

THE BIG IDEAS

Good News

+ Bad news.

Your Consciousness

Heaven or hell?

Heaven and Earth

Start with consciousness.

The Ego

Identification is the issue.

“My”

My, my, my, my...

Role-Playing

You're NOT your roles.

Pain-Bodies

Undissolved pain.

Evolutionary Support

Life helps you grow.

Suffering

Embrace the growth.

Shadow

Check your projections.

Your Thoughts

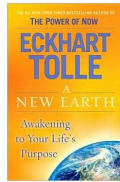
Choose your response!

One With Life

Secret to the art of living.

Enthusiasm

God is within!



A New Earth

Awakening to Your Life's Purpose

BY ECKHART TOLLE · PENGUIN © 2008 · 315 PAGES

“A new heaven’ is the emergence of a transformed state of human consciousness, and ‘a new earth’ is its reflection in the physical realm.”

~ Eckhart Tolle from *A New Earth*

There's a reason Oprah decided to team up with [Eckhart Tolle](#) to create an unprecedented 10-week course to teach the principles in *A New Earth* to hundreds of thousands of people: it's a remarkable book.

Tolle has a profound ability to take the complex ideas of spirituality and consciousness and boil them down into simple, powerful lessons easily grasped and applied to our lives.

I'm excited to share some of my favorite Big Ideas from his book but I'm barely going to scratch the surface of the depth of transformative ideas Tolle presents in this book.

If you're feelin' it, I recommend you take some time to curl up with this gem and dive deeper into understanding how we can transform our consciousness and create A New Earth.

First, let's start with some:

GOOD NEWS & BAD NEWS

“A significant portion of the earth's population will soon recognize, if they haven't already done so, that humanity is now faced with a stark choice: Evolve or die.”

Tolle starts *A New Earth* with some good news and some bad news.

We'll start with the bad news. We've inherited a collective dysfunction.

For the history of humanity, as Tolle bluntly states, we, as a collective society, have been acting like a criminally insane person—with “chronic paranoid delusions, a pathological propensity to commit murder and acts of extreme violence and cruelty...”

Yikes.

According to Tolle, the cause of this state is simple: “Fear, greed and the desire for power.”

The great traditions have named this dysfunction of the mind. Hinduism calls it *maya* which means “veil of delusion.”

Buddhism calls it *dukkha* which means “suffering, unsatisfactoriness, or just plain misery” and directly translated points to being stuck like a potter's wheel that screeches as it turns.

And, Christianity calls it “Sin” which, when stripped of all of it's cultural baggage and properly translated from its Greek origins, means “to miss the mark”—as in an archer missing the target.

Tolle's point is simple: we carry a lot of inherited cultural baggage.

The good news?

Those same traditions point to the “other” side of the dysfunction—Hindusim juxtaposes *maya*

*“This book is about you.
It will change your state
of consciousness or it will
be meaningless.”*

~ Eckhart Tolle

"How "spiritual" you are has nothing to do with what you believe but everything to do with your state of consciousness."

~ Eckhart Tolle

with *enlightenment*; Buddhism juxtaposes *dukkha* with *awakening* and Christianity points from *sin* to *salvation*.

The first step?

To recognize our own insanity. As Tolle advises: "To recognize one's own insanity is, of course, the arising of sanity, the beginning of healing and transcendence."

Can you see it? Can you recognize your own fear, greed and desire for power?

And can you see how this results in your own mini-wars within your own consciousness and in relationships with your family, your friends, your colleagues and your community?

Pause for a moment and check in with your own embodiment of our inherited insanity.

That's a powerful step toward creating a new earth!

YOUR STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

"How 'spiritual' you are has nothing to do with what you believe but everything to do with your state of consciousness. This, in turn, determines how you act in the world and interact with others."

Powerful.

Makes me think of my childhood. We went to church every Sunday. (I was raised Catholic.) I always found it extraordinarily odd that, after the service, my dad would be murmuring/yelling about how poorly everyone was driving on the way out of the parking lot. (Rest in peace, pops!! :)

Even as a young boy, that always seemed just a little off. :)

As Tolle says, what we *believe* means nothing.

How we act—which is determined by our consciousness—is what it's all about.

How about you?

How do you act?

It's not enough to have noble beliefs. We've gotta integrate them into our being so our consciousness shifts accordingly.

And, of course with a transformed consciousness our actions follow suit.

HEAVEN AND EARTH

Heaven and Earth. The path?

First, Tolle establishes the fact that "We need to understand here that heaven is not a location but refers to the inner realm of consciousness."

Then? "A new heaven' is the emergence of a transformed state of human consciousness, and 'a new earth' is its reflection in the physical realm."

Brilliant.

...

So, how do we transform our consciousness?

We need to start by understanding what's getting in the way.

THE EGO

"Ego is no more than this: identification with form, which primarily means thought forms. If evil

"We need to understand here that heaven is not a location but refers to the inner realm of consciousness."

~ Eckhart Tolle

"There are people who have renounced all possessions who have a bigger ego than some millionaires."

~ Eckhart Tolle

has any reality—and it has a relative, not an absolute, reality—this is also its definition: complete identification with form—physical forms, thought forms, emotional forms. This results in a total unawareness of my connectedness with the whole, my intrinsic oneness with the Source. This forgetfulness is original sin, suffering, delusion. When this delusion of utter separateness underlies and governs what I think, say, and do, what kind of world do I create? To find the answer to this, observe how humans relate to each other, read a history book, or watch the news on television tonight."

Wow.

That's definitely worth a slow re-read.

The basic idea is this: To the extent we are exclusively identified with our thoughts (or any other "relative" form), we are separate from Source. When we are separate from Source, we're in trouble. All the sudden we fail to see the interconnectedness of each of us and everything in our world. We are in *maya, dukkha, sin*. And from that place, we are insane. We do bad things.

You want to see what that looks like manifest?

As Tolle tells us, watch the news tonight. Or log on to CNN. (I'm ALWAYS *blown away* by the insanity of their home page—so and so killed this person, this bomb went off here, etc., etc., etc.)

"MY"

"The reason why such acute suffering occurs is concealed in the words "my."

"My."

My toy. My car. My house. My spouse. My country. My life. My, my, my.

S.N. Goenka, the teacher who led the silent 10-day Vipassana meditation class I took, had a hilarious story about "my." Imagine someone else's watch got stolen. Someone else's car broke down en route to an important meeting. Someone else's order was messed up at the restaurant. Someone else's spouse cheated on them. Unfortunate, but not *that* big of a deal for you, right?

Alright.

Now imagine this: "My watch was stolen." "My car broke down." "My order was messed up at the restaurant." "My spouse cheated on me."

Takes on a whole new meaning when we add the "My," doesn't it!?! :))

It's time to quit taking ourselves quite so seriously. Let's witness our reactions to things, develop the ability to see ourselves as an actor in this game of life and loosen our grip on all things "my." :))

ROLE-PLAYING

"When you are completely identified with a role, you confuse a pattern of behavior with who you are, and you take yourself very seriously."

Newsflash: we are NOT the roles we play in our lives.

Step back. (Take a deep breath.)

Realize you are much bigger than any *one* role you play. Lighten up. Laugh. Connect to Source.

PAIN-BODIES

"Because of the human tendency to perpetuate old emotion, almost everyone carries in his or her energy field an accumulation of old emotional pain, which I call 'the pain-body.'"

Pain-bodies.

"Usually people are completely unaware of the roles they play. They are those roles."

~ Eckhart Tolle

"Nothing ever happened in the past that can prevent you from being present now; and if the past cannot prevent you from being present now, what power does it have?"

~ Eckhart Tolle

"When you want to arrive at your goal more than you want to be doing what you are doing, you become stressed."

~ Eckhart Tolle

"The shadow disguises itself in our projections, when we react intensely to a trait in others that we fail to see in ourselves."

~ Connie Zweig from *Romancing the Shadow*

A fascinating concept Tolle presents in detail throughout the book.

In short: "Any negative emotion that is not fully faced and seen for what it is in the moment it arises does not completely dissolve. It leaves behind a remnant."

That remnant shows up in your "pain-body." It's that energy that you can almost *feel* from five feet away when you're near someone who's suffering.

The key to dissolving it? Accept what is.

Become whole as you realize that your pain and your challenges are simply:

EVOLUTIONARY SUPPORT

"Life will give you whatever experience is most helpful for the evolution of your consciousness. How do you know this is the experience you need? Because this is the experience you are having at this moment."

I love that. :)

Reminds me of [Byron Katie](#). She says: "How do I know that the wind should blow? It's blowing!"

She adds: "I realized that it's insane to oppose it. When I argue with reality, I lose—but only 100% of the time."

Hah.

Guess what? What's happening is happening. We can fight it or we can embrace the opportunity to grow with it.

It's *always* our call.

SUFFERING

"One of the ego's many erroneous assumptions, one of its many deluded thoughts is 'I should not have to suffer.' ... That thought itself lies at the root of suffering. Suffering has a noble purpose: the evolution of consciousness and the burning up of ego."

Brilliant.

How do you respond to your suffering?

Do you say to yourself that it "shouldn't" be happening?

Not a very empowering position to take, eh?

What if we could learn to embrace our suffering as a process serving our enlightenment?

Let's embrace [Rumi](#)'s wisdom: "This discipline and rough treatment are a furnace to extract the silver from the dross. This testing purifies the gold by boiling the scum away."

And, as we embrace the noble purpose of suffering in the process of polishing our souls let's remember another gem from Rumi: "If you are irritated by every rub, how will you be polished?"

SHADOW

"The particular egoic patterns that you react to most strongly in others and misperceive as their identity tend to be the same patterns that are also in you, but that you are unable or unwilling to detect within yourself."

This idea that what we find most annoying in others is really an indicator of what we find (unconsciously) most annoying in ourselves is a powerful one.

"If you think you are so enlightened, go and spend a week with your parents."

~ Ram Dass

Jung called it our "shadow" and said: *"Unfortunately there can be no doubt that man is, on the whole, less good than he imagines himself or wants to be. Everyone carries a Shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. If an inferiority is conscious, one always has a chance to correct it. Furthermore, it is constantly in contact with other interests, so that it is continually subjected to modifications. But if it is repressed and isolated from consciousness, it never gets corrected and is liable to burst forth suddenly in a moment of unawareness. At all events, it forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions."*

The fastest way to identify our shadow?

Take a look at what bothers you in other people.

Many teachers, like relationship experts [Gay & Katie Hendricks](#), call this "projecting." We *project* our own issues onto others—we focus on the most unappealing aspects of another's personality that *mirror* our own challenges.

You annoyed when people are impatient? Guess what? Look at how you show up as an impatient jerk in your life more often than you'd like to admit and your reaction to "impatience" may just dissolve.

You annoyed when people are inauthentic? Are greedy? Are self-obsessed?

Same thing. Look within. And watch your reactions dissolve.

This is a *really* powerful exercise.

Try it out. The next time you're upset, pause for a moment. Take a deep breath. (Then another one. :)

Identify what it is you're finding frustrating in the other person. Ask yourself, "How am I that?!" And see how this is really just an issue YOU need to address in your life!!

Some more thoughts on shadow from Carl Jung: *"To confront a person with their own shadow is to show them their own light."*

And: *"One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious."*

"The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation but your thoughts about the situation."

~ Eckhart Tolle

"Don't seek the truth. Just cease to cherish opinions."

~ Zen saying

YOUR THOUGHTS

"If there is nothing you can do, face what is and say, 'Well, right now, this is how it is. I can either accept it, or make myself miserable.' The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation but your thoughts about the situation. Be aware of the thoughts you are thinking. Separate them from the situation, which is always neutral, which always is as it is."

Another truth that's echoed across cultures and across millennia.

From [Epictetus](#) in his *Enchiridion*: *"We cannot choose our external circumstances, but we can always choose how we respond to them."*

To Shakespeare in *Hamlet*: *"There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."*

To [Viktor Frankl](#) in *Man's Search for Meaning*: *"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing; the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."*

Are you a victim to your circumstances, or do you realize that you have the power (always!) to choose how you respond to a situation?!?

"Love and do what you will"

~ St. Augustine

ONE WITH LIFE

“There are three words that convey the secret of the art of living, the secret of all success and happiness: One With Life.”

So true...

The essence of Tolle’s work can certainly be distilled into these three words: “One With Life.”

Is there something you’re resisting right now that you can embrace a little more?

ENTHUSIASM

Enthusiasm come from the Greek “*enthousiazein* [that] means ‘to be possessed by a god.’ With enthusiasm you will find that you don’t have to do it all by yourself. In fact, there is nothing of significance you *can* do by yourself. Sustained enthusiasm brings into existence a wave of creative energy, and all you have to do is ride the wave.”

I *absolutely* love that.

May we be One With Life and ride the wave of the God dancing within as we create heaven on A New Earth,

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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you’ll probably like...

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About the Author of “A New Earth”

ECKHART TOLLE



Spiritual Teacher and author was born in Germany and educated at the Universities of London and Cambridge. At the age of twenty-nine a profound inner transformation radically changed the course of his life. The next few years were devoted to understanding, integrating and deepening that transformation, which marked the beginning of an intense inward journey. Later, he began to work in London with individuals and small groups as a counselor and spiritual teacher. Since 1995 he has lived in Vancouver, Canada. Eckhart Tolle is the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestseller *The Power of Now* (translated into 33 languages) and the highly acclaimed follow-up *A New Earth*, which are widely regarded as two of the most influential spiritual books of our time. (from [EckhartTolle.com](#) where you can learn more about Eckhart and his teachings)

About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at [brianjohnson.me](#).