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A New Earth
Awakening Your Life's Purpose
Eckhart Tolle

The Book, *A New Earth, Awakening Your Life's Purpose*, has a powerful and ongoing theme about the importance of the transcendence of the ego based consciousness of human beings, and all the ego has become identified with. It states that one must decide to make an inner shift of consciousness, to a new state of Beingness or Presence. The author, Eckhart Tolle advocates that awakening this state of Awareness is necessary for one to learn to accept life's circumstances and by doing so this will ultimately lead to one's personal happiness and fulfillment of life. He also suggests that this awakening is the key to ending suffering and conflict throughout the world. Tolle outlines his spiritual philosophies throughout the book, which give the reader a foundation to learn to cope w/ life's ever changing situations. It is essential, however, that the reader be open and willing to accept the ideas presented in this book in order for his philosophies to even be considered a solution. What one may take away from the book will be dependent on their personal life situation when they read it. As Tolle states, "It (this book) will change your state of consciousness or it will be meaningless. It can only awaken those who are ready." An essential part of this awakening is recognizing the unawakened you, your ego, as well as the constant "self-talking" that consumes the unawakened state of Being. The book explains how the ego operates in the individual and also in the collective (world), and how this collective unconsciousness ego has grown out of fear and is causing an obvious a failure of society all over the Earth. Tolle states that when our ego controls our state of consciousness, our emotions are affected as well. Our emotions then in-turn affect our physical bodies. These emotions and physical ailments can be attributed to the pain-body. The pain body is mainly addicted to unhappiness and will work with your ego to attain that unhappiness as long as one is living unconsciously. Spiritual practices such as t'ai chi, qi gong, and yoga are suggested forms of other training to help in the process of universal awakening and breaking down of this pain-body. Once the awakening process has begun and one starts to break free of their ego, Tolle sends you on the next step of the transformational journey which is to find out who you truly are and what your ultimate inner purpose is.

Tolle starts his book by establishing the idea that human enlightenment is attainable and is something that humans ultimately want for themselves (their desire for happiness). He presents this theory by telling a story about the first flower to bloom on the Earth over 114 million years ago. He says that this flower represents the transformation of a plant life form. Eckhart connects this process of transformation as playing an essential part in the evolution of consciousness from one species to another. He found that over time, humans have become captivated with flowers because they seem to provide us with an

inspiration to awaken to the beauty of our own innermost beauty. Flowers represent an expression of form of something humans see as sacred and ultimately formless within ourselves. They serve as the connection to the world as physical form and the formless. Flowers can be seen as the enlightenment from the plant species. Humans can connect with this concept in the hope that they too can become enlightened and reach that evolution of consciousness just as the flower did with the plant species. If humans can learn to remove the mental labels they place on objects and people and just feel the presence of things in nature, as they have come to when observing flowers, then possibly they can do the same with people too.

Tolle is not trying to instill new beliefs or values to his readers but to get his audience to simply awaken to this concept of enlightenment. That is, to awaken is to see one's own madness and dysfunction. He states that humans today "have become so entrenched in their beliefs (their minds) that they can no longer look beyond form". The ego is one's identification with form. Tolle describes how the ego and our inclination to the attachment of our egos causes this dysfunction and leads to anger, jealousy, unhappiness, suffering and even war. When we attach verbal and mental labels to other people, things, and situations, we end up casting an almost hypnotic spell upon ourselves. Humans begin to unconditionally believe whatever it is that one has attached a word to and this is what brings the shallow and lifeless feelings of reality to life. We become stuck in the gap between perception and the interpretation.

One of the most common ways we get stuck in this misconception of reality is by using the terms: me, my, mine, myself, and "I". This creates an illusory sense of self. These terms are the terms we use to identify ourselves with these labeled objects. This identification process starts in humans as early as a young childhood. When a child begins to recognize words, those turn into thoughts, and then the child begins to associate those words and thoughts of who he or she is. They then start to grasp those thoughts and begin to identify themselves with other "things" which in turn begins to develop their sense of mine and "I". As the child grows up he/she will continue to identify with objects and roles and begin to further define their sense of self as "me and my story". This "me" likes to base its form on experiences and things that happened "to me" in the past. The egoic mind is completely conditioned by the past-of content and structure. Life then begins to live through the "voice in the head". This is what keeps us unsatisfied. This voice constructs an ongoing internal monologue of mental madness. It constantly wants to identify with "things" (content) and can become consumed by this obsessive preoccupation with objects. Tolle suggests that when we as humans can no longer feel the life that we are, we are likely to try and fill up our life with things-our "my". This is a prime example of the ego taking over consciousness. The ego isn't wrong, it is just unconscious. We need to become aware of the ego and learn to stop connecting with this illusion of ownership and to let go of our attachment to things and our continual "wanting for more". Humans need to realize that no content will ever satisfy them as long as the egoic structure is in place. No matter what you get or have will ever keep you happy. There will always be "a looking" for some new content to replace the lack of sense of self that you feel within.

This leads us to body-identification. The body-identification is one of the most basic forms of ego but it is also one of the forms that is the easiest to transcend. This is done not by trying to convince yourself you are not the terms you have labeled yourself (beautiful, fat, strong, and weak) but becoming aware of the feeling of aliveness within your body or life energy. This body awareness not only grounds you to the present moment “but is a doorway out of the prison that is the ego”. This helps you to become less identified with your mind and allows one to move away from the form-identification toward the formless, or Being. Your ego arises when your sense of Beingness, of “I Am” (which is formless) becomes mixed up with form.

There are many different strategies that the ego takes to strengthen itself. Complaining, resentment, reactivity, holding grievances, and faultfinding are all examples of these strategies. These all strengthen the ego’s sense of boundary and separateness which it is dependent on for survival. Nothing strengthens the ego more than the feeling of being right (over someone else who is wrong). Humans seem to need to have a sense of superiority and make others feel wrong to get a stronger sense of self. Another example of this superiority is when we use association through others. Those who we feel are important. By “name dropping” the ego tries to increase its identity in a false sense of self. We also see the ego play roles. This is because the ego wants something from another and will play a role in order to have its needs met. Some examples of these roles are: the villain, the victim, the lover, the boss, the stay at home mother, the provider of the family, ect. All of these roles cause humans to lose their true sense of self and to start living in their notions of life functions instead. By living in function instead of in Presence can cause conscious suffering and a life full of unhappiness. One of the reasons it is so hard to not live in life functions is because of the constant mental chatter (voice in the head) that most people are under control of all day, every day. This type of thinking is involuntary and automatic and serves no purpose. And since the mind is conditioned by the past, you are forced to replay your past over and over again and again in you head. Some people are completely trapped in this negative egoic state. “Attention is absorbed in thinking” and therefore “they will never really see you or be listening to you”. How does this negative emotion affect our physical bodies? The voice of the ego is constantly disrupting the body’s natural state of well-being. The mind is what creates the body’s stress-the pain-body.

Tolle states that “it is because of human tendency to perpetuate old emotion, that almost everyone carries in his or her energy field an accumulation of old emotional pain” or what he refers to as “the pain-body”. The good news is that we can learn to break the habit of collecting and reliving old emotion by becoming aware and abstaining from mentally focusing on the past. When we can do this, our Presence then becomes our identity and not our thoughts and emotions. If one does not face the negative emotions of the past then it never completely disappears. Some people find negative emotions too difficult to cope with and those “stuck” emotions are then left in the cells of the body and can cause not only emotional pain but physical pain and illness as well. The pain-body then becomes a companion to your ego. This pain-body is an energy form that lives within most human beings, even in newborns, and is made up of negative emotional memory. This pain-body can be transferred from one person to another and its primary

purpose is survival. It renews itself by bringing on negative thinking which sequentially brings unhappiness. In most people the pain-body has an inactive and an active stage. When the pain-body is active it can be triggered by any event at any time. Thinking will become intensely negative and will feed incessantly on those negative thoughts. However, it can only feed on negative thoughts and not positive ones. It likes to feed on the thoughts of the lower energy field. The thoughts of the pain-body quickly grab control of your thinking and you become totally identified with this feeling of negativity. And at this point you unconsciously do not want to want to stop this train of thought. Your pain-body has become addicted to this unhappy state. Your pain-body will then feed on more drama. The pain-body will do whatever it can to feed itself by inflicting pain and negativity on others. Some people carry so much of this negativity that their pain-bodies never lie inactive. You can tell who these people are because you can sense their seething sense of anger just under their surface, just waiting for the next event to react to and explode on to another pain-body. Pain-bodies can never get enough fulfillment and therefore “magnify the need for enemies”. An example of this is road rage. Typically when an accident has occurred, it has happened because both drivers’ pain-bodies were active at the time. Their pain-bodies unconsciously wanted the accident to happen. These drivers became physically violent due to their pain-bodies needing to recharge and the pain-bodies found their sustenance through the accident and the negative emotions that came with it. There are different triggers that set off the pain-body and usually they extenuate from some kind of emotional pain from the past. One must recognize their triggers in order to sense when they are happening and once they do happen immediately recognize what they are and then “make the shift” to be able to enter that higher state of consciousness of being aware. When this happens you will still “hear the voice in the head” but will not react to it on instinct. You can start to become free of the identification with the pain-body by knowing when it becomes activated. This knowing is all that is needed to break your identification with the pain-body. But you have to make the choice to recognize this in yourself. Once this is the choice you make the pain-body can no longer renew itself through you and use your emotions to label you as whom you are.

But if we don’t use our ego then how does one figure out whom he/she is? Tolle explains that “when you become aware of your ego, it means you know who you are not. But it is knowing who you are not that the greatest obstacle to truly knowing yourself is removed.” When we begin to take the content out of our life, it is then that we stop identifying. We need to learn to stop minding (over thinking) what happens to us. We need to become aligned with what is- to not label things or events as good or bad but to let it be what it is--It is so. As humans we need to learn to understand that our ego is simply a “dysfunctional relationship with the present moment.” Once one has received a certain level of awareness, you can start to decide what kind of relationship you want to have with the present. It is in this relationship with the present that you find out who you are. When you decide to make peace with the present moment that is the end of the ego. The ego can not live in the present, only in the past and future. Tolle suggests asking yourself the question: What is my relationship with Life? According to him this question is a great way of unmasking the ego in you and bringing you into the state of Presence. Humans need to learn to live in the joy of just being. This is the only true path

to happiness. It emanates from the formless dimension within each one of us—from consciousness itself and is thus one with who we all are. “When we become aware, we are not only conscious of things but also conscious of being conscious.” Space consciousness frees us from depending on material things in this world. We can then be happy by beginning to experience beauty and the simplicity of life. When consciousness is no longer taken completely over by thinking, then it has the potential to become formless. This is inner space. One way to gain inner space is to become aware of your breathing. It only takes one breath to become aware of your inner space. Reason being—the breath has no form so it can easily bring space into your life because it forces you to become present immediately. This stops your mind from thinking and allows that space to open up and become free. This is your inner purpose—to awaken to consciousness—consciousness without thought.

In conclusion, Tolle has skillfully used this book to reveal exactly what has to happen to an individual to begin to release the ego, the tools that enable the continued practice of releasing the ego and pain-body, and how each one of us holds a little part of the solution of eliminating the unconsciousness of living life unaware in “mental madness”. He lays down a clear path to follow to attain a better way of life for a better world. Tolle suggests that to be ultimately happy we must make peace with the present moment or to be “One With Life”. We need to become aware that we do not live life but life lives us. We are not who our ego’s would like us to believe we are.

The good news is the ego is destined to dissolve and once Awareness begins, it never stops. There is nothing that ever happened in our past that can keep us from living in the present now. This concept is what Tolle tries to get his readers to accept. I personally have started on my own journey of Awareness and by reading this book I have definitely been even more enlightened. I have experienced many “Ah Ha!” moments and am trying to implement constant consciousness in living in the present daily. I have found many of Tolle’s theories to be consistent with my own life especially in regards to the pain-body. This book is one that I will definitely share with others who are looking for that spiritual transformation to a higher since of Awareness.

The only possible limitation to this book that I see is the fact that Tolle seems to intrinsically believe in the will-power and diligence of his audience to keep on his path of enlightenment after they finish reading the book. I personally think it will take a serious conscious effort, on the part of the reader, or person seeking Awareness, to keep this continual and focused attention to retraining the usual thoughts and patterns of Being, especially if the recommend tools are not resourced. As suggested in the book, one method that helps one succeed with the outlined path to Presence is practicing Yoga. Yoga sustains the success of this practice of Awareness by facilitating the union of like-minded individuals who want to come together to share different and successful approaches to discovering and maintaining Presence in life. Yoga helps ones willingness to join the and stay on their journey by sharing alternate methods and techniques to help one learn to live in the Present and accept the waves of life, and learn to truly be happy and enjoy the abundance an Aware life has to offer. Yoga, in turn, could therefore be viewed as one of the avenues for the evolution of humankind. A new earth.

