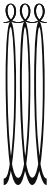
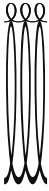


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PREFACE



Some four hundred years before the birth of Christ, the philosopher Socrates uttered his famous maxim. “The unexamined life,” he said emphatically, “is not worth living.” When Socrates was holding philosophical discussions in the marketplace of Athens, the world’s population was only a tiny fraction of what it is today, and the technology of the times was limited to working in metal, wood, stone, and clay. People rose with the sun and went to bed when it set. Life had a defined rhythm and a deliberate pace.

Today we wrestle with such problems as overpopulation and a toxic environment, and while our advanced technology has improved the quality of our lives, it has also increased the speed of life and heightened the stress under which we all labor. Modern economic, technological, and social trends are relentlessly at work reformulating and redefining our civilization, forcing us to move at speeds far greater than those for which our nervous systems were designed. The increasing speed of life is neither a short-term phenomenon nor a one-time aberration from the norm, but has become a constant in our culture. Keeping up with the pace of change as well as the chronic demands that constant change places on our systems, has created a whole new set of problems for us to deal with.

One of these problems is that we rarely have time to reflect on life’s purpose and meaning or to discover who we really are. What free time we do have is largely channeled into the endless assortment of mind numbing entertainments that our culture provides, but what relief we find in those diversions is of a temporary nature. Rather than creating a foundation of inner peace in what we do, we lurch instead from crisis to crisis. As our stress builds and our energy diminishes, our patience with

one another disappears. We seldom listen and we rarely forgive. Instead, we accuse and blame, deepen our divisions, and contribute to the growing climate of conflict that is plaguing the world. When we go too fast in life two things happen: we lose our balance, and then we crash.

While the words of Socrates may be ancient, largely forgotten, and ignored, they have never been more relevant. If we are to build a better world, we must know who we really are. We have accomplished a great deal with our technology, but we have strayed far from ourselves in doing so. The price of our success has been the loss of our identity. The world is in crisis, and what we do to address that crisis may well determine the future course of civilization. If we are to have peace in the world, we must create peace within ourselves. If we are to find love, we must become love. If we are to find fulfillment, we must help others find theirs. If the world is to change, we must embody the change we seek.

I wrote *Just Who Do You Think You Are?* to help those who are ready discover their true identity. For more than two decades I have helped people balance their lives and move forward to greater success and inner fulfillment. The ideas and principles in this book come from that work. What my clients have taught me about their individual predicaments applies equally to us all.

The universal is mirrored in the particular. We are all human and have the same basic set of needs. These needs were programmed into us as a species when we were conceived and have stayed with us as we have grown and evolved as a race. The deepest of these needs is our eternal search to find out who we are. That quest is why we are here. We are all in pursuit of transformation, whether we realize it or not. Life is a quest for truth, light, and identity. The answer to that quest does not lay outside us, but rather, hidden deep within us. No one can do the work of transformation for us. This work we must do for ourselves. *Just Who Do You Think You Are?* is about walking the path of Light as directly, deeply, and powerfully as possible.

In writing this book I have referred to the Divine in masculine terms, as a He rather than a She. I have done this, not because I feel that the Divine power has a gender, but because it is simpler and more economical to speak in terms of one gender than to speak in terms of two. Likewise,

in places where I could have said his and hers, I chose to use the masculine pronoun to refer to both genders because that is how it has been handled historically. I have followed that literary convention in order to economize my use of words and to make those sentences in which I could have said his or her less awkward.

If you find value in *Just Who Do You Think You Are?* please consider reading my previous book, *The T Zone: The Path to Inner Power*. *The T Zone* will deepen your understanding of unconscious dynamics and amplify your appreciation of what may truly happen when you heal your life.

Throughout this book I have cited the experiences of several clients to better illustrate important dynamics in the psyche. I have changed the names of these clients to protect their identity and privacy.

RESISTANCE AND ACCEPTANCE



What we cannot accept makes us unhappy.
What makes us unhappy we resist.
What we resist, we struggle against.
What we struggle against binds us to it.
Whatever binds us, enslaves us.
Whatever enslaves us, shames us.
Whatever shames us, diminishes us.

Our failure to accept the way things are lies at the root
of our problems.
Our resistance makes us rigid with resentment.
It steals our clarity and power, and deprives us of
happiness.
What we cannot accept we draw to us and are doomed
to repeat, over and over again.

What we accept will change, because we have changed.
When there is no more resistance within us, our
behavior will not be polarizing.
Everything will flow toward balance and harmony.
Peace will prevail over conflict.

Forgiveness is the key to acceptance.
We can't forgive until we find the inner victim and
acknowledge our pain.

When we find our pain we must embrace it completely.
Until we become one with our pain we will be unable to
release it.

Knowing this, the wise man resolutely faces himself,
feels his pain fully, and goes free. He becomes strong
and complete.

Fearing this, the foolish man deceives himself, denies
his pain, and diminishes his power. He remains in
harm's way, beaten down by that which binds him.
Because of his self-deception he grows even weaker and
more incomplete. His rage never ends.

The world will become peaceful when we become
peaceful.

To find inner peace we must face ourselves, and remove
the source of our resistance.

It is far better to face our self than it is to continually
blame others for our predicament.

Blame makes the negative the ruling power in our lives.

When we find inner peace, the solutions to our
problems are clear and obvious.

The future of the world is in our hands.

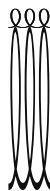
If we don't find inner peace, who will?

We are the world.

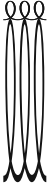
When we save ourselves, we save the world.

The time to act is now, not later.

We are too close to losing the future.



one THE SILENT EPIDEMIC



I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of a man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor.

Henry David Thoreau

Be the change you want to see in the world.

Mahatma Gandhi

Life is a risky business. We shine here for a short time then disappear. Permanence is an illusion. Everything in the physical world is temporary, subject to decline, decay, and dissolution, even the rocks and the stars and the sea.

We all know this, and yet we all ignore this. No one wants to dwell on the inevitable. It is too painful and disturbing. Instead, we build our lives, make our plans, and hope that good fortune will shine on us when we need it most. Despite the clarity of our intentions, the brilliance of our plans, and the sincerity of our prayers, our efforts to court success do not ultimately guarantee success. We cannot account for every possibility or prepare ourselves for what cannot be foreseen. While we all would like life to be orderly, predictable, happy, and secure what we least expect to happen is what often occurs. The only constant life ever brings us is constant change.

With the impermanent nature of reality operating relentlessly in the background, the only real security we can find in life is the light and consciousness we build within ourselves. If we cannot consistently count on something outside ourselves to save us, we must learn to rely on the inner light of our soul to guide us to safety and lead us to success.

Orthodox Religion, Mystic Tradition: Two Views of Human Nature

The great religions of the west have consistently taught their congregations that they are weak and sinful; that God exists outside of and separate from them; and that the church is their only legitimate avenue to redemption and salvation. Over time these teachings have created a deep sense of dependence on the church and a compelling, almost irreversible belief in personal guilt. To the extent that these teachings have empowered the church they have disempowered the individual. Instead of uplifting and transforming the masses these teachings have often cast doubt upon the nature of human potential.

We now live in a time when more people are better educated, affluent, and informed than ever before. The pace of social and technological change in the world continues to accelerate. Everything is in flux. The culture is rapidly changing. The old order is being questioned and challenged as it never was before. Nothing is sacred. The time of blind, unquestioning obedience is over. People are eager to improve their lives, find peace and happiness, and fulfill their potential. As more people seek to transform their lives they have come to the realization that guilt and dependence will not help them go forward but will lead instead to further weakness, confusion, and suffering. More and more people are determined to find their inner light and leave their pain and darkness far behind them.

The ancient wisdom traditions of both East and West have a different perspective on human nature and man's relationship to divine authority than the views offered by conventional religion. For thousands of years these wisdom teachings have said that the Divine light dwells in each of us and that there is no real separation between man and God but that which we create ourselves. The main purpose of life is to forge our connection to the Divine. As we develop that connection, the power of the Divine flows down into us. As that power flows into us it lifts us up, helping us evolve into the person we were always meant to be. As we continue to grow, and our capacity to hold more light expands, we become a conduit of unconditional love and compassion to those in need.

According to the mystic view of human nature we are not sinful, dependent, and weak, but extraordinary beings capable of great luminosity and unconditional love. If we are to fulfill our true potential the Divine does not want us to be wracked with guilt over our innate sinfulness, but rather, to find our oneness with Him. Where orthodox religions indoctrinated their followers into belief systems that may limit their inner potential, the ancient mystical traditions developed methods of personal transformation that fulfill that potential.

Access to our inner light is certainly a great advantage to have when we are faced with a rapidly changing world, great unrest, high stress, deepening anxiety, and a climate of contagious uncertainty. That advantage is one of the reasons why there has been so much interest in Eastern mysticism and alternate systems of transformation in the west.

Polarization

As a new century dawns, one worldwide trend is particularly worrisome and may have reached epidemic proportions already. This is the trend toward political, economic, religious, and social polarization that continues to grow unabated in every sphere of life. The gaps that divide us continue to grow larger, and the emotional distance that separates us continues to grow wider. There is little remaining cohesion to hold us together. What common ground we do share shrinks beneath our feet.

With every passing day and every new upheaval, these distances continue to grow, that cohesion continues to erode, and a peaceful future slips further from our grasp. Extreme selfishness has replaced respect for the common good. We have less in common than we ever have. Turmoil, hostility, and conflict are at high pitch, sweeping over our small planet with alarming ease. Nothing seems able to slow the rising wave of negativity. Everywhere, on every continent and in every country, people feel a deep sense of foreboding about the future. No one is immune from the corrosive anxiety, the loss of innocence, and the increasing toxicity of our times.

It is as if a dark tide were gathering its strength, while we stand helpless in the rising water, waiting for the deluge that seems certain to come. Many fear that this time it might be too late to save the world

from itself. In the meantime, we stand shivering in the cold currents of our time, unprotected and vulnerable, facing a worldwide epidemic of conflict, polarization, frenzy, and rage.

The Negative Momentum of Our Times

When an individual acts out his rage there are no winners. Everyone loses. The impact of isolated incidents of violence contributes to the flood of darkness sweeping over the world and encourages others, who are also unstable and full of rage, to commit similar atrocities. Terrible acts committed by unstable people, lead to more unstable people committing terrible acts. This is one way a negative trend starts. The psychic atmosphere of the globe becomes polluted by the increasing sum of terrible acts and encourages ever more terrible atrocities.

The world is full of lost souls. If we lose sight of the inner person, we lose our way in life. "What does it profit a man," Christ once asked, "to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" The answer is devastatingly simple. It profits him nothing.

Where Are We Headed?

No one knows where we are headed, but we are running faster than we ever have to get there. Chaos? World War? A series of regional wars? The use of weapons of mass destruction? Chemical, biological, or nuclear attacks? Earth and climate changes? Pole shifts? Two hundred mile an hour winds swirling over the planet, destroying all plant life, most homes and buildings, and nearly all of us? Massive earthquakes? Volcanic eruptions? Tidal waves? Floods? Water appearing where it hasn't been seen in centuries? Planetary warming? Gaping holes in the ozone layer? Famine? Chronic drought? Starvation? Plagues? Incurable infectious diseases?

Presently, nearly two billion people in the world are without access to clean drinking water. Two hundred fifty thousand new babies are born everyday. Estimates suggest that by the year 2015 there will be 8.5 billion people on the planet, increasing the present population by nearly a third. Virtually all that growth will occur in the third world where there is not enough fresh water, food, housing, or economic opportunity as

it is. The additional population will become a source of new crises and increased conflict that will impact the whole world. As it is, AIDS cases are rising dramatically in the third world and are beginning to climb again in America following a period of slow growth.

In the United States, over one third of the population now has Insulin Resistance Syndrome, a leading precursor of diabetes and heart disease. Sixty percent of the population is overweight. Statistics indicate that one out of two Americans will contract some form of cancer during their lifetime. If we do not destroy ourselves through ideological and cultural divides, limited economic opportunity, war, lack of food and clean water, we may well destroy ourselves by eating processed foods, packed with refined sugar and carcinogens, breathing toxic air, and drinking contaminated water.

Unfortunately, what we are doing to ourselves is only part of the saga in the growing epidemic of global imbalance. The other part of the story is what we have done to the earth's ecosystem. Because of our prolific capacity for heedless pollution, nature is fast losing her capacity to regenerate herself, and may one day fail to support us. The natural world is our foundation. Our continued existence is impossible without its embrace.

The Web of Life

Why is it that as human beings we hurt and destroy nearly everything we touch? Could it be because we are out of touch with our true nature and have no respect for or sensitivity to things, species, and people outside of ourselves? We're not the only show in town or the only species on the planet. When we uproot and destroy everything in our path in the name of profit and power, we sow the seeds of our own destruction. Life is a web, and all species on the planet, including us, are contained and connected within that web. Destroy one part of that intricate network and the web of life is suddenly out of balance.

Without systemic balance, all the individual elements of the web will eventually suffer. Interfere with the ability of several elements of the web to function as intended, and that suffering will come much faster

and cut much deeper. We may well be at that point now. The overriding ecological question of our time is whether or not we have reached the point of no return. Is there still time for us to rise to the challenge, overcome the polarization that plagues us, and save ourselves and the ecosystem from overwhelming degradation?

Of course, the degradation of the ecosystem contributes to the rise of epidemics. When we rip the web of life asunder, pollute the environment, and make the world more toxic, we create the conditions for that toxicity to come back to haunt us. When we destroy our foundation, we put our future at risk. In a famous and controversial speech made in 1854, but not reported on until thirty-three years later, Chief Seattle of the Suquamish Indians was attributed with making the following remarks: "Whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth. We did not weave the web of life; we are merely strands in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves."

Karma and Accountability

We do not operate in a vacuum. What we do to others and what we do to the world, life one day will do to us. We are all accountable for our actions. Everything we do, the good as well as the bad, will eventually come home to us. Our actions are an investment in our future. We never escape our karma. Rumi, the great mystical poet of the fourteenth century, put the notion of karmic accountability in these terms: "If you cause injury to someone, you draw that same injury to yourself."

Taking this fundamental truth under consideration, our strategy should be to proceed thoughtfully and deliberately in our lives. We should be compassionate, sensitive, and clear in what we do and why we do it. Being deliberate and in control of our emotions is far superior to being impulsive and controlled by momentary desires. The wise person lives by The Golden Rule and will "do unto others as he would have them do unto him."

If our actions have been destructive to other people's well-being, all our attempts to deny our activities, discredit others, and distance ourselves from the repercussions of our actions will prove futile in the end. There is no escaping the long reach of universal law. The Law of

Consequences, or Karma, makes no exceptions for anyone. We are all equal under that law. Karma has no favorites. God cannot be bribed or placated. What we do now determines what life will bring us later. We are responsible for our destiny.

Karma and the Long Term

Sometimes, however, it might seem that universal law does not work as advertised. Many ruthless killers throughout history became powerful and rich, and led privileged lives. Some ruled countries. A few created empires. Several were celebrated. Where, then, are the consequences to their actions? They seem to have been rewarded for their inhumanity rather than punished for their crimes.

What must not be forgotten is that universal law applies to the long term as well as the short term. The consequences for actions against humanity are not always immediate. The Law of Consequences determines the timing of karmic events. It manifests our karma when it deems that the conditions are right for us to be confronted with the experience we created for ourselves.

Richard Nixon, for example, won many elections by spreading lies and ruthlessly destroying the reputations of his opponents. In his early political career it seemed like a successful strategy, enabling him to swiftly climb the political ladder from congressman to Vice-President of the United States. His karma did not come back to haunt him until the zenith of his political career when he was re-elected President of the United States in a landslide victory in 1970, winning every state's electoral votes but Massachusetts. Then came Watergate. Two years after his triumphant re-election, he was forced to resign his high office in disgrace. The man who had destroyed the reputation and careers of others had now destroyed his own.

If Nixon's karma had come back to him when he had first created it, his humiliation would have occurred on a local scale, been noted in the local papers, and then quickly forgotten. Instead, the Law of Consequences waited until he had reached the pinnacle of his career and attained the high office he had lusted after for decades before

manifesting his karma. His humiliation occurred on the world stage under the glare of the world media, rather than on the inside pages of the local paper. The Law of Consequences is very patient. Its timing is impeccable, and it never fails to find us.

Refining the Soul

From the Divine perspective, we are embodied souls having all kinds of experiences in the physical world in order to facilitate our growth. The business of evolution is the refining of the soul, and part of that refining process involves learning right from wrong and developing a conscience to guide us. In this way the karma we create as we go forward will be positive and accelerate our evolution rather than impede it. If we don't develop a strong ethical nature, we run the danger, much like Richard Nixon did, of being chronically stuck in destructive patterns that will continue to create negative consequences in our lives. Without a moral compass to steer us we will generate more imbalances in our lives and add to the overwhelming problem of imbalance in the world.

The Law of Consequences is not a law of retaliation, although it might seem that way. Rather, it is actually a way of teaching responsibility and accountability. Life gives us free will. Within certain parameters we can do what we want, but we are also accountable for our actions. What better way to learn the difference between right and wrong than to be forced to suffer the same fate we may have forced on someone else?

Mirror Images

Karmic experiences then, are often the mirror images of what we once did to someone else. They reflect our lessons back to us. Though it may be difficult to find the hidden cause of our dilemmas, painful experiences that come into our lives unexpectedly are often the result of past sins of commission or omission. The reverse of course, is also true. Helping someone in need will bring help to us in the future when we need it most.

Wherever we go and whatever we do, the Law of Consequences always accompanies us, registering all that we do. The Law doesn't create

our karma. We do that. The Law makes us responsible for what we do, whether or not we want that responsibility. We create our future by what we do now, by how we treat other people as we move through life.

The Law of Consequences and the Soul

Since the Law of Consequences deals more with the soul than the personality, it is not limited to working out someone's karma during the lifetime in which that karma occurred. The law is patient and may wait for another incarnation before it inserts that soul into the karmic situation it had created previously for itself.

I once had a client come to me, a psychotherapist, who had recently embarked on a new relationship with a wonderful woman. He came to resolve issues of long standing that had little to do with his new relationship. Despite the issues that he wanted to address, when he got on my healing table the spiritual light that I channeled into his body brought to the surface an unknown strand of karma that had been hidden in his soul for hundreds of years. This karmic strand was from a lifetime in the fourteenth century of which he had no previous awareness. In that life he had been a soldier in charge of protecting a village from the attacks of roving marauders. One day he and his men were out on patrol when the thieves sneaked around them and attacked the village. They killed all the men and carried off the women and children to sell into slavery. When my client and his men returned to the village they encountered a ghastly scene of death and destruction. My client was devastated. Not only had he failed to protect the village, but the raiders had also carried off the woman he loved and was betrothed to marry.

He regrouped his men and at dawn the next day they followed the thieves to their stronghold in the mountains. They arrived late in the afternoon and hid in a nearby forest waiting for the cover of night to attack. Unfortunately, the bandits had anticipated the soldier's plan and sent several scouting parties into the woods to search for them. The soldiers were located almost as soon as they arrived. Whatever element of surprise they might have had was now lost. Their attack was a complete disaster. My client was killed during the battle. He had tried to rescue his

beloved and failed, sacrificing his life in a vain attempt to save her and the other women and children from the village.

When my client returned to normal consciousness he was overcome by emotion. The past life he had just experienced explained the deep love he had felt immediately on meeting the woman he was now involved with and the terrible feelings he experienced whenever they parted. Each time she left him he was sure that he would never see her again. She too had fallen in love with him immediately and shared the same terrible feeling of loss whenever they parted. Now he knew why his feelings were so powerful and why his fear of losing her was so strong. She was the woman he had loved and lost long ago. The Law of Consequences had brought them together again to live out the love they had not been able to experience and complete more than six hundred years earlier. A lost opportunity had come full circle, becoming a new chance to complete the past and heal an ancient wound.

Greed and Universal Law

There is, of course, another side to the karmic coin. My client and his partner had been brought together to experience a beauty that had never had the chance to bloom in the time of its conception. Since the energy between them had been pure and loving, their encounter with each other in this lifetime rekindled that love. Most people, however, are motivated by factors that are not as pure. For example, those whose greed is stronger than their conscience often refuse to consider the way Universal Law functions or to admit that it even exists. For the greedy person, it's always about today, never tomorrow. The greedy person rarely considers the consequences of his actions and will often deny that any correlation exists between what he does now and what he draws to himself later. The greedy person is too engrossed in the overwhelming demand of his own need to see how his actions impact other people or to care that he has hurt them. Profit and self-advancement are more important to him than doing what is right and honorable. He considers the notion of the web of life irrelevant and immaterial. It is his focus on self, profit, and the present, to the neglect of other people's well-being, and the future

cost of that neglect upon the environment, that leads him to continually inflict suffering upon the world.

Greed, of course, is a form of self-involvement and heightened selfishness. All self-involvement is a sign of emotional immaturity and an expression of need. Greed then, is need's instrument. The overwhelming sense of need that drives greed makes it blind to everything but what it desires in that particular moment. It is rarely interested in anyone else's well-being because it is too preoccupied with its own distorted needs to see beyond its self-gratification. Greed is never very clear or far seeing. It has little sense of proportion and less conscience. It doesn't care who it hurts or how it hurts them, as long as it gets what it wants.

The survival of the planet, however, is a long-term concern that involves all of us. The sustainability of the environment requires a group effort. Greed is the enemy of that effort. Greed's focus on self-concern to the detriment of everyone else promotes polarization, conflict, and hostility. Greed is one of the major causes of imbalance in the world and one of the great enemies of the future.

Greed and Desire

"All people on the planet are children," wrote the poet Rumi, "except for a very few. No one is grown up except those free of desire." Desire is the ally of greed. They are like the right and left hand of the same person. When they combine in our nature they fan the flame of selfishness and extinguish common sense. If we lose our common sense we will often ignore our innate sense of right and wrong. Without a moral compass to guide us it is all too easy to abandon ourselves to the most destructive elements in our nature.

I once knew a man who had been a fine athlete in his youth. As an adult he became a high school teacher and a football coach. One fateful night he found someone else's credit card. The temptation to use that card burned in his mind for days and in the end proved too much for him to overcome. He went on a buying spree, purchasing several luxury items he could not afford on his teacher's salary. Needless to say, he was eventually caught, arrested, and punished. His actions destroyed his reputation and

led to great personal humiliation. Desire and greed led an otherwise decent man down a frighteningly fast path to self-destruction.

Where the Marriage of Desire and Greed Begins

The collaboration of desire and greed begins when we decide we want something we don't have. By focusing intensely on what we want, we soon find that we can't bear to live without it. What we don't have consumes us, and our desire for what we don't have incites our greed to go and get it. What we want becomes what we must have. When something enters our "must have" zone, we will do almost anything to get it. The mixture of greed and desire exacerbates our neediness and adds an element of unhappiness and desperation to an already volatile combination of negative motivations. The conjunction of desire, greed, need, and unhappiness can easily overwhelm our common sense and cause our undoing. Greed and desire flourish when we do not know who we really are and are not centered in our true identity. It is only when we are centered in our true identity that we are relieved of greed's temptations.

When greed and desire dominate our conscious minds, short-term, selfish thinking dominates our lives. When we lose sight of the big picture, focusing solely on our own gratification, we are primed to cause repetitive injury to the web of life and create karmic repercussions in our own lives. When greed and desire are in the ascendant in our lives we will be unhappy and out of balance. When they are the dominant forces in the world, the world will be full of suffering. If the level of imbalance in the world continues to grow, how can we possibly protect the future and build a better world?

The Most Insidious Epidemic of Our Time

The most insidious epidemic of our time is the lack of inner balance that exists in nearly all of us and is reflected in the world around us. When the population of the planet was much less than it is today, when the available technology was much cruder, the damage done to the web of life was repairable by nature. That is no longer the case. There are now too many of us with too much internal toxicity and too much technology to

continue on in the same way as before. Personal toxicity and advanced technology present a frightening combination of unpredictable factors that threaten the future of this planet. There is too little margin of error in our endeavors to tolerate much more thoughtless greed.

While we cannot legislate consciousness, we can choose to rectify our own lack of balance and find our true center. When we are centered we are better positioned to deal with the challenges of life and the particular stresses of our time. If enough of us become centered and clear, together we will create a clear and radiant energy field that will help the world overcome the negative trends now dominating it. There can be no balance in the world until there is more balance in each of us. In order to find the balance we need we must overcome our attachments to greed and desire.

The Two Major Aspects of the Human Bio-System

There is only one certain way to restore our internal balance. We must transform our nature by clearing the unconscious emotional toxicity that pollutes it. Most of us live in the gulf of confusion that separates the human from the Divine. If we are to fulfill our potential, we must find a way to incorporate the Divine elements of our nature into our conscious experience. In most of us, the Divine elements exist more as a promise and a hope than as a tangible reality. The challenge we face is how to stretch our consciousness toward the Divine. We won't escape the gulf of confusion we inhabit until we do. Fortunately, we have been designed by our Creator to accomplish this very task. When God gave us a body, He also gave us a soul and spirit. We have a dual nature and are a unique combination of physical substance and Divine energy. Our job is to unite the two and make them one.

The physical elements of our system are designed to last a lifetime, but no more. They are mortal. On the other hand, the supra-physical aspects of our system are designed to last for eternity. They are immortal. Therefore, while the physical part of us is destructible and will die, the larger part of us that we do not see and rarely experience is indestructible and will never perish.

The physical components of our system include the brain, the skeletal structure and the physical body with its various organ systems, such as the circulatory, respiratory, endocrine, immune, digestive, muscular, and nervous systems.

The supra-physical elements of our system include the electromagnetic field, or aura, that encircles the physical body, the seven major chakras (an Indian term that means a spinning wheel of light) that exist just outside the front of the body, and the subtle nervous system, composed of the meridians and the nadis, that is located within the physical body. (For a complete and detailed visual representation of the supra-physical elements of the human system please view the work of the artist Alex Grey as they appear in his book of remarkable paintings, *Sacred Mirrors*.)

The electromagnetic field contains the energies of mind (as differentiated from the brain), emotion, soul, and spirit. These aspects of consciousness are represented in the electromagnetic field as bands of light and color that encircle the physical body. The band of the emotional nature is the band closest to the body. Next to it is the sheath of the mind, followed by the sheath of the soul. The band of the spirit is the band farthest from the body. The bands of the mental nature and soul lie between those of the emotional nature and the spirit.

The ancient Yogis of India had an interesting aphorism they used to describe the relationship between the mind and the body. "The mind is not contained in the body," they said, "but the body is contained in the mind." At first glance this aphorism may not seem to make much sense, but when we think of the mind and body in terms of the aura, it makes perfect sense. Since the energies of the mind are located in the electromagnetic field surrounding the body, the body is literally contained within the mind, much like an egg is contained within its shell. The physical brain is the central receiving station for the mind as well as the processor for the ideas that emanate from the mental sheath of the aura.

Unlike the energies of the mind, soul and spirit, the seven chakras are not bands of light and color surrounding the body in successive

layers but are, rather, spinning wheels of light located in specific locations just in front of the physical body. The chakras transform and distribute the energy from the electromagnetic field into the physical body in order to sustain the body and regulate its many systems.

The subtle nervous system is made up of the acupuncture meridians, charted by ancient Chinese seers, and the nadis, charted by ancient Indian sages. The meridians and nadis are both microscopic channels through which the subtle energy that has been stepped down through the chakras is distributed throughout the body. The main focus of the meridians is the health of the physical body, while the nadis are concerned with the individual's spiritual evolution. Just as plants need sun to grow, we need spiritual light to evolve.

The flow of subtle energy moves down through the various levels of our consciousness, starting at the spiritual level then down through the soul, mind, chakras, and, finally, into the meridians and nadis. At each succeeding level, the energy is stepped down so that the physical body might be able to handle the influx of power without having its circuits blown.

The Conscious Gateway

Self-actualization occurs when spiritual light is consciously introduced into the energy channels of the subtle nervous system through meditation and is then directed to rise in a disciplined manner through the chakras, starting with the base chakra at the bottom of the spine system and culminating in the chakra above the top of the head. When all of the seven chakras are opened, synchronized, and vibrating at their highest optimal level, they form a conscious gateway to the realms of the soul and spirit that is sealed off from our awareness until the gateway is created. That gateway is of supreme importance in our evolution. Fully opened, it is the vehicle for developing a strong soul connection and moving beyond the gulf of confusion that plagues most people. The spiritual light that flows up the gateway to our spirit, there to be answered by an even greater stream of spiritual energy flowing down from the spirit to our conscious mind, completes that higher connection. The great mystery of who we really are cannot be revealed until we make that connection.