12. Your 4 Primary Motivations

The heart of what I am trying to convey in the **Ultimate Journey** is that you have a choice about the motivations from which you will live—and your choice will have dramatic effects on your life and the world you experience. Many people make their choices unconsciously, but doing so is problematic, especially as one gets older.

There are, of course, a thousand things we are motivated to do—eat, sleep, create art, make love, make war, watch movies, make money, buy clothes, serve those in need, build houses, talk to friends, shop, travel, write books, fight, argue, engage in social media, seek fame, run for office, and on and on. We spend a great deal of the time of our lives deciding which of these to do, and when.

Beneath and behind all those options, however, are the 4 motivations that direct our attention and provide the energy to do what we choose to do. Said a different way, there are 4 levels from which motivations arise, 4 sources within us that provide the energy to act into life. Each human life is lived from a mixture of motivations from these 4 levels.

To a surprising degree, these motivations remain unclear and mostly unconscious to many, but it is possible to make them more conscious. By doing so, you will know yourself much better—who you are and why you do the things you do. Then, of central importance, you will be able to make conscious decisions about how you will live and what you will live for.

The 4 Motivations:

1. **Let your basic urges and desires** determine your behavior, the basic drives for food, shelter, sex, pleasure, comfort, power, and control. (These are the drives and instincts Freud called the *id*.) To follow this motivation, you simply fulfill as many of your instinctual urges and desires as you can until you are stopped, either by warnings or actions, by those who have more power.

2. **Try to live by the guidelines and directions you were given while growing up**, the rules and regulations into which you were enculturated. (The Freudian *superego*.) In modern cultures, some people replace the cultural rules they were given with those of a new group they join, and then try to follow the rules and guidance of the important people in the new group. Unless this is done with a great deal of conscious awareness, however, this too is the *superego*.

3. **Use your ego to find the best balance between the above two motivations**. (Freud called this the "I," the individual sense of a separate self, but a fancy translation of his German into English gave us the misunderstood and often maligned

term *ego*.) The first two motivations above are shared with all higher animals, and they are always present in us, whether we are conscious of them or not. But these two forces are often in conflict; in fact, the main reasons for cultural systems (in humans as well as animals), are to curb the basic drives enough for the pack or the tribe to live together in relative peace, and to cooperate to fulfill common goals.

Having an "I" that is aware of itself as separate, an ego that can stand back and make considered choices. does not seem to be present in most animals, at least to the degree humans have it (perhaps a few animals do, but that is a different discussion). This third alternative, then, assumes the existence of a separate "I" or ego that can weigh the relative importance of the demands of the first two motivations and create a life trajectory that involves choices between many conflicting urges and demands.

Having an ego is a marvelous thing—we would not be able to have a human life without it. But the ultimate goal of an ego is to maximize the number of good things one can get for oneself. It is, therefore, "self-centered" by definition.

An ego can be enculturated to get what it wants in various ways, of course, so your ego might feel that being nice is important, that taking care of family and friends is what you should do, that serving the tribe or nation is honorable, that being a moral person is a good thing. Teaching individuals to do some of these things is the point of conventional morality, and each of us has been trained to accept a certain set of rules and guidelines—the system of conventional morality into which we were raised. But, in the end, the ego follows conventional morality to get what it wants; it has simply learned that some things are best achieved through the social forms of the tribe. Ultimately, then, following conventional morality is about fulfilling your personal goals and desires.

4. **Decide there is more to who you are than your *id*, *ego*, and *superego* and use your intuition, imagination, and deeper knowing to get in touch with universal meanings, values, and virtues**. All the world's great wisdom traditions have said there is another dimension beyond conventional morality, and all provide ways for individuals to get in touch with that wisdom. Through opening to universal wisdom, a person can discover deeper meanings, intentions, directions, and purposes for life. Following this path, it is possible to move into harmony with the Tao, the Buddha within, or God, and thereby open into compassion, love, peace, joy, and even bliss.

A Normal Life

The wisdom traditions do not suggest the first three motivations are unimportant; on the contrary, they tell us these forces are always influencing our lives and any attempt

to ignore or wish them away will not work. Instead of denying these motivational levels, the traditions created moral systems to guide the actions of the tribe, the community, the cultures within which humans have lived. Each of the great traditions developed moral systems to help people live together in communities, providing guidelines that restrained and molded the motivations so the group could live together as well as possible.

Many cultures have functioned successfully for long periods of time within these moral orders, and most people through history have lived according to the system they were given—without becoming very conscious of their motivations. Within these cultural systems, many people have had relatively normal lives.

The primary wisdom traditions within which I was raised were the Christian, Jewish, and ancient Greek (its influence is still powerful in Europe and America), but a large percentage of the people through history were given a Confucian, Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Taoist, or Sikh value and guidance system. Earlier in human history, many grew up within shamanic, tribal, or indigenous wisdom traditions (such as the sophisticated cultures of the Cherokee, Sioux, Navajo, and Incas in early America, the elaborate Celtic and Norse traditions in Europe, the artistically refined Shinto tradition in Japan, and the many and varied Africa tribal traditions beginning with the environmentally attuned San people at least 20,000 years ago). Some people still live within shamanic and tribal traditions today, but the number is not great. The crucial point is that anyone who grew up within a culture that came from one or more of these traditions absorbed most of their values and meanings from them, whether they were conscious of doing so or not.

Taken together, these ten wisdom traditions have provided the basic framework within which most people have lived. They still do. Crucially, just because a person is not religious does not mean they didn’t absorb, at a deep level, one or more of these traditions. Countless feelings we have about how to behave, what to like and dislike, what is good and bad, what to eat and not eat, what is worthwhile to do, and on and on, are enculturated into us. We might rebel against some of the rules we are given, and our *id* urges often do cause us to rebel, but many feelings in us come from the wisdom traditions in which we were raised, and following these enculturated feelings and guidelines has provided many people a fairly happy, normal life.

In the modern world, however, at least in the fragmented, polarized, digitized, short-attention-span modern cultures, it is increasingly important to understand one’s own motivations and to make choices more consciously. Fortunately, a lot of wise men and women through the ages have done just that, going far beyond enculturated systems and conventional morality, and they provided guidance for anyone who wishes to

follow in their footsteps. Each marked a trail we can follow to a more conscious, fulfilling, and meaningful life.

The 4th Way as A Free Choice

To say again: Many people throughout history have lived fairly normal lives, fitting into their respective cultures while following the conventional morality they were given. This path usually brings a mixture of joys and sorrows, gains and losses, ups and downs. It can be a good life. Many have not considered any other possibility, and most people today who have a high-functioning normal life will not be interested in the 4th path, at least until difficulties arise.

In this broad framework, the first role the wisdom traditions have played for thousands of years is providing value and meaning systems to create the foundations for the world's cultures. These systems are, of course, the world's religions, which have splintered into thousands of branches through the centuries, sometimes in healthy directions, sometimes not so healthy.

The traditions, however, have had another crucial role, for normal lives within any of these systems are carried out by an ego, and the ego's motivation is to fulfill as many basic drives and desires as possible—within the framework of the enculturation it was given. The problem is, trying to balance and control many conflicting instinctive impulses while being bombarded by the superego's perfectionist orders is a never-ending struggle. And it is often not much fun—or even very satisfying. That is why Freud believed that the highest possibility of a normal life was quite limited. He tried to reassure one patient, however, by saying that "much has been gained if we succeed in turning your hysterical misery into common unhappiness."[1]

Thus, if a person is to find something more in life, it is necessary to look beyond Freud and toward the wisdom traditions, which definitely offer much more. Each one of them taught that the 4th path is open to anyone at any time. Anyone who feels a deep emptiness in their life; who becomes dissatisfied with the world into which they were enculturated or feels a need to go beyond the structure they were given; for anyone who viscerally feels the lyrics of the old song, "Is That All There Is?"—the wisdom traditions offer guidance for a journey far beyond the ego.

There are, of course, significant differences between the teachings of the traditions. And, besides those differences, each tradition has at times been corrupted and abused by people who were motivated by selfish aims. Yet, at their core, all the traditions have said that there is a path to a truly fulfilling life. Every one of the wisdom traditions has pointed to a Source of deeper knowledge, a dimension beyond basic drives, material satisfactions, and ego ambitions to which we can turn if we wish to

find what Aristotle called a flourishing life. Importantly, this advice is true for those living in well-functioning societies as well as those that are broken.

Evelyn Underhill, one of my favorite guides, captures the higher alternative in the following passage, in which she says the most highly developed branches of the human family have in common one characteristic:

"They tend to produce—sporadically it is true, and often in the teeth of adverse external circumstances—a curious and definite type of personality: a type which refuses to be satisfied with that which other men call experience, and is inclined, in the words of its enemies, to 'deny the world in order that it might find reality.'

"Their one passion appears to be the prosecution of a certain spiritual and intangible quest: the finding of a "way out" or a "way back" to some desirable state in which alone they can satisfy their craving for absolute truth."

We meet these persons in the east and the west; in the ancient, mediaeval, and modern worlds.

> Their one passion appears to be finding a 'way out' or a 'way back' to a state which alone can satisfy their craving for absolute truth.[2]

This quest, for them, constitutes the meaning of life.

Her point is that, in every culture, a few individuals have realized that they would not be able to satisfy their deepest longings, would never get what they truly wanted, by following the normal patterns. Even in cultures that were functioning well, a significant number through the centuries have broken away from living a normal life. Looking at the lives of all the great spiritual figures, each left the normal world and set off on a journey to find a personal connection to the Source.

Both Jesus and the Buddha left their old lives completely behind around the age of thirty. We have no reason to believe that Jesus did not have a good home and community, and the Buddha was raised with every privilege it is possible to imagine. Yet both left their old lives and encouraged us to follow them in that choice. Similarly, when Muhammed was nearly forty he began spending many hours alone in prayer, and in a fairly short time left his old life behind. These three figures epitomize the free choice of the 4th path, and this is precisely why they have become the most widely known spiritual figures in human history, and symbols for how best to live.

Every culture has similar images. In India, for thousands of years the 4th path has been woven into the culture. One common image is that a person takes up the life of a householder first, raises a family, then enters the forest as a renunciate and seeks a deep connection to the Source. Of course, like the Buddha, many through the ages did

not wait that long, setting off from home to become sannyasins (ascetics who renounced the world) at an earlier age. (Becoming a renunciate is still very common in India today. On a visit twenty years ago, I asked our guide to estimate the number of sannyasins at that time, and he said there is no way to count, but his guess would be at least ten million.)

In Buddhist countries through the centuries, many men and women have left home and taken up residence in practice communities, committing to a highly disciplined life. Similarly, in the West for almost two thousand years, millions of men and women have gone to the desert or entered monasteries and convents, renouncing the world through elaborate ceremonies, committing their lives to a spiritual search. In the cultures of earlier peoples, the shaman or healer was felt to be called to leave normal life, endure an ordeal, open into a connection to the larger world, and come back and serve as a guide for the tribe in relation to the "Unseen" dimension.

The core teachings of Islam are also completely aligned with the 4th way. For instance, a frequent admonition in the tradition is, "Die before you die," meaning to die to your personal urges, desires, drives, and ambitions so you can open into a connection with ***that*** which is greater than your small self. The poet Rumi, who lived in the Persian branch of Islamic society in the 13th century (and who, in a strange twist of fate, has been the best-selling poet in the English language for the last fifty years), wrote poem after poem about the Source to which we should look for guidance. Just one example:

> You say you see my mouth, ears, eyes, nose
> —they are not mine.
> I am the life of life.
> I am that cat, this stone,
> no one.
> I have thrown duality away like an old dishrag,
> I see and know all times and worlds,
> As one, one, always one.
>
> So what do I have to do,
> to get you to admit who is speaking?
> Admit it and change everything!
> This is your own voice,
> echoing off the walls of God.[3]

The Universal Confirmation of the 4th Path

Throughout history, a certain number of people have dropped out of settled society and set off in search of something more than the normal life to which they had been

enculturated. In the modern world, in which the traditional approaches seem less appealing to many, numerous examples of the spontaneous emergence of the 4th way have appeared. Many of the Romantics of the late 18th and 19th centuries were trying to find their way to the 4th path, as were the beatniks in the 50s and the flower children of the 60s and 70s. Unfortunately, without wise guidance, just dropping out does not often lead to much personal or spiritual progress. In a number of cases, it has led to very unhappy lives.

This longing for something more resurfaces in every culture, however. A modern way of thinking about it has been presented by Carl Jung, Helen Luke, Joseph Campbell, Maureen Murdock, and many others as the hero's or heroine's journey. What they are offering, however, is just a new way to think about a journey that is as old as humanity itself, for each of these modern guides uses the wisdom traditions as the basis for their guidance. And today, a significant number of people feel called to the same search.

Finding the right path is not easy, however, and it is somewhat different for each person. But those who feel called to find something more can always turn to the wisdom traditions, or to modern images of the journey, for guidance. And both ancient and modern approaches agree that deep peace, joy, bliss, and the highest experience of love and compassion will only be found by going beyond the first three motivations —beyond biological drives, enculturated rules, and ego ambitions—and bringing one's life into harmony with the Source (called by whatever name you prefer).

Even for those who have led a fairly normal life, as the years pass rapidly by, something begins to stir in a significant number. Friends and loved ones get sick and die. A person you thought you loved is no longer interesting to you, or you no longer interest them, and the relationship becomes increasingly uncomfortable. Friends and family members violate values you thought they should follow, and you feel betrayed. You violate the moral code you were given—giving in to a strong desire or a momentary rationalization—and feel bad about yourself, sometimes depressingly bad. You have a serious accident or illness, lose a job or have a financial setback, or lose a loved one. Gradually, as the losses mount, you begin to realize that following the script you were given isn't working very well anymore.

Which leads to a life crisis. Several times in life most of us are presented with a choice of the direction we will take. Each time we are brought back to the 4 primary choices. We can:

1) Redouble our efforts to fulfill as many of our base desires and urges as possible, giving the *id* as much room to run as the power structure around us will allow.

2) Recommit to the model for a successful life we were given by our culture, trying ever harder to fulfill ourselves through the *superego* guidelines we were taught.

3) Adjust our *ego* goals and ambitions to fit what we have learned, but then re-empower the ego to "go for the gold," to fulfill as many ego images as it can before we die.

4) As we get older, though, the problem with each of these three approaches, or with a mixture of them, is that losses and failures are always accumulating, and this often leads to a downward spiral of disappointment, bitterness, and resentment that life is not bringing what we had hoped. This, in turn, can lead to alcohol abuse, drug addiction, escapism of various kinds, needy relationships with friends and family, loneliness, despair, and even suicide.

But rather than continue on this downward spiral, the 4th path is always there—waiting for us. We can, at any time, turn toward the spiritual path the wisdom traditions have perennially offered, or to the more modern version of the same thing called the hero's or heroine's journey. We can begin working to release our self-centered desires and ambitions and gradually open into connection with something greater than our personal ego life. In short, we can commit to moving into harmony with that which is greater than our self-centered, individual self.

If, at any point in your life, you choose the 4th path, all the wisdom traditions offer practices and techniques to loosen the grip of your biological urges, enculturated rules, and ego ambitions. They all offer ways of opening to receive guidance from the still small voice, the Numinous, the Absolute, the Deathless, the Mystery, the Unseen Order, the Great Spirit, the Higher Self, the Buddha within, the Tao, or God.

Whatever name you use for the Source of deeper wisdom, if the traditions are correct, you will never experience the highest fruits of which they speak unless you find your way into harmony with this Source. Without a deep, personal connection with "something" beyond the first three levels, your life will be lived solely from your biological drives, enculturated guidelines, or as a narcissistic ego venture that will never provide ultimate fulfillment.

The *Tao Te Ching,* first recorded in written form in China 2500 years ago, captures the highest possibility beautifully:

> Returning to the source is serenity.
> If you don't realize the source,
> you stumble in confusion and sorrow.
> When you realize where you come from,
> you naturally become tolerant, disinterested, amused,

kindhearted as a grandmother,
dignified as a king.
Immersed in the wonder of the Tao,
you can deal with whatever life brings,
and when death comes, you are ready.[4]

All Rivers Lead to the Same Ocean

This universal message has been conveyed by all the great teachers of humanity. The core Confucian idea was that we should learn to live with kindness, goodness, courtesy, compassion, humaneness, and an attitude of benevolence and care toward others. Developing these traits, however, required dedication, practice, and self-awareness. For instance, Confucius said, "A wise man "is troubled by his own lack of ability," but need not be concerned with "the failure of others to appreciate him."[5] His work, instead, is to "help others to realize what is good in them."[6] Bringing this way of living into fruition requires great practice and a high degree of consciousness. Yet, if only one person lives in this way, it can have a powerful impact, for as he quoted the *Book of Poetry*, "What needs no display is virtue. … the superior man being sincere and reverential, the whole world is conducted to a state of happy tranquility."[7]

For Confucius, the ultimate goal was to perfect oneself, to become a *jen*, his image for a truly good person. Confucius was very focused on how people could best live together in society; he was more focused on peoples' lives in the world than most of the wisdom teachers. But he knew the only way to have a fulfilling life was bringing oneself into harmony with the "Way of Heaven," with the Tao. One practice for achieving this was the Confucian version of the Golden Rule: "Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire,"[8] and "return justice for injustice and good for good."[9]

Although the virtues and values that have been emphasized by the traditions vary considerably, the differences have mostly to do with the needs of the particular time and place in which they are being taught. At their core, the messages are remarkably similar. Consider:

Hinduism: This is the sum of duty; Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.

Buddhism: Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find harmful.

Christianity: All things whatsoever ye would that [others] should do to you, do ye even so to them.

Islam: No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.

Judaism: What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the entire law; all the rest is commentary.

Taoism: Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain and your neighbor's loss as your own loss.

Zoroastrianism: That nature alone is good which refrains from doing unto another whatsoever is not good for itself.

Given the incredible similarity of these injunctions, it is hard to believe they did not come from a common Source, especially since there is little chance they could have been passed to each culture through normal channels at the time they were first articulated.

The Buddha was in many ways the opposite of Confucius: Rather than trying to improve his society and teaching people how to live in it, he turned away from the culture in which he was raised and spent his life modeling renunciation of the everyday world (the Great Renunciation), and the value of following him into a life away from it (the Great Departure). The goal he offered was to go beyond all motivations associated with the id, ego, and superego levels, so as to enter Nirvana.

Nirvana is a very confusing term today—and probably has been for most of those who heard it in Buddhist teachings through the centuries. Part of the confusion stems from the fact that the Buddha was reluctant to talk about what he meant by that word, and also because he borrowed it from Hinduism, used it with people who were steeped in the Hindu understanding of it, but was using the term in a somewhat different way than they understood it. So, we continue to struggle with what he meant by Nirvana to this day. (I have read and heard various Buddhists arguing about what Nirvana is and means, sometimes heatedly.)

Still, trying to understand this word is important if one is to gain any value from Buddhist teachings. A modern dictionary says Nirvana is "a transcendent state in which there is neither suffering, desire, nor sense of self, and the subject is released from the effects of karma and the cycle of death and rebirth." Through the centuries, various Buddhist teachers have used different words to convey a sense of it, saying Nirvana is "permanent, stable, imperishable, immovable, ageless, deathless, unborn, unbecome … that is the real Truth, and the supreme Reality; that it is the Good, the supreme goal and the one and only consummation of our life."[10] And as quoted before, the Buddhist path "aims to lead the practitioner … to the same sorrowless and

stainless bliss of Nibbāna that the Buddha himself attained on the night of his enlightenment."[11]

The relevance of all these definitions is to make vivid that Buddhism, like all the other traditions, offers a goal for human life that is quite different from a normal life. Like all the others, the Buddhist path requires going beyond normal urges and desires, and it requires commitment, dedication, and a willingness to follow specific guidance. In fact, the Buddha insisted that those who followed him had to adhere to the guidelines he established, such as the Eight-fold path and the moral precepts he articulated. It was only by discipline, following the guidelines, and acquiring hard-won self-knowledge that a person could discover the Buddha within, open into the Absolute, or become one with Buddha-nature—and thereby attain Nirvana.

Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism shaped the lives of billions of people over thousands of years in Asia. They still do. Although the imposition of a materialistic Marxist ideology in China beginning around seventy years ago dramatically affected the extent of their influence, the reemergence of an improving life for the Chinese after the devastation of the Mao years has, to a great extent, been the result of the gradual reintroduction of many of the ancient values, especially the Confucian ones (beginning with Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping about fifty years ago).

Deeply ingrained cultural values have a tendency to re-emerge, even as they shift and change. And getting rid of a cultural tradition and replacing it with a system not grounded in one of the wisdom traditions has never been successfully accomplished. All such attempts have, in fact, had serious ill effects. Just look at the horrific examples of the excesses of the French Revolution, the gulags of Stalin, the pogroms and death camps of the Nazis, and the imprisonment and murder of millions by Mao Zedong (one estimate is that from 1958 to 1962, Mao's "Great Leap Forward" resulted in the deaths of up to 45 million people). Anyone believing the wisdom traditions can be easily replaced must deal with this history and provide convincing evidence that their ego ideas will actually work in the real world before asking others to risk their lives and well-being on ego-devised plans.

More Recent Versions of The Key Point

As mentioned before, Ralph Waldo Emerson explored the 4th path at a profound level and wrote eloquently about what he had discovered. Although he seems to have had a good early life, he nonetheless broke from his tradition and became one of the greatest American philosophers, in the process giving rise to the Transcendentalist movement. (This tradition did not take shape out of thin air, of course, but is a synthesis of Christian, Hindu, and native American spiritual wisdom.) For me, it could

be included with the ten primary traditions discussed above, as could the other 19th century addition to world religions, Baha'i. But neither has, to date, had the historical reach or impact as the ten core traditions. But both have the same message. Listen to Emerson:

For all things proceed out of this same spirit, which is differently named love, justice, temperance… just as the ocean receives different names on the several shores it washes. All things proceed out of this same spirit, and all things conspire with it. Whilst a man seeks good ends, he is strong by the whole strength of Nature.[12]

Emerson talked often about the Source of wisdom:

> What is the aboriginal Self on which a universal reliance may be grounded?... This inquiry leads us to that source—at once the essence of genius, of virtue, of life… In that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin. For the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how, in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, but one with them, and proceeds obviously from the same source whence their life and being proceed… Here are the lungs of inspiration which giveth man wisdom… Here is the fountain of action and of thought. Here is the inspiration which giveth man wisdom.[13]

For Emerson, this Source is available to each of us at all times:

> "We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us organs of its activity and receivers of its truth. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams.[14]
>
> "The moment the mind opens and reveals the laws which traverse the universe, and makes things what they are, then the great world shrinks at once into a mere illustration and fable.[15]

It is worth dwelling on that last line for a moment: "The moment the mind opens," then the outer world "shrinks into a mere illustration and fable." Mystics have reported for thousands of years that the outer world, the everyday world, is but an illusion. The Buddha said:

> Regard this phantom world
> As a star at dawn, a bubble in a stream
> A flash of lightening in a summer cloud
> A flickering lamp—a phantom—and a dream.[16]

To me, this does not mean we do not take the everyday world seriously, but that we recognize there is another dimension to existence that we must also take seriously. This is what Emerson is advising. When we learn to open to this Source of wisdom:

A sweet and overpowering beauty appears to man when his heart and mind open to the sentiment of virtue. He learns that his being is without bound; that to the good, to the perfect he is born, no matter how much he might now lie in evil and weakness. That which he venerates is his own, though he has not realized it yet.[17]

With this advice, Emerson is following in the footsteps of Aristotle, and so many others, who believed the key to a good life is to develop in ourselves the universal virtues. (For Aristotle, these virtues were grounded in a Final Cause, and each life had a teleology, a force guiding it in the direction of ultimate flourishing. This could only be realized, however, by practicing the virtues.)

The especially encouraging idea Emerson has given me, put into modern words, is this: No matter how far I seem from the highest possibilities, they are there, always available, waiting for me to open into at any moment. Crucially for my rational mind, no one has ever produced one shred of evidence that this is not true, that this other dimension is not there, waiting for me to recognize, pay attention to, and gain guidance from for my life.

Albert Schweitzer, another of those brilliant souls in the modern world who found his way to the 4th path, captures beautifully the importance of, as well as a method for, accessing this deeper level of reality:

> You know of the disease in Central Africa called 'sleeping sickness.' … There also exists a sleeping sickness of the soul. Its most dangerous aspect is that one is unaware [of having it]. That is why you have to be careful ... You should realize that your soul… suffers if you live superficially. People need times in which to concentrate, when they can search their inmost selves. It is tragic that most men have not achieved this feeling of self-awareness. And finally, when they hear the inner voice they do not want to listen anymore. They carry on as before so as not to be constantly reminded of what they have lost. But as for you, resolve to keep a quiet time ... Then your souls can speak to you without being drowned out by the hustle and bustle of everyday life.[18]

I could, of course, give many more examples, but I will provide only one more: Baha'is believe that the Source periodically reveals itself to humanity in order to transform the character of humankind and to develop, within those who respond, moral and spiritual qualities.

The key point of all these citations is simply this: The wisdom traditions have been central to the organization of normal human cultures for thousands of years, but beyond that, each has emphasized that the only way to a fulfilling, complete life is to go beyond normal and enter the 4th path with determination and commitment.

Returning To Your Critical Choice

Most people throughout history have followed the path they were given. Most still do. If your life is going reasonably well, you can continue on with a normal life for a time, living within the conventional values of your group. But if your life is not going well, if cracks are showing in your worldview, if living within your current framework is no longer working very well, then you have a fundamental choice to make: Will you begin to go beyond survival instincts, enculturated values, and ego motivations and try to get in touch with deeper values, meanings, virtues, wisdom, love, compassion, and a path toward harmony with that which is greater than your ego self?

Freud, Marx, and a few other thinkers have argued that there is nothing beyond the material world and that life, in the end, is random and meaningless. This view leads to a world of raw power, narcissism, and nihilism. Of those choosing this path, I believe most are doing so without an understanding of what it means for their lives or for the world they are creating.

The other option is offered by the world's wisdom traditions, all of which say that there is an Unseen Order, and that it is the source of meanings, values, and guidance for how to live. They tell us the only way to an ultimately fulfilling life is to bring ourselves into harmony with this larger dimension.

If you choose this 4th way, you must come to "Know Thyself," as Socrates said long ago. One good approach to knowing yourself is to look at your motivations; to make a dedicated effort to discern how much each of the 4 motivations is affecting you.

I have never met anyone in whom the first three motivations were not active. I have met a number of people who were not conscious of how much they were being controlled by them, but that is a totally different matter. So, a good place to start is to take an honest look at yourself: 1) try to discern how much your basic cravings for comfort, sex, pleasure, and the rest are motivating you; 2) look carefully at how much you are governed by the rules and values into which you were enculturated; 3) then explore how your ego is organizing your life to get as many good things for you as possible.

Once you have a firm grasp on these motivations and how they are affecting you, you can then turn to a consideration of how much time, energy, and attention you will give

to finding a connection to the Source—to finding the higher values, meanings, and guidance for living that the wisdom traditions suggest is always there and available.

Having taken a clear snapshot of where you are now, you will be in a better position to decide if you would like to change the balance of how you are investing your time, attention, intention, and energy. And you will be able to decide if you wish to focus more on the 4th path the wisdom traditions recommend for opening into a truly fulfilling life.

If you choose to give more attention to the 4th way, it will be extremely valuable to discover your own, individual approach for learning from one or more of the traditions, or to find a guide who is steeped in a tradition. Without such help, your ego will likely take control of the process and tell you how wise and spiritual you are—as it continues to focus on fulfilling your ego ambitions.

I believe there is something more to life than fulfilling base urges and ego ambitions. As Emerson said, our true being is boundless, and we are born to reach toward the "good," no matter how far we are from it at this moment. He went on to say, "that which we venerate is our own, though we have not realized it yet."

The necessary next step for opening into a more fulfilling life is to discern what you "venerate" and then give it sufficient time and attention to make it your own. If you mostly venerate making money, being famous, sexual exploits, comfort, worldly pleasures, then the 4th path has nothing to offer. But if you have reached a point in life of sensing the value of venerating that which the wisdom traditions have suggested brings true fulfillment, then Emerson and all the wisdom traditions say you can make that your own. In fact, that you "ought"—for your own sake, as well as for that of the world.

The result will be, in Emerson's words, the "…highest happiness. Wonderful is its power to charm and to command. It is a mountain air. ... It makes the sky and the hills sublime, and the silent song of the stars is it."[19] When you can finally open into this place, you will discover, with Emerson, that "the worlds, time, space, eternity, do seem to break out into joy."[20]

More Book for the Journey

The following books are additions to the previous lists of those that I have found valuable on my journey that are **not** written from within a particular religious tradition. There are many, many more of those that can be found in "Books for the Journey" on my web site.

1. Valuable guides

The Highest State of Consciousness by John White: The author also wrote *What is Enlightenment? Exploring the Goal of the Spiritual Path*, and both are very good concerning where the path of the traditions can lead when we do the work inside ourselves to harvest their fruits. They also make clear the importance of extraordinary experiences in the journey.

Coming Home: The Experience of Enlightenment in Sacred Traditions by Lex Hixon: Another fine book about how opening to the spiritual dimension can take us to higher states of consciousness and experience, and ways to achieve these results.

Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories that Heal by Rachel Naomi Remen: The author had a highly successful career as a physician, and through her own experiences and that of her patients, began to explore a much broader understanding of life and its meaning—and how that broader perspective had a powerful effect on her own health and that of her patients.

Reality by Peter Kingsley: Greek scholar Kingsley shows that all the major pre-Socratic philosophers were spiritual teachers as well as philosophers. Pythagoras, the first great name in the tradition, was a shaman, and the heart of his teaching was how to get in touch with a deeper reality. Parmenides, who is celebrated as the first to espouse reason as a value in western thought, wrote a long poem that is a guide to a direct grasping of Reality. This direct grasping is what reason is ***for***, not reason as a calculating and comparing process, but the ability to grasp Reality as a "knowing" in a mystical sense.

The Observing Self: Mysticism and Psychotherapy by Arthur J. Deikman: A good book in which the author, a highly regarded psychiatrist, extensively explores ways the mystical traditions can help Western psychology deal with the issues of meaning, self, and change.

The Ultimate Colin Wilson: Writings on Mysticism, Consciousness and Existentialism by Colin Stanley and Colin Wilson: After publishing a best-selling and acclaimed book, *The Outsider*, at the age pf 24, Wilson spent a lifetime researching and writing about extraordinary experiences. Among the 100 books he eventually wrote, it is hard to know where to begin, but this is a good starting point.

The Caretakers of the Cosmos: Living Responsibly in an Unfinished World by Gary Lachman: A thoroughly researched book about the thoughts of well-known scientists, philosophers, psychologists, and other western thinkers who developed an understanding of meaning that is very compatible with modern science.

2. Personal stories

The Still Good Hand of God: The Magic and Mystery of the Unconscious Mind by Michael Gellert: An account by a young man, later to become a successful psychologist, who was driven by a harrowing set of circumstances past all normal limits during a trip to India, resulting in a whole new level of awareness and consciousness.

The Living Classroom: Teaching and Collective Consciousness by Christopher M. Bache: The author, a classroom teacher, began to notice examples of the existence of collective consciousness in his classroom, and began to study it intentionally. This is his report.

I Can See Clearly Now by Wayne Dyer: The highly successful author and speaker shares his personal story, which involves several extraordinary experiences.

[1] Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, Studies on Hysteria (first published in1895), translated This translation by Nicola Luckhurst (London, United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 2004), 280.

[2] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*, ed. Anthony Uyl (Woodstock, Ontario: Devoted Publishing, 2017), 9.

[3] Andrew Harvey, *Light Upon Light: Inspirations from Rumi* (Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books, 1996), 211.

[4] Stephen Mitchell, *Tao Te Ching: A New English Version* (New York, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), 16.

[5] Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau (London, United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 1979), 134.

[6] Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau (London, United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 1979), Book XII

[7] Confucius *The Doctrine of the Mean,* Chapter 33, saying number 5, Chan, Wing-Tsit. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963)

[8] Confucius, *The Analects*, 15.

[9] Lionel Giles, M.A., The Sayings of Confucius: A New Translation of the Greater Part of the Confucian Analects (London, United Kingdom: John Murray, 1912), 67.

[10] Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 2003, 40.

[11] Bhikkhu Bodhi, In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon (The Teachings of the Buddha) Somerville, Massachusetts: Wisdom Publications, Inc. 2005). 223.

[12] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Divinity School Address," Divinity College, Cambridge, July 15, 1838.

[13] Ralph Waldo Emerson and Bliss Perry, *Selections for the Prose Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1926), 107.

[14] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Essay on Self-Reliance* (Aurora, New York: The Roycraft Shop, 1905), 23.

[15] January Searle (pseudonym for George Searle Phillips) *Emerson: His Life and His Writings* (London, United, Kingdom: Holyoake and Company, 1855), 18.

[16] Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (New York, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1961), 117.

[17] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Divinity School Address," Divinity College, Cambridge, July 15, 1838.

[18] Albert Schweitzer, *Reverence for Life*, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (New York, New York: Irvington Publishers, 1993), 80-81.

[19] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (London, United Kingdom: Longmans, Green and Company, 1902), 32.

[20] Emerson and Perry, *Selections*, 80.