutionary development. This change is accompanied by a shift in world view the basic picture we carry with us of “the way things are.“ A world view seeks to answer two fundamental questions, “Who are we?“ and “What is the nature of the Universe in which we live?“ Our answers to these questions dictate the quality and characteristics of our personal relationships with family, friends and employers/employees. When considered on a larger scale, they define societies.

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

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

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

provocative case that there are more advanced stages of human development. As a person reaches these advanced levels of spiritual maturity, extraordinary capacities begin to blossom of love, vitality, personhood, bodily awareness, intuition, perception, communication, and volition. First step: to recognize they exist. Most people do not.

Then, methods can be employed with conscious intention.

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

This myth of “other-than-me” has been responsible for wars, the rape of the planet, and all forms and expressions of human injustice. After all, who in their right mind would harm another if they experienced that person as part of themselves? Stan Grof, in his research of non-ordinary states of consciousness, summarizes by saying “the psyche and consciousness of each of us is, in the last analysis, commensurate with ”All-That-Is“ because there are no absolute boundaries between the body/ego and the totality of existence.”

Dr. Larry Dossey's Era-3 medicine, where the thoughts, attitudes, and healing intentions of one individual can influence the physiology of another person (in contrast to Era-z, prevailing mind-body medicine) is very well supported by scientific studies into the healing power of prayer. Now this can't happen according to the known principles of physics and world view of traditional science. Yet the preponderance of evidence suggests that indeed it does.

MYTH #3 The physical world is all there is.

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

This clashes with the “perennial philosophy,” that philosophical consensus spanning ages, religions, traditions, and cultures, which describes different but continuous dimensions of reality. These run from the most dense and least conscious what we'd call “matter” to the least dense and most conscious, which we'd call spiritual.

Interestingly enough, this extended, multidimensional model of reality is suggested by quantum theorists such as Jack Scarfetti who describes superluminal travel. Other dimensions of reality are used to explain travel that occurs faster than the speed of light the ultimate of speed limits. Or consider the work of the legendary physicist, David Bohm, with his

explicate (physical) and implicate (non- physical) multidimensional model of reality.

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

So contrary to what those who pledge their allegiance to the traditional paradigm might think, the influential, pioneering individuals I spoke with felt that we have not reached the pinnacle of human development, we are connected, rather than separate, from all of life, and that the full spectrum of consciousness encompasses both physical and a multitude of nonphysical dimensions of reality.

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

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

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

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

Fortunately, there are guides and teachers to help us along the way. As

a teacher and guide, Eckhart's formidable power lies not in his adept ability to delight us with entertaining stories, make the abstract concrete, or provide useful technique. Rather, his magic is seated in his personal experience, as one who knows. As a result, there is a power behind his words found only in the most celebrated of spiritual teachers. By living from the depths of this Greater Reality, Eckhart clears an energetic pathway for others to join him.

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

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

Eckhart Tolle masterfully opens us to that possibility.

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

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You are here to enable the divine purpose of the universe to unfold. That is how important you are!

Eckhart Tolle

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INTRODUCTION

The Power of Now

THE ORIGIN OF THIS BOOK

I have little use for the past and rarely think about it; however, I would briefly like to tell you how I came to be a spiritual teacher and how this book came into existence.

Until my thirtieth year, I lived in a state of almost continuous anxiety interspersed with periods of suicidal depression. It feels now as if I am talking about some past lifetime or somebody else's life.

One night not long after my twenty-ninth birthday, I woke up in the early hours with a feeling of absolute dread. I had woken up with such a feeling many times before, but this time it was more intense than it had ever been. The silence of the night, the vague outlines of the furniture in the dark room,

the distant noise of a passing train everything felt so alien, so hostile, and so utterly meaningless that it created in me a deep loathing of the world. The most loathsome thing of all, however, was my own existence. What was the point in continuing to live with this burden of misery? Why carry on with this continuous struggle? I could feel that a deep longing for annihilation, for nonexistence, was now becoming much stronger than the instinctive desire to continue to live.

"I cannot live with myself any longer." This was the thought that kept repeating itself in my mind. Then suddenly I became aware of what a peculiar thought it was. "Am I one or two? If I cannot live with myself, there must be two of me:

the 'I' and the 'self' that 'I' cannot live with." "Maybe," I thought, "only one of them is real."

I was so stunned by this strange realization that my mind stopped. I was fully conscious, but there were no more thoughts. Then I felt drawn into what seemed like a vortex of energy. It was a slow movement at first and then accelerated. I was gripped by an intense fear, and my body started to shake. I heard the words "resist nothing," as if spoken inside my chest. I could feel myself being sucked into a void. It felt as if the void was inside myself rather than outside. Suddenly,

there was no more fear, and I let myself fall into that void. I have no recollection of what happened after that.

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

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

That day I walked around the city in utter amazement at the miracle of life on earth, as if I had just been born into this world.

For the next five months, I lived in a state of uninterrupted deep peace and bliss. After that, it diminished somewhat in intensity, or perhaps it just seemed to because it became my natural state. I could still function in the world, although I realized that nothing I ever did could possibly add anything to what I already had.

I knew, of course, that something profoundly significant had happened to me, but I didn't understand it at all. It wasn't until several years later, after I had read spiritual texts and spent time with spiritual teachers, that I realized that what everybody was looking for had already happened to me. I understood that the intense pressure of suffering that night must have forced my consciousness to withdraw from its identification with the unhappy and deeply fearful self, which is ultimately a fiction of the mind. This withdrawal must have been so complete that this false, suffering self immediately collapsed, just as if a plug had been pulled out of an inflatable toy. What was left then was my true nature as the ever-present I am: consciousness in its pure state prior to identification with form. Later I also learned to go into that inner timeless and deathless realm that I had originally perceived as a void and remain fully conscious. I dwelt in states of such indescribable bliss and sacredness that even the original experience I just described pales in comparison. A time came when, for a while, I was left with nothing on the physical plane. I had no relationships, no job, no home, no socially defined identity. I spent almost two years sitting on park benches in a state of the most intense joy.

But even the most beautiful experiences come and go. More fundamental, perhaps, than any experience is the undercurrent of peace that has never left me since then. Sometimes it is very strong, almost palpable, and others can feel it too. At other times, it is somewhere in the background, like a distant melody.

Later, people would occasionally come up to me and say: "I want what you have. Can you give it to me, or show me how to get it?" And I would

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

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

The Power of Now

THE TRUTH THAT IS WITHIN YOU

This book represents the essence of my work, as far as it can be conveyed in words, with individuals and small groups of spiritual seekers during the past ten years, in Europe and in North America. In deep love and appreciation, I would like to thank those exceptional people for their courage, their willingness to embrace inner change, thought that kept repeating itself in my mind. Then suddenly I became aware of what a peculiar thought it was. "Am I one or two? If I cannot live with myself, there must be two of me: the 'I' and the 'self' that 'I' cannot live with." "Maybe," I thought, "only one of them is real." their challenging questions, and their readiness to listen. This book would not have come into existence without them. They belong to what is as yet a small but fortunately growing minority of spiritual pioneers: people who are reaching a point where they become capable of breaking out of inherited collective mind-patterns that have kept humans in bondage to suffering for eons.

I trust that this book will find its way to those who are ready for such radical inner transformation and so act as a catalyst for it. I also hope that it will reach many others who will find its content worthy of consideration, although they may not be ready to fully live or practice it. It is possible that at a later time, the seed that was sown when reading this book will merge with the seed of enlightenment that each human being carries within, and suddenly that seed will sprout and come alive within them.

The book in its present form originated, often spontaneously, in response to questions asked by individuals in seminars, meditation classes and private counseling sessions, and so I have kept the question-and-answer format. I learned and received as much in those classes and sessions as the questioners. Some of the questions and answers I wrote down almost verbatim. Others are generic, which is to say I combined certain types of questions that were frequently asked into one, and extracted the essence from different answers to form one generic answer. Sometimes, in the process of writing, an entirely new answer came that was more profound or insightful than anything I had ever uttered. Some additional questions were asked by the editor so as to provide further

clarification of certain points.

You will find that from the first to the last page, the dialogues continuously alternate between two different levels. On one level, I draw your attention to what is false in you. I speak of the nature of human unconsciousness and dysfunction as well as its most common behavioral manifestations, from conflict in relationships to warfare between tribes or nations. Such knowledge is vital, for unless you learn to recognize the false as false as not you there can be no lasting transformation, and you would always end up being drawn back into illusion and into some form of pain. On this level, I also show you how not to make that which is false in you into a self and into a personal problem,

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

On this level of the book, the words are not always concerned with information, but often designed to draw you into this new consciousness as you read. Again and again, I endeavor to take you with me into that timeless state of intense conscious presence in the Now, so as to give you a taste of enlightenment. Until you are able to experience what I speak of, you may find those passages somewhat repetitive. As soon as you do, however, I believe you will realize that they contain a great deal of spiritual power, and they may become for you the most rewarding parts of the book. Moreover, since every person carries the seed of enlightenment within, I often address myself to the knower in you who dwells behind the thinker, the deeper self that immediately recognizes spiritual truth, resonates with it, and gains strength from it.

The pause symbol □ after certain passages is a suggestion that you may want to stop reading for a moment, become still, and feel and experience the truth of what has just been said. There may be other places in the text where you will do this naturally and spontaneously.

As you begin reading the book, the meaning of certain words, such as “Being” or “presence,” may not be entirely clear to you at first. Just read on. Questions or objections may occasionally come into your mind as you read. They will probably be answered later in the book, or they may turn out to be irrelevant as you go more deeply into the teaching and into yourself.

Don't read with the mind only. Watch out for any “feeling-response” as you read and a sense of recognition from deep within. I cannot tell you any

spiritual truth that deep within you don't know already. All I can do is remind you of what you have forgotten. Living knowledge, ancient and yet ever new, is then activated and released from within every cell of your body.

The mind always wants to categorize and compare, but this book will work better for you if you do not attempt to compare its terminology with that of other teachings; otherwise, you will probably become confused. I use words such as “mind,” “happiness,” and “consciousness” in ways that do not necessarily correlate with other teachings. Don't get attached to any words. They are only stepping stones, to be left behind as quickly as possible.

When I occasionally quote the words of Jesus or the Buddha, from A Course in Miracles or from other teachings, I do so not in order to compare, but to draw your attention to the fact that in essence there is and always has been only one spiritual teaching, although it comes in many forms. Some of these forms, such as the ancient religions, have become so overlaid with extraneous matter that their spiritual essence has become almost completely obscured by it. To a large extent, therefore, their deeper meaning is no longer recognized and their transformative power lost. When I quote from the ancient religions or other teachings, it is to reveal their deeper meaning and thereby restore their transformative power particularly for those readers who are followers of these religions or teachings. I say to them: there is no need to go elsewhere for the truth. Let me show you how to go more deeply into what you already have.

Mostly, however, I have endeavored to use terminology that is as neutral as possible in order to reach a wide range of people. This book can be seen as a restatement for our time of that one timeless spiritual teaching, the essence of all religions. It is not derived from external sources, but from the one true Source within, so it contains no theory or speculation. I speak from inner experience, and if at times I speak forcefully, it is to cut through heavy layers of mental resistance and to reach that place within you where you already know, just as I know, and where the truth is recognized when it is heard. There is then a feeling of exaltation and heightened aliveness, as something within you says: “Yes. I know this is true.”

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Chapter One

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YOU ARE NOT YOUR MIND

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THE GREATEST OBSTACLE TO ENLIGHTENMENT

Enlightenment what is that?

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

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

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

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

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

I love the Buddha's simple definition of enlightenment as "the end of