

A NEW EARTH





ALSO BY ECKHART TOLLE

*The Power of Now*

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# A NEW EARTH



*Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*

ECKHART TOLLE



A PLUME BOOK

PLUME

Published by Penguin Group

Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, U.S.A.

Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700,

Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4P 2Y3 (a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.)

Penguin Books Ltd., 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

Penguin Ireland, 25 St. Stephen's Green,

Dublin 2, Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd.)

Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road,

Camberwell, Victoria 3124, Australia (a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty. Ltd.)

Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd., 11 Community Centre,

Panchsheel Park, New Delhi – 110 017, India

Penguin Books (NZ), cnr Airborne and Rosedale Roads,

Albany, Auckland 1310, New Zealand (a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd.)

Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty.) Ltd., 24 Sturdee Avenue,

Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd., Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

Published by Plume, a member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc. Previously published  
in a Dutton edition

First Plume Printing, September 2006

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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 REGISTERED TRADEMARK—MARCA REGISTRADA

The Library of Congress has catalogued the Dutton edition as follows:

Tolle, Eckhart, 1948—

A new earth : awakening to your life's purpose / Eckhart Tolle.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-525-94802-3 (hc.)

ISBN 0-452-28758-8 (pbk.)

1. Spiritual life. I. Title.

BL624.T635 2005

204'.4—dc22 2005023358

Printed in the United States of America

Original hardcover design by Carla Bolte

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*This is a Namaste Publishing Book.*



# CONTENTS



## CHAPTER ONE

<i>The Flowering of Human Consciousness</i> . . . . .	I
Evocation . . . . .	1
The Purpose of This Book . . . . .	5
Our Inherited Dysfunction . . . . .	8
The Arising New Consciousness . . . . .	13
Spirituality and Religion . . . . .	17
The Urgency of Transformation . . . . .	20
A New Heaven and a New Earth . . . . .	23

## CHAPTER TWO

<i>Ego: The Current State of Humanity</i> . . . . .	25
The Illusory Self . . . . .	27
The Voice in the Head . . . . .	30
Content and Structure of the Ego . . . . .	34
Identification with Things . . . . .	35
The Lost Ring . . . . .	38
The Illusion of Ownership . . . . .	42

Wanting: The Need for More . . . . .	46
Identification with the Body . . . . .	49
Feeling the Inner Body . . . . .	52
Forgetfulness of Being . . . . .	53
From Descartes's Error to Sartre's Insight . . . . .	54
The Peace That Passes All Understanding . . . . .	56

CHAPTER THREE

*The Core of Ego* • 59

Complaining and Resentment . . . . .	61
Reactivity and Grievances . . . . .	64
Being Right, Making Wrong . . . . .	66
In Defense of an Illusion . . . . .	67
Truth: Relative or Absolute? . . . . .	69
The Ego Is Not Personal . . . . .	72
War Is a Mind-set . . . . .	74
Do You Want Peace or Drama? . . . . .	77
Beyond Ego: Your True Identity . . . . .	77
All Structures Are Unstable . . . . .	79
The Ego's Need to Feel Superior . . . . .	81
Ego and Fame . . . . .	82

CHAPTER FOUR

*Role-playing: The Many Faces of the Ego* • 85

Villain, Victim, Lover . . . . .	87
Letting Go of Self-Definitions . . . . .	89

Pre-established Roles . . . . .	90
Temporary Roles . . . . .	93
The Monk with Sweaty Palms. . . . .	94
Happiness as a Role Vs. True Happiness . . . . .	95
Parenthood: Role or Function? . . . . .	97
Conscious Suffering . . . . .	101
Conscious Parenting . . . . .	103
Recognizing Your Child . . . . .	104
Giving Up Role-playing . . . . .	106
The Pathological Ego . . . . .	109
The Background Unhappiness . . . . .	112
The Secret of Happiness . . . . .	114
Pathological Forms of Ego . . . . .	118
Work—With and Without Ego. . . . .	121
The Ego in Illness . . . . .	124
The Collective Ego. . . . .	125
Incontrovertible Proof of Immortality . . . . .	127

CHAPTER FIVE

*The Pain-Body* • 129

The Birth of Emotion . . . . .	131
Emotions and the Ego . . . . .	134
The Duck with a Human Mind . . . . .	137
Carrying the Past. . . . .	139
Individual and Collective . . . . .	141
How the Pain-Body Renews Itself . . . . .	144

How the Pain-Body Feeds on Your Thoughts . . .	145
How the Pain-Body Feeds on Drama. . . . .	148
Dense Pain-Bodies . . . . .	151
Entertainment, the Media, and the Pain-Body . . . . .	152
The Collective Female Pain-Body . . . . .	154
National and Racial Pain-Bodies . . . . .	157

CHAPTER SIX

*Breaking Free* • 161

Presence . . . . .	164
The Return of the Pain-Body . . . . .	167
The Pain-Body in Children . . . . .	169
Unhappiness . . . . .	172
Breaking Identification with the Pain-Body. . .	174
“Triggers” . . . . .	177
The Pain-Body as an Awakener . . . . .	180
Breaking Free of the Pain-Body . . . . .	183

CHAPTER SEVEN

*Finding Who You Truly Are* • 185

Who You Think You Are . . . . .	186
Abundance. . . . .	190
Knowing Yourself and Knowing <i>About</i> Yourself	192
Chaos and Higher Order . . . . .	194
Good and Bad . . . . .	195

Not Minding What Happens . . . . .	198
Is That So? . . . . .	199
The Ego and the Present Moment . . . . .	200
The Paradox of Time . . . . .	204
Eliminating Time . . . . .	206
The Dreamer and the Dream. . . . .	208
Going Beyond Limitation . . . . .	210
The Joy of Being. . . . .	213
Allowing the Diminishment of the Ego . . . . .	214
As Without, So Within. . . . .	217

CHAPTER EIGHT

*The Discovery of Inner Space* • 223

Object Consciousness and Space Consciousness . . . . .	227
Falling Below and Rising Above Thought . . . . .	229
Television . . . . .	230
Recognizing Inner Space . . . . .	233
Can You Hear the Mountain Stream?. . . . .	236
Right Action. . . . .	238
Perceiving Without Naming . . . . .	239
Who Is the Experiencer? . . . . .	241
The Breath. . . . .	243
Addictions . . . . .	246
Inner Body Awareness . . . . .	248
Inner and Outer Space . . . . .	250
Noticing the Gaps . . . . .	253

Lose Yourself to Find Yourself . . . . .	254
Stillness . . . . .	255

CHAPTER NINE

*Your Inner Purpose* • 257

Awakening. . . . .	259
A Dialogue on Inner Purpose . . . . .	262

CHAPTER TEN

*A New Earth* • 279

A Brief History of Your Life . . . . .	282
Awakening and the Return Movement . . . . .	284
Awakening and the Outgoing Movement. . . . .	288
Consciousness . . . . .	291
Awakened Doing. . . . .	293
The Three Modalities of Awakened Doing. . . . .	295
Acceptance. . . . .	296
Enjoyment. . . . .	297
Enthusiasm. . . . .	301
The Frequency-holders . . . . .	306
The New Earth Is No Utopia . . . . .	307

*Notes* • 311

*About the Author* • 315

A NEW EARTH





## CHAPTER ONE



# *The Flowering of Human Consciousness*

### EVOCATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Since time immemorial, flowers, crystals, precious stones,

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

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

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

## THE FLOWERING OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

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

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

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### OUR INHERITED DYSFUNCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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