

SURRENDER ALL TO CONSCIOUSNESS TO REVEAL THE SELF

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Summary

This paper is a chapter adapted from a completed, yet-to-be-published book with a working title: *Awakening To Sanity: Being Sane In An Insane World—A Traveler's Guide*. The paradoxical truths of surrender and awakening are explored through seven key themes that each point to specific aspects of one's being that are unfolded through consciously letting go of who we cannot be, to reveal who we already are. The seven themes are: 1) Ego-mind falling away reveals Awareness itself 2) Nature of the One 3) Darkness acknowledged/released opens up sacred depths 4) Seeing false identities naturally unveils True Nature 5) The crossroads of learned craziness and original sanity 6) I AM—Divine qualities have no opposite, only absence, and 7) Walking the razor's edge of being in and not of this world. The seven themes are not presented as a literature review but rather to illuminate a shift in perception or outlook and weave a tapestry of deconstructing and surrendering the illusory separate self's control. This release leaves only a blossoming realization of the already existing suchness of the timeless eternal moment, all that is real and true, authentic liberated Self or True Nature, and the opportunity for its embodiment.

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“Jesus said: The seeker should not stop until he finds.
When he does find, he will be disturbed.
After having been disturbed, he will be astonished,
Then he will reign over everything.” (The Gospel of Thomas)

In the Gnostic text, The Gospel of Thomas, one is first called to seek. In the seeking, one does not stop until one finds. In finding, one is disturbed. In being disturbed, one is astonished. After astonishment, one is a godlike master of the universe, seeing its glory arrayed in everything and everyone. The astonishment contains both awe and terror, the two components of all who know the numinous. The third theme of endarkenment opening up sacred depths within can be the dark night of the soul that transforms one into the light of a revelatory day—limitless infinity and timeless eternity.

This writing employs numerous terms, such as Awareness itself, Consciousness, unconditional presence, emptiness, nothingness, original sanity, Original Nature, True Self, awakening, who we truly are, Absolute, Divine, Self, essential being, authentic liberated Self, and I AM, all to point to True Nature. May this broad pallet of descriptive colors only deepen the reader’s experience of all that is ever-present within us once all imaginary nonsense made up by our ego-minds is seen through and surrendered. Brief clinical case examples will be presented to help illustrate each of the seven themes. Capitalized words stand for what is beyond the personal and point to the Absolute.

Addressing the overall theme of surrender and awakening, most religions and mystics hold that salvation from identification with a false separate self is a function of divine grace over which one has no direct control. This may well be the case at times, whether it takes the form of a sudden or gradual awakening, crises of being and meaning, enlightenment experiences with or without a spiritual teacher or guru or, encounters with death and annihilation as a catalyst to deepening surrender. However the view of the Gnostics during the early beginnings of Christianity did not understand salvation as a gift of grace, but rather as what must be sought and earned by the performance of good works coupled with looking within. For the Gnostics, Gnosis or direct inner knowing or self-knowledge is only found when one can surrender as a moment-to-moment process and turn inward.

Ramesh Balsekar (1999) noted a key understanding that runs through all surrender and awakening: “True love of God means surrender to Divinity, wanting nothing, not even salvation” (p. 98). Over the odyssey of clinical work it is phenomenal how often people have returned incredulous at how simply releasing something, whether it is asking why, using pressure words like should, must and have to, being emotionally reactive, betting against anyone including themselves, or being negative, gently opens up to peaceful relaxation and sanity.

Two millennia ago, Jesus of Nazareth declared: “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (New Testament), understood as One is to give to worldly

concerns worldly due and give to heaven what is heaven's due. Since all belongs to and is an expression of God, what is to withhold from the Source? Nothing.

Freeing the Sculpture from the Stone: Ego-mind Falling Away Reveals Awareness Itself

Having had a vision of a mammoth statue of the Biblical David, Renaissance artist Michelangelo went from quarry to quarry looking for a slab of the finest alabaster Carrara marble that he envisioned to hold David within it. After visits to the best quarries and much reflective seeing, Michelangelo finally spotted his David inside a huge slab of stone and arranged to have it transported to the studio. Michelangelo (n.d.) was quoted as having said: "I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free."

After more study and numerous sketches, Michelangelo began his creative journey, chipping away all that was not David, freeing David from the marble slab. When everything finally had been chipped away, only David remained. As the essence of David was freed from inside a block of marble, so letting the ego fall out of the way reveals True Nature. My attention was recently redirected to behold Michelangelo's stunning Prisoners in Stone, human figures cut from stone from the waist up, raw unsculpted stone from the waist down. How befitting it is to remind us of what lays dormant within everything awaiting a creative cutting away for emergence. In the words of Indian sage Nisargadatta Maharaj (1973), "See the unreal as unreal and discard it. It is the discarding the false which opens the way to the true" (p. 315).

Advaita Vedanta, a branch of Hinduism, calls the process of removing unawareness in order to unveil True Nature to be one of negation and renunciation, or *neti-neti* (not this, not this). The true meaning of nirvana is extinct cessation, that is, the cessation of everything that is unreal, lacking Truth. It is this process of removing and letting go all that is unreal that unveils what remains—the real. The evolutionary impulse of all true growth, transformation and transcendence is not aggressively driven by gain or profits, but wisely unfolds by all that is freed and surrendered.

Not knowing what anything is in Truth, one recognizes what is not who one is, which in turn allows for its letting go and release. Symbolically, freeing Michelangelo's David frees Life to live. Through this lifelong process, what remains—*iti iti* (this, this)—is real and true. To name this realization would only turn it into yet another projection. Thus, one returns to still Silence, purest Divinity—timeless, causeless and formless I AM.

Advaita Hindu mystic Ramana Maharshi offers this analogy for how the Self is covered over by ignorance and how self-realization can help remove the rubbish, leaving only the space of peace that was already here:

...there is space in a hall (room). We are not going to create space anew. We fill up the space with various articles. If we want space, all that we need do is to remove all those articles and we get space. Similarly, if we remove all the rubbish from the mind the peace will become manifest.

That which is obstructing the peace must be removed. Peace is the only Reality. (Mudaliar, 1961, p. 26)

Space is easily seeable once the stuff is removed, so the timeless is revealed once all that fills time is released, just as the needless is unveiled once all needs are recognized as conceptual illusions. People speak of the space in the room, building and Earth, while overlooking that actually the room, building and Earth are all in space all the time. The Self ever remains. The great privilege has been to experience innumerable clients over the years seeing to their delight that much in their daily life routines were not only unnecessary, but outright defeating, harmful and destructive. Examples include arguing with their spouses, children or in-laws, triangulating or being in the middle between two people, or carrying everyone and the world like a proverbial atlas! Each experience of surrender is nothing short of modern day magic when you have believed yourself to be inescapably stuck and powerless in the face of old unworkable patterns.

Nature of the One

Spiritual author Allan Combs (2002) points out that the Self in Advaita Hinduism is highly resonant with the neo-platonist tradition, especially of Plotinus and the term ‘the One’. The One is the unlimited vital power in the universe, the eternal origin of existence. For Plotinus the One is inclusive of everything, unified without distinction or boundary in containing all possibilities and potentialities. Consider the One as all that is existent and non-existent, manifest and unmanifest, all Awareness. Everything in the world, universe and Kosmos, including all dualities, polarities and opposites, are the One. As spiritual teacher and author John Welwood (2000) noted: “Ego is a pretender to the throne; it sits in the seat of the real sovereign, which is our true nature, our larger being” (p. 39).

Consider the illustration of my wonderfully compassionate and generous friend who has a long-standing pattern of nursing unfairness and angry thoughts into a state of rage. He recently shared that remembering one good quality about the person he is angry with almost invariably calms him down enough that he can reconnect with his heart, and a peaceable and reasonable discussion can begin. Of course, the one good quality he can see in that angry moment is within him, or how else could he see it in the first place? Being in touch with his common humanity, anger at another would be anger turned back on him, the essence of non-harming or Ahimsa, which makes no sense at all. This clearing seems to allow an inner movement and opening for his original sanity to shine through.

Some teachers refer to the many within the One or the One expressing as many. Author Jan Kersschot (2004) writes, “the play of the One pretending to be the many” (p. 35). Even this is illusory—everything is the One. The authentic liberated self is the small wave of consciousness and the ocean of Awareness it arises from—silence, peace and stillness itself, timeless, calm and perfect. The one used here is the One everyone truly is.

Personal and possessive pronouns get in the way of what is. It is a matter of where one comes from and the lens through which one looks. Once a shift into standing outside the mind occurs, then all of this makes sense and is self-evidently what is. Imagine an

hour without self-referencing thoughts—what original sanity and peace can naturally blossom.

Via Negativa: Darkness Acknowledged/Released Opens Up Sacred Depths

Without the suffering, which seems the epiphenomenal requisite for psychological and spiritual maturation, one would remain unconscious, infantile and dependent. (Hollis, 1996, p. 8)

Via Negativa is the Christian term for a path of renunciation, release and surrender, akin to the backward step in Buddhism and the Hindu Sanskrit *neti-neti* (not this, not this). A true Via Negativa does not equate a denial of ego, as in asceticism, sacrifice and punishment. Neither does embracing the darkness equate with denouncing the ego as an evil villain or a convenient scapegoat in thought, attitude, word or action.

A true Via Negativa opens up the sacred depths, largely by the releasing and surrendering of what never was, is, or will be true, thereby revealing what remains. When a tightly held belief, role or false identity is seen through as untrue, not who one truly is, this deconstruction reveals the space of unconditional Presence and Original Nature.

Practicing *neti-neti* reveals an unconditional realm. We see through the shadow of the conditioned realm with its pain and suffering, and a natural humanness highlighted by empathy and kindness can now begin to emerge. This is the training ground for the expression of human compassion. The healthy process of modulated disillusionment, that is, seeing all illusions as false, and deconstructing beliefs by seeing through all beliefs as false, are key via negativa activities. All things are revealed for what they truly are.

Since Via Positiva complements Via Negativa, and vice versa, neither can exist without the other. Via Positiva, also called Via Affirmativa, is a Jungian term also used in contemplative Christianity referring to an affirmative, welcoming, and validating set of lenses on life that embraces trust, harmony, simplicity, salvation and enlightenment (Fox, 1983). Whipping the darkness is a doomed and futile attempt to produce light, whereas simply turning on a light naturally dispels the darkness! These two facets of the same reality are expressed in the Eastern concept of yin and yang, the Karmic law of cause and effect or what goes around, comes around, and popularized in *The Secret* (Byrne, 2006).

Mystics and theologians point out how the experience of nothingness and emptiness is directly related to the experience of everythingness and fullness. Without one there cannot be the other, nor can there be a true experience of joy without sorrow, pleasure without pain, light without darkness, silence without sounds, or love without the absence or loss of love. Sickness only reminds us of the health we took for granted.

Revealingly, there are no aspects, categories, distinctions, facets or boxes that honestly split the vast wholeness of the universe. The lighter and darker aspects are really misnomers since both are equal expressions of the Light, Truth and Essence of Universal Consciousness, Pure Awareness and the Self. The interplay of the many is revealed within the One and the One pretends to be and expresses through the many.

When one stands inside someone else's shoes, the other's viewpoint ushers in tolerance, understanding and compassion (Fox, 1983). Suffragist Dorothy Day (1970), after being arrested and thrown into jail for picketing in 1918, unashamedly exposed her raw experience:

The blackness of hell was all about me. The sorrows of the world encompassed me. I was like one gone down into a pit. Hope had forsaken me. I was that mother whose child had been raped and slain. I was the mother who had borne the monster who had done it. I was even that monster, feeling in my own heart every abomination. (p. 8)

Inside the heartbreak of shattered illusions, the shadow elements of endarkenment, honest empathy and compassion can naturally develop. Henry David Thoreau (1975) proclaimed, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" (p. 263). It was by no stretch of the imagination a condemnation, but rather it was an alarm bell to awaken and a portent of impending danger.

Once one sees through, accepts, and surrenders all ego-generated projections, each effortlessly dissolves as unreal. Tempests arrive and tempests leave; purely who you truly are remains. The opera tenor Rolando Villazón (2005) faced life with all its demons through a nine-year journey in analysis and was willing to own the entire process:

All of us have something inside that we don't like. But it's not a monster. It's just a piece of you. You have to love it and accept it. Being able to do that in psychoanalysis gives me the freedom to create a complex character onstage, with all its colors. (p. 33)

Consider that everyone is born in blissful Oneness. Pain and dissatisfaction arise when needs and wishes are not met. As a survival mechanism, the ego makes survival decisions that it carries as conditioning or programming. In this context, a healthy revision can only occur by going inside the disillusionment café to do the essential transformative work. How else can you surrender the ego's self-defeating conditioning and grandiosity as well as develop authentic empathy, humility and compassion? The imaginary ego also belongs and is a part of the One. There is no moving through and beyond a suffering that cannot be fully felt and experienced. Glassman and Fields (1996) depicted this perfectly:

The pure lotus growing in muddy water is a metaphor for enlightenment. The lotus arises from all its impediments. It actually needs the impurity of the water for its nourishment. In the same way, in our own personal development, we can't just work with what we like about ourselves. We have to work with our muddy water. We have to work with our problems and hang-ups because that's where the action is. (p. 110)

Unexpectedly, the engine of true growth churns ahead when, faced with pain and

suffering, one sinks knee-deep into muddy emotional swamplands. Yet, as the cleaners of nature know, there is nourishment in the wastes and impurities of living things. The action of life transformation is found precisely in the grit of the most difficult times. At some point, all defenses break down and no longer work. This difficult moment is often called an identity crisis, breakdown, mid-life crisis or turning point. Regarding the ladder of success, mythologist Joseph Campbell once expressed to Michael Toms (1989) as the latter recorded in his book *An Open Life*, "...he's gotten to the top of the ladder, and found that it's against the wrong wall" (p. 108)

Carl G. Jung (1971) calls universal patterns that run across all times and civilizations archetypes, with the shadow archetype being the best known. Jung names everything that is unacceptable within oneself that typically gets projected onto others the archetype of the shadow or shadow self. The unacceptable equally can be projected within, upon oneself, as evidenced by introjective hate, shame and being evil. The shadow side of awakening can take many forms, including spiritual materialism or misusing spirituality for personal gain and to gratify the ego, belief in one's own myth, ego inflation or the stink of enlightenment, the corruption of power, group think, narcissism, and other false claims to enlightenment (Caplan, 1999).

In this context, Welwood (2000) uses the term spiritual bypassing, defining it as a "...tendency to avoid or prematurely transcend basic human needs, feelings and developmental tasks" (p.12). Spiritual teachings and practices can be used to rationalize and support old ego defenses, self-righteously stay positioned in self-deceit, and create a false spiritual identity to avoid addressing unresolved psychological issues and developmental stages. The dangers of false claims to premature awakening and surrender are played out in the broad range of ego defenses, especially with projection. Jung's great achievement and crowning jewel is in recognizing the key role of projection. Projection is a classic ego defense of displacing what is unacceptable about oneself—positive or negative—onto another or even oneself. How pervasive is it? Fritz Perls, founder of Gestalt therapy, would say that everything is projection.

For healthy development and individuation, Jungian analysis and Gestalt therapy suggests one take back, ingest and integrate all projections. One takes back what one has denied, avoided and projected, ingesting unacceptable characteristics, such as being cheap, lazy, hasty, or selfish. By facing the shadow and telling the complete truth about it, one is now open to reclaim misplaced feelings. The central task is to face, be connected with, and incorporate the archetype of the shadow, that is, all the raw material the ego has defended against, denied facing, avoided engaging, and refused to accept and address.

One can ask, who is the source of this projection? or simply, who is projecting? Is projection purely a non-existent self throwing a non-existent thought onto another non-existent self? Is projection only the ego's world? Without a person projecting some stuff onto another person who catches the stuff given his/her vulnerability for that specific stuff the whole enterprise collapses. This is the power of seeing through all displaced feelings and ideas as merely projections and noticing that there is actually nothing to project in the first place. For example, when one truly sees criticalness and negativity

toward oneself being projected onto family members, and the harm that occurs in the relationships, it is much harder to consciously continue doing this.

Since the shift to a presence-centered therapy some ten years ago, a great majority of people have been able to progressively spot the optical illusion of the ego-mind and its propensity to engage in projection, fear, negativity, blame and judgment, and then joyously buy out. In this awakening process of being present and witnessing what the imaginary mind is up to now, one client remarked that she was noticing how “it’s doing that thing again,” and in this moment happily returns to the sanity of presence itself. Others name what ego is doing, like being anxious, worrying, comparing and getting emotionally reactive, as a means to disidentify with it and give themselves a pause and some breathing room to not follow its urgent direction and, in this moment, be free of it.

When you taste absolute abject failure, powerless and hopelessness, you are on the cusp of finding the light in the darkness, an impersonal rebirth or renaissance. The ancient myth of the phoenix tells of a great bird dying and slowly being reborn anew and stronger out of its own ashes. Turning points and watershed opportunities for transformation can break through the dark night of the soul, as St. John of the Cross (1959) described it. St. John of the Cross (1959) depicted the journey of the soul from its bodily home to its union with the Divine, especially the difficult challenges and hardships faced by the soul in detaching from the world and coming into the light of union with the God. This spiritual crisis parallels the aphorism that it is darkest just before dawn given that the hardest obstacles arise just before the clarity and brilliance of a new day’s dawning.

Going down to unearth and reclaim True Nature in all its vastness, one enters a realm beyond words, concepts and images. When hot tears, hard hugs and concrete support arrive, we learn that we are stronger than we ever imagined, accepting the unacceptable, surrendering to the experience of emptiness. Once we accept emptiness on its own terms, without explaining it away or covering it up, there is a freedom to be with nothing and everything, dark and light, fear and love. In the song *Anthem*, from the album “The Future” (Cohen, 1992, track 5), Leonard Cohen gets to the core: “There is a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.”

Surrendering False Identities: Seeing False Identities Naturally Unveils True Nature

Spiritual teacher Ramesh Balsekar (1999) noted: “If there is no individual doer, then ‘who’ does it is irrelevant” (p. 4). When there is no attention or importance given to the individual doer, all Being and living is seen as impersonal. Nothing is to be taken personally by any person because there is no person as a separate entity. When someone makes a comment about another, who is making the comment? That one is! How could it be about this one? It isn’t! By helping get the ego out of the way, Presence, silence and peace remain. Nothing is about you since there is no separate you—never was, is not now, nor ever will be. What a burden relieved! What a relief experienced!

Who one is not is another way of describing false identifications. Two examples: men so strongly identify with thoughts, jobs, and doing they often believe they are thoughts, jobs, and doing; while women so strongly identify with their feelings, bodies, relationships, and being, they also often believe they are their feelings, bodies, relationships and being. Author Wayne Dyer (1998) speaks to the identity of the doer by noting: “If you are what you do, then when you don’t, you aren’t” (pg. 85).

All generalizations related to who one is, such as demographics like male—female gender, ethnic background and age, are surely not who anyone is. Of course, no one is strictly the sum of one’s thoughts or feelings, actions or relationships. Therefore, no one happens to be what one thinks or feels, behaves or relates to. Who humans are is not the human condition. All false identities and organizations are only ego states.

The single most popular false identity is thinking I am this self, ego, mind, body, thoughts, beliefs, roles, feelings and experiences. Hindu sage Nisargadatta Maharaj (1973) was adamant that the core misidentification is with the body itself. Look at how commonplace it is to take how the body feels for how someone is. For example, if your body feels painful and anxious, it is very easy to assume that who you are is painful and anxious. And, how can who you are be painful and anxious?

Many people hold the common belief that ‘I’ actually is the creator of thoughts, beliefs and feelings. Yet, if you examine, inquire and look for yourself, can it be true? Even some idea, urge, or agenda to live life in some fashion, whether psychologically healthy, wealthy or joyous, is no less the ego in disguise. Seeking enlightenment is just another ego-generated false identity. What is outside of all wanting? As the Buddha pointed out, you are what observes, not what you observe.

Anyone can only be Original Nature or True Nature. It can be pointed to and recognized in Presence and in experience as Being, without any one experiencing or thinking about experience. The identification of who one is with you or self, mind or ego, only obscures Pure Awareness, Original Nature. Only when you are not here are you in touch with who you truly are! Ironically, our True Nature can only be ever-present when you as a separate sense of self are not present! Spiritual teacher Jean Klein (1989) wrote, “Only in the complete absence of you is there total presence” (p. 110).

The false identity of me is expressed by incessantly taking mental positions that occur in one’s experience. No one is responsible for the I or me, or the creating of how one thinks, believes or feels since no one has any direct control of any of these. One is not the immediate situation, the life condition, or the mind’s mental stream or contents. One is not the body, doer, experiencer, the experience, or any content of the body. False identities commonly are constructed from one’s occupation, point-of-view, roles, degrees, and philosophies. Eckhart Tolle (1999) in a highly popular book writes:

The most common ego identifications have to do with possessions, the work you do, social status and recognition, knowledge and education,

physical appearance, special abilities, and often political, nationalistic, racial, religious, and other collective identifications. None of these are you. (p. 37)

Whether assigned by oneself, others or in combination, each false identity is purely a description or historical fiction, and nothing more. You are no more your past history than you are a history book. You are no more your future expectations than you are a fantasy novel or a futuristic movie. You are no more a label and concept than you are a mango or a kiwi fruit! When you know who you are, it no longer matters what you have thought you were. Thoughts, beliefs and stories of the one's personhood are but momentary slices into the ego's dreamed-up mental stream of ideas, nothing else.

American writer Linda Henley (n.d.) clarifies the risks of false identification in a particularly Western observation on materialism:

So many of us define ourselves by what we have, what we wear, what kind of house we live in and what kind of car we drive.... If you think of yourself as the woman in the Cartier watch and the Hermes scarf, a house fire will destroy not only your possessions but your self.

Actually how could anyone be one's name, sex, age or self-presentation? Could anyone be opinions or beliefs? One's marital state as single, married, divorced or re-married? One's fidelity or infidelity? One's possessions? One's accomplishments or one's plans? One's attitude, intention or personality? How could one be limited to any identity, even a spiritual self? The human ego invests meaning in each of these, none of which are who you are. While you can invest each with meaning and build a story about it, none are True Nature. All are the ego's trickery, subsidized by our acting as its misdirected accomplice and co-conspirator.

One pivotal root of all conflict, division and animosity is to be attached and falsely identified with your ethnicity, nationality, gender, emotional affiliation, ideology or cultural preference. The mind says we are these identifications and beliefs and, when seen as threatened or with loss, it's worth fighting and dying for—dying for what isn't even real!

Each false identity is a story or object identification the ego makes up and claims as true to stay in control and survive. Can any artificially constructed box, whether in the form of a concept, belief, label, judgment, accomplishment, role or story, encompass a thousandth of the multifaceted depth, breadth and vastness of who you are? All ego stories and false identities are fundamentally fictions and lies. All ego stories are about some thing, while the True Self isn't about any thing, only revealing, being and inhabiting who you truly are. All these ego stories, opinions and identities are purely props on the stage of life, as William Shakespeare portrays it. All are tools Consciousness uses in the play of life to express itself to itself, Awareness being aware of itself in human form. As Shakespeare would say—all the world's a stage; the play's the thing!

In order to fathom the depth of this misidentification, one can start letting go of

attachment to all false identifications. This process of buying out or disidentifying with false identities, roles, stories, thoughts and beliefs is not the unskillful human defense of dissociating when faced with severe trauma. With the sole exception of Original Nature, all identities are illusory. Who one thinks oneself to be simply isn't who one is. This is often unsettling and exciting all at once. There is less because there is so much more now.

In clinical work there have been many people who began to question whether any of these identities were actually who they truly are. Of particular note was a gentleman who thought he was his compulsively driven behavior in his career which had yielded a good deal of success, yet had brought an inner hollowness, meaninglessness, and an aching lack of fulfillment. As he was able to witness for himself these urges, thoughts, beliefs, agendas, and actions, he had less and less interest in following in habitual lockstep. He reported repeatedly experiencing a sense of freedom and ease of being with himself, opening up a wholly new, relaxed way of being in the world and his career.

Another illustration is of a woman who thought she was other people's opinions about her, especially any negative or critical ones. She experienced a shift when she realized that her acting in the role of caretaker, Atlas, and conflict avoider was eroding her quality of life making her ineffective in her job, and greatly lessening her joy of engagement. In this realization, she is shifting her outlook, learning skills to buy out of co-dependency and hyper-responsibility by simply doing what works that resonates with who she is and her naturally bubbly personality.

Where are we as humans in our development at this point in time? Drawing upon research and theory of developmental psychology, philosopher Ken Wilber (2000, 2006, 2009) provides help by theorizing that all lines of moral development proceed through four major stages or levels of body, mind and spirit respectively: egocentric (me), ethnocentric (us), worldcentric (all of us), and kosmocentric (all sentient beings). Central to hierarchical stage development of increasing consciousness is the requirement that an earlier stage must be fully lived and conquered before one can proceed to the next stage.

Each of Wilber's (2006) four stages or levels of moral development in the unfolding of greater human potentials has its own milestones in evolutionary unfoldment. In the first egocentric (me) stage, also called the preconventional or prepersonal stage, is the infant's largely self-absorbed awareness dominated by the gross physical reality of the body and its survival. Egocentric stands for morals being decided by what I feel, that is, what is right and good for me without consideration for what is right and good for everyone else. This narcissistic, primitive ego developmental stage is the earliest stage of moral development, equally for individuals and cultures.

In the second ethnocentric stage (us) stage, also termed the conventional stage, the young child starts to learn the society's norms and rules, and shares relationships with others given common interest, values, dreams and ideals, using the mind to take the role of others. When people and societies start to factor in the feelings and concerns of others in this stage, morals are decided by what is good for my family, tribe and nation.

In the third worldcentric (all of us) stage, also known as the postconventional stage, the person's identity begins to expand to include the concerns and care for all people in seeing similarities regardless of demographic differences and has the quality of being spiritual in the sense of commonalities of all sentient beings. The moral context then expands into the worldcentric stage when morals are decided by what is right and good for all human beings without regard to sex, race, creed or any other demographic category describing individual differences and diversity.

In the fourth kosmocentric (all sentient beings) stage, also termed the integral stage, the being begins to explore living responsibly and fully, experiencing a seamless wholeness of existence, and witnessing being and states of mind in an integral model or AQAL (all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, all types or shortened to all quadrants, all levels) that allows access to all forms of knowing and consciousness. For Wilber, the kosmocentric stage is the most advanced and mature level of moral development. In this stage morals are decided by what is right and good for all conscious beings, embracing not only humans but extending to Consciousness itself, that is, the light beaming out of the eyes of all sentient beings and in identifying with all the Kosmos.

The good news is that human beings have made a large leap in moving up these moral stages of development in contrast to pre-modern times. The less than thrilling news is that Wilber (2009) estimates that fully seventy percent of the world's population are still at the egocentric and ethnocentric stages of development at the present time.

Hindu philosopher/mystic Jiddu Krishnamurti (1982) underlines this point in a video talk: "This repetitive process of killing each other has been going on, though we are highly educated, technologically we are extraordinarily efficient, but psychologically we are very, very primitive." There is plenty of room for a decentering and growing beyond the normal healthy developmental stage of ego identity. Seeing and shedding ego as a false identity is undeniably central to humans moving up this theoretical ladder of moral development individually and collectively. It seems we don't remember or appreciate ego identity as a developmental stage, not our true identity. It still remains for us as beings and as a species to outgrow ego as a false identity, since it is not who we truly are.

C. G. Jung (1977) understood: "...the experience of the self is always a defeat for the ego." (par. 778). At some point the ego must bow down to the Self, transcendent Being. When the soul moves, the ego has to follow. The bowing of the ego to Original Nature is recognition that Being is prior to thought, that Awareness precedes any idea stream. Sage Ramana Maharshi spoke of the mind merging with the Self. When all concepts are seen through as not who anyone is, when the ego is seen through as having served its purpose, when all longing is seen through as disguised grasping of the non-existent ego, then in an instant or gradually the imposter self collapses before the sheer aware Presence of Original Nature. It is inconceivably and inevitably Life's way.

True identity, that is, True Nature, at this stage of human evolution can only be approached in terms of possibility. Certainly our True Identity is Consciousness and

Awareness itself and is ever available to fully unveil as well as elaborate and completely embody moment-to-moment. True Identity—intangible, ineffable, unknowable and beyond all experience—is freely and joyfully embracing God’s loving Presence, thereby being what one loves of Divinity. To live who one is remains solely a possibility until one awakens and matures to a level that allows one to hold Consciousness and Being. Given that there is nothing that is not you, how can there be anything other than God?

Spiritual teacher Adyashanti (2008) suggested that, in terms of recognizing our true identity, isn’t it time for a change in occupancy? There are many true responses to asking who is one? or what is one?, that is, what is Original Nature? Here are a few candidates that have shown up on my journey and seem to deeply resonate throughout all time:

I am who I am. I am the kingdom, the power and the glory. Self meeting Self, Love greeting Love. A will entrusted with a heart to unfold. The one who makes the choices face-to-face with our Source. The fruit of a living communion with the Divine. A conscious creation of the Most High.

Humans are points of pure life force, the awareness of the Self with unlimited possibility for attunement with the Divine. In a way, our True Self is a field of infinite possibilities, only apparently limited by imagination itself. True Nature is Buddha-nature. All are Buddha, the enlightened one. Other candidates? One is egoless courage and ever-evolving universal bliss consciousness. One is the unconditioned without beginning or end, here to take a chosen place in the Divine spectrum. One is nothingness that is the space of everythingness, ever awake to itself. One is Awareness itself being aware of itself. Bodian (2004) writes of Adyashanti describing this experience as: “...the emptiness prior to the oneness, forever awake to Itself” (p. 45). The Divine is right here, right now, precisely where one is. As spiritual teacher Timothy Conway would say, there is no spot where God is not.

One is Spirit, fully knowledgeable, wise-hearted and engaged in living the Good. One is Consciousness in true, passionate service and wholehearted contribution to this earth, humankind and life. One is what doesn’t change and is beyond all change. We are not our sensory experiences, but that in which these occurs. Who you are is not an event in time and space, but rather that in which time and space happens. One is Being in loving correspondence to the Divine’s wish—that is delusion-less, illusion-less, causeless, timeless, birthless, deathless Love expressing Consciousness in human form.

Ultimately everything is Love, Consciousness, Oneness and Divinity itself, as is all in Truth. Spiritual teacher A. H. Almaas (2000) describes the experience of who we truly are in these words: “When people say they want love, it’s like the fish saying it’s thirsty. You are swimming in love” (p. 172). Love, Truth and True Nature pervade every moment. Natural Being is unique, transparent Being in holy Light and sacred Love. It is a leap in development to recognize the mirages of false identities past and future, and see the ordinary everyday oasis of True Nature that is purely here-and-now.

Ask the question to what religion do you belong? And answer the one God

belongs to. This provokes revealing responses from people. That religion must be the true one! Of course, God and consciousness inhabit everything, including all true faiths, religions and everything. How can one know what is unknowable? True Nature is beyond all words, concepts, beliefs and every thing else in this phenomenal world. British mystic Tony Parsons (2000) provides a wry look at exactly this:

To attempt to share through words the rediscovery and wonder of who we are is as futile a process as writing a recipe for plum pudding and expecting someone reading it to be able to taste it. (p. 49)

How does one name the nameless? Describe the indescribable? What use is time and space for the timeless and spaceless? What use are words for the wordless? What use are metaphors, symbols, parables, and stories for what transcends all of them? At best one uses what one can as stepping-stones, signposts and pointers to Truth and Original Nature. An inner reflection by this writer of pointers to who we are not and who we are:

You cannot do anything to be, because you are Being expressing every moment.

You cannot attempt to create well being, because you already are well being.

You cannot try to achieve empowerment, because you are empowerment.

You cannot aim to be liberated and free, because you are liberated and free.

You cannot search for lovingkindness, because you are lovingkindness.

You cannot find balanced inner harmony, because one is balanced inner harmony.

You cannot do your best to bring faith, because you are active faithing itself.

You cannot practice reverent devotion, because you are reverent devotion.

You cannot work for compassionate peace, because you are compassionate peace.

You don't seek values and genius, because you are your values and genius.

You cannot have unconditional acceptance, because you already are unconditional acceptance.

You cannot strive for joy, happiness and fulfillment, because you already are this.

You cannot own Life, Love and Truth, because you are Life, Love, and Truth.

You cannot achieve awakening, because Original Nature is already awake and embodied as Divinity inherent in everyone and everything.

The Crossroads of Learned Crazyiness and Original Sanity: Pointers to Home

God is at home; it is we who have gone out for a walk.

(Meister Eckhart, n.d.)

Given the troubled, violent history on this planet, the toxic and rapacious assault on the environment, and the peril of global warming, the key question facing humans individually and collectively is perish or grow? Spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle (2005) asks, "...peace or drama?" (p. 77) You can ask: stay asleep or consciously awaken? This is the crossroads—will one hold on and rot in the separation of hell or let go and surrender into the undivided oneness of heaven? Will one cling to status quo existing or be willing to die to who one thought one was to be who one truly is? Nowhere to go and no going back; nothing to do, nothing not to do; no one to do anything for no one else. From here on out, all happens, flows and moves by itself on its own energy and momentum.

Caplan (1999) described French spiritual teacher Arnaud Desjardins as stating, "It's always the same question, Ego or surrender?" (p. 448) In harder-hitting terms: suffer or surrender? Ego and suffering demand a tremendous exertion of energy, while letting go in surrender takes essentially no effort, energy or willfulness. The word *energy* in its earliest French or late Latin root literally means as work or at work. Given trauma can be understood as anything one cannot face and accept, compassionate acceptance ushers in the opportunity for healing. Anyone who has lived the human experience might ponder: stubbornly insist one knows? Or humbly accept one doesn't know?

One can equally ask: trauma or yield, with yield pointing to a deep acceptance of what is. Or similarly: be someone else or be oneself, Original Nature? Each question implicitly presents the choice: be a character in a story of who one is or simply be who one truly is? It is purely one's life, human evolution, Consciousness itself and the Love and Divinity one is that are the fulcrum of this seesaw. As The Course in Miracles asked, would you prefer to be right or happy? Simply asking people to sit inside the question, "react or respond?", has resulted in a great leap forward in awareness for many people. It is reminiscent of a scene in the movie *Groundhog Day* in which the main character played by actor Bill Murray keeps reliving the same day. For example, after repeatedly stepping into a deep pothole filled with water while crossing a street, he experiences an awareness of being about to do this again, and quickly dodges it. He delights in this breakthrough!

For the 4500 years of recorded human history, most people would rather suffer and die than honestly grow and evolve. The question can be posed as learned craziness or original sanity? however ultimately the question is: human's way or divinity's way? It is witnessing consciousness that amusingly sees through the personal self attempting to hijack life. It is being able to see this ego maneuver for just what it is and naturally surrender this fictive self that is the prelude to the authentic liberated self. True character is built upon one's personality once the ego is out of the way. The authentic liberated self unfolds Being, inhabits the Pure Awareness of that which is prior to birth, outlasts death, and is beyond the conceptual.

I AM—Divine Qualities Have No Opposite, Only Absence

“I am that I am” and “Be still and know that I am God.”
(Ramana Maharishi, in Mudaliar, 1961, p. 32)

In the above two Biblical statements, Mudaliar (1961) stated that Sage Ramana Maharshi described the stillness spoken of in scripture as “Be still and know I AM God” to also mean freedom from thoughts. The true freedom of I AM comes at the price of seeing through and destroying the optical illusion of the ego. In the words of Maharshi (1985), “‘I am’ is God, not thinking ‘I am God’” (p. 84). Maharshi considered I AM another name for reality, truth, and Self with stillness being the sole requirement for the realization of Self as God. The I AM is inhabiting presence coming out of absence, all things manifesting out of nothing, without any separate self being an intermediary between one’s direct experience and Being. The Self or I AM has no subjects or objects, no I am this or that. I AM is the all-embracing present Awareness observing present Awareness, Self seeing Self, Being grokking Being.

As Ramana Maharshi would say, Nirvana actually is Perfection. Once again, given nirvana stands for extinct cessation, in nirvana, there is no subject or object, nothing to see, feel, or know. In ceasing the unreal, only bliss consciousness, Self and I AM remain. Many sages, spiritual teachers and writers know: I AM is the only self-evident truth.

Direct approaches to Truth have no stages and wholly accept the emptiness of existence and the fundamental Oneness of everything as an inherent paradox of this universe. Through the pure perception and eyes of Essential Being, all is observed as a perfect expression of itself and everything. This awareness has roots stretching back to the ancient Chandogya Upanishad, so influential in Hinduism, in which the ultimate Consciousness and Absolute Reality is Brahman, one without a second.

To be one without a second is to be impersonally One with no other or opposite, the space and consciousness of I AM in Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism, as well as Buddha-nature in Buddhism. Hindu Sage Nisargadatta Maharaj calls this I AM THAT (Tat Twam asi). The general principle is Brahman, Atman or the Self when applied to a person. Atman and Brahman are actually identical—universal Consciousness. The ancient Hindu Upanishads directly speak to a core awareness that we already are Brahman because Brahman is all there is. There is only Brahman.

Underneath every great truth is often an equal and reciprocal great truth, as physicist Niels Bohr suggested. Underneath the great truth of I AM is the reciprocal great truth of I AM NOT. As in observing both sides of your hand as indeed your hand and light defined by dark and vice versa, so I AM is inseparable from I AM NOT. In fact, in Buddhism the three characteristics of existence or experience are: impermanence (Anicca or the arising and disappearing of everything), suffering (Dukha or dissatisfaction) and not-self (Anatta or no essential nature to anything and only dependent self-co-arising).

Once the false, ever-shifting ego is seen through, the no self—the nothing at the core of the Buddha’s teachings—is revealed. When there is a seeing through and falling away of all that is unreal, only non-separation, the real, Original Nature remains self-evident. Nisargadatta Maharaj (1973) often repeated that one must be free of all concepts, including the concept I AM. There is no self to be fearfully critiquing itself, there is no one acting in the present. In this space of freedom, all that remains is authentic, transparent I AM as Being. For clarity’s sake, the statements of I AM and I AM NOT actually are misnomers given that any person, one, you, me, and I are only conceptualizations that are expressed in words, not real, reality or what exists. These provisos along with presence and witnessing the mind’s shenanigans serve as a reminder and protection from subtle ways to continue to grasp onto false identity and illusions.

Seeing through the personal I or personal self as purely a delusion yields to awareness of everything being essentially empty and nothing as well as full and everything, including oneself. Once I and me are seen through as illusions, a natural Awareness unfolds on a transcendent level not conceivable before—who and what you truly are. One doesn’t so much know Original Nature as is known by Original Nature. It takes being somebody to be nobody, to be who one is by knowing who one is not. It takes a self to see the not-self to inhabit the I AM. As Wei Wu Wei(1970) said, I am, then I am not, thus I AM.

Consider doing an experiment: choose to put aside looking outward to the world for a little while. Naturally bring attention inward. This simple and profound inner looking and listening awareness is available to anyone who quiets the mind sufficiently to attune to the inner silence, peace, and truth that are present at all times. At this very moment all that is, is This—an abiding in Present Awareness as more of a feeling than a thought. This points to what’s so in reality and Original Nature is here. True Self is experienced in this present moment awareness, the forgiveness of at-one-ment, moments of thoughtless flow, the space of creative inspiration and intuitive attunement to the One. As an old proverb said, there’s God, and then there’s not paying attention.

The imaginary ego makes the false claim to create me with all its attendant feelings, thoughts, beliefs and actions. The fictive ego or mind also makes up all the worldly and conceptual polarities such as right and wrong, hot and cold, my way and your way. In moments of presence and witnessing mind’s penchant for playing in polarities, people I’ve counselled become less interested in all these arbitrary opinions and moralistic judgments, leaving only a beautiful sense of being vitally present to this precious moment to breathe, look and feel what it is like to be scintillatingly alive and in appreciation of everything. And in this movement of consciousness, as a lovely bonus, people gain access to the intuitional, the real, and the transcendent, usually deepening their spiritual lives.

When the storyteller I is seen through as both false and non-existent, polarities still remain, now nested inside the pure perception of nondualistic wholeness and oneness. The dualistic world, nested in the nondualistic universe, is the essence of the authentic liberated self—being totality, wholeness and oneness itself. All functions can

thrive through the mind-body mechanism that occurs through Consciousness or Pure Awareness—a direct experience of Being, not experience thought about by a fictive ego.

The divine qualities of love, light, truth, beauty, kindness, and the good have their opposites reversed through the lens of the ego—e.g., hate, darkness, falsehood, cruelty, ugliness, and the bad. Conversely, in the pure perception of Original Nature, these qualities do not have an opposite. Each purely reflects God’s wholeness. Through pure perception, a felt sense of Being in this moment has no opposite, only Being itself.

The absence is as close as it comes to depicting what has no opposite—divine qualities in Absolute Reality. Medieval philosopher St. Augustine was possibly the first to articulate this understanding with the precept *privatio bonum* or absence of good. Defining evil as the absence of good, for example, illuminates how paired qualities have an inverse relationship of absence and presence, rather than opposites.

The Absolute Divine possesses no opposite, whether appearing as qualities, virtues, or sentiments. All gets misperceived through the lens of ego. An appearance of opposites is only two aspects of the same thing. As the Tao Te Ching long ago pointed out, when something positive does occur, it contains within it the seeds of negative and positive. Similarly, something negative contains within it the seeds of the positive and negative. Darkness is an absence of light; unconsciousness is an absence of awareness; phoniness is an absence of authenticity; being uninspired is absence of being enthusiastically inspired; and all ignorance, separation, attachment and suffering are only an absence of Oneness. Similarly, indifference is an absence of love; deception is an absence of truth; despair is an absence of faith; ugliness is an absence of beauty; cruelty is an absence of kindness; and abuse, violence, and war are an absence of the Good.

Only through ego’s perception can the divine appear to have an opposite. So with Awareness there is no ignorance; ignorance is purely the absence of Awareness. With Presence there is no being tuned out; tuned out is purely the absence of Presence. In Self there is no other; perceiving an other is only the seeming absence of the Self.

Walking the Razor’s Edge of Being In and Not Of This World

Be in, but not of, this world.

(Source Unknown, attributed to both Jesus of Nazareth and Mahatma Gandhi)

The integrity to be in, but not of, this world is transparent. Those who courageously ask impertinent life-affirming questions challenge the widespread anti-life status quo. Stand for Divine principles in the all-inclusive, universal ground of Being. These stalwart souls risk everything for what rings truest inside the heart. Whistle-blowers, conscientious objectors, iconoclastic rebels, idealists and forward-thinking progressives risk financial ruin, prison, abuse, torture, and death for the authentic freedom of the Self. A stand for Divine principles is not deviancy. Vilified and punished, these rare beings remain true to Spirit and to that which every one truly is.

To be in but not of this world is to be of the timeless, loving realm of Spirit, of undivided Oneness. Not being seduced by the world, not taking anything personally, and not projecting meaning or form into the empirical world, translates as a wholehearted acceptance that everything that arises in the world is sacred. The high art of being free in an unfree world is akin to walking the razor's edge, whether one be keeping all one's plates spinning without breaking a dish, or keeping one's equanimity when provoked. To surrender all seeking and false identities equates to an acceptance of simply and purely being in the world, without any interest in being of what you are not—the changing world.

To be in the world and not of the world is the space of authentic power. Being *in* one's family, company, or country, is experiencing it directly. To be in, but not of this world—the space of spirit union—is to observe and witness everything, recognizing all as divine without separation or division, distinction or other. Being in and not of the world is to know Original Nature and soul's awareness, to know each being as an expression of Divinity, a child of God.

When human beings are neither in nor of the world, it results in deadening apathy and damaging disconnection. When humans are both in and of the world, the personal I or ego, characterized by constant seeking, grasping and fear, acts and believes it is more important than God. The former has no connection to life and the latter is so enmeshed in the world that one cannot see beyond it. It is so easy to get lured into thinking that either nothing matters anyway, so why bother, or it's so important that nothing else matters.

One who is in and not of has the wherewithal to pause, step back, breathe and actively witness any difficulty or emotionally charged situation. In the instant of seeing through the ego, the false self falls away. All is clear and flowing as an eagle in smooth, gliding flight. From a bird's eye view, one senses what's behind the unfolding life drama.

Consider these illustrations: Stand inside the beast of worldly ego insanity, yet be not of it as one remains sane, openhearted and able to make healthy, soul-filled choices. Be in a non-feeling, unsupportive family, and be not of it, as one bonds and lovingly supports one's true family in the larger human family. Be in a country projecting aggression, abuse and terrorism, yet be not of its mentality or actions. One gentleman who was a high-level corporate consultant began to see how his company really had not lived up to their agreements and was able to assertively confront this long-standing devaluing pattern of behavior without being unduly attached to the outcome, knowing he was not trapped and could look for a healthier, more responsible company to affiliate with for mutual benefit. He began to see and experience that he could be in and not of his company, and it was this sense of freedom and taking actions that mattered most to him.

To be in and not of this world means to participate in the world and contribute to it as an integral, undifferentiated Being. In this inner space, one does not misidentify with ego's perception and desires. One is not the product of all the communal programming and conditioning. When making life choices in this phenomenal world, one can embody and express an authentic, liberated self in attuning to the spiritual Absolute.

Discussion and Conclusion

The seven themes of surrender and awakening woven throughout this writing serve as a lovely trellis for claiming the treasure of our True Nature. Each strand unfolds, interlaces, and synergistically enhances the other in weaving a lovely, natural tapestry of our ever existing suchness of being. We've explored how the seeing and recognizing of the optical illusion self or ego can naturally sideline it and unveil Awareness itself. Further, once all that hides the real is revealed and discarded, whether marble chips hiding Michelangelo's David, the junk in a room seemingly distracting from the ever-present space, or our unreal minds acting like a smokescreen hiding our True Self, only what does not come and go, reality and truth, remain. This experience can point to Plotinus' insight of the One that embraces everything in recognizing the integral nature of everything, much like the notion of Gaia points to seeing the whole world as a living organism. What emerges is an appreciation for being lived in a greater matrix of life.

The Via Negativa theme of a full-bodied experience of the travails, nastiness and heartache of failurehood cracks open our compassionate heart to the untold sacred depths within, ushering in an appreciation for what is that had heretofore been taken for granted. We've seen how the ego's claim to premature awakening through spiritual materialism and bypassing is a hoax that leads nowhere. Jung's concept of individuation, the mature development of revealing True Nature without any individual getting in the way, occurs in a process of incorporating the shadow self—all that is projected onto others—back into ego. Although individuation has been misunderstood as egotism, it is actually the humble surrender and submission to the inner calling of the Self. One takes back all one has resisted and rejected while ingesting everything one had found unacceptable.

Profound acceptance coupled with complete non-resistance and unceasing surrender of ego desires are keys for accepting, befriending and largely transcending the ego. Thereafter, one finds there was nothing to project in the first place, and no one or person to do this. Ingesting the shadow or simply seeing that there never was any one to project unwanted circumstances, uncomfortable feelings or negative judgments to begin with, creates a beautiful awakening. As one outgrows the normal healthy developmental stage of ego identity, all remaining is the healthiest expression of Self shining through.

Once false identities of every stripe and concoction are brought into the light of a new day, examined and deconstructed, the pull of thinking who one is as equating to any of these conceptualizations becomes ever more absurd and ridiculous. By standing in awareness and witnessing all worldly forms and thought-forms as ephemeral, these all can be seen as pale imposters for True Nature. Upon being seen for what each is, all false identities lose their pull, interest and fascination, leaving only Awareness itself in its wake.

Arnaud Desjardins (1989) writes: "If your mind lives, you die; if your mind dies, you live" (p. 124). Every moment our being inhabits this crossroads with the ever pesky, under-the-radar ego in a gazillion different disguises looking for another angle to control

and run our lives, supposedly for our security, protection and survival. It is purely within the inner safe harbor of surrendering all that we are not that who we truly are can breathe and blossom, unveil and manifest, what has always been, ever is, and timelessly remains—consciously living our true lives and fully inhabiting the True Self.

It is precisely what occurs at the crossroads of conditioned learned craziness and unconditioned original sanity moment-by-moment that essentially determines what our life is. Surrendering any doer, person or any one, and further releasing any hocus pocus separate self running the show of our true lives by its will masquerading as our own, leaves purely This, I AM. In witnessing this gracious gentle space of sanity, who you truly are can begin to notice the invitation of the true, impersonal, Divine Will and through exercise of our apparent choice can honor and follow. Within witnessing the seamless oneness of Being itself and pointing to I AM or Absolute, there is no opposite.

Through the lens of the labeling ego-mind, countless worldly polarities appear that continually fascinate the mind and act like a distraction, while the crime of robbing our true life is repeatedly committed. Through the lens of witnessing consciousness, you can see only love, joy, truth and kindness or the apparent absence of love, joy, truth, and kindness. Of course, such absence itself is illusory and doesn't really exist since it is no more real than having lost the brilliant sun, when the truth of the matter is that the sun is always shining and only seems to be blocked by thick clouds or missing at nighttime.

The razor's edge of nondual consciousness is to be in and not of the vehicle of these bodies traversing the landscape of the empirical world much like a surfer rides a magnificent powerful wave from the ocean to the shore. Like a surfer is ever consciously watchful and aware to the dangers of the shallows and rocks, riptides, sharks and hidden shoals, a course is intuitively, skillfully and almost effortlessly navigated in this world and not of this world to outgrow and shed the illusory ego-mind's entrancing siren call and its myriad conceptualizations, while being attuned and inhabiting our True Self. The cost, exit ticket off the old ride, and entry ticket to True Nature is one ego—yours.

True Nature communes in the ineffable, unknowable Absolute. We can be ever available and remain in open awareness, witnessing everything and nothing, neither and both, including everyday miracles and epiphanies when the Absolute breaks through this earthly dominion. This is the joie de vivre or joy of life that sages through the ages have experienced, spoken of and pointed to that is not only ever-present for everyone, but further is our Divine-given birthright for who we truly are that is already here hiding in plain sight. Instead of continuing to fall for the ruse of ego-mind's claim to authority and authorship, the grand opportunity every moment affords is to observe and examine, investigate and deconstruct all such conceptual claims and discover for yourself that each is false. Pausing inside this awareness is our true identity and freedom, life and Self.

In his book *Eihei Dogan, Mystical Realist* (1975), author H. Kim quoted the exceptionally ordinary Zen master Dōgen as stating: “To study the Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things of the universe” (p. 77). When the fictive ego self is fully seen through as a

mirage, released and forgotten, only then can our true lives begin. When everything can be accepted and embraced as Self, with no second or other, surrender is complete. When all attachments, clinging and desires are willingly freed and one is authentically needless, surrender is naturally and fully realized. In the space of all that is present and real in each moment, we are blessed to progressively embody our original sanity and Original Nature in the cutting edge of life living itself.

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