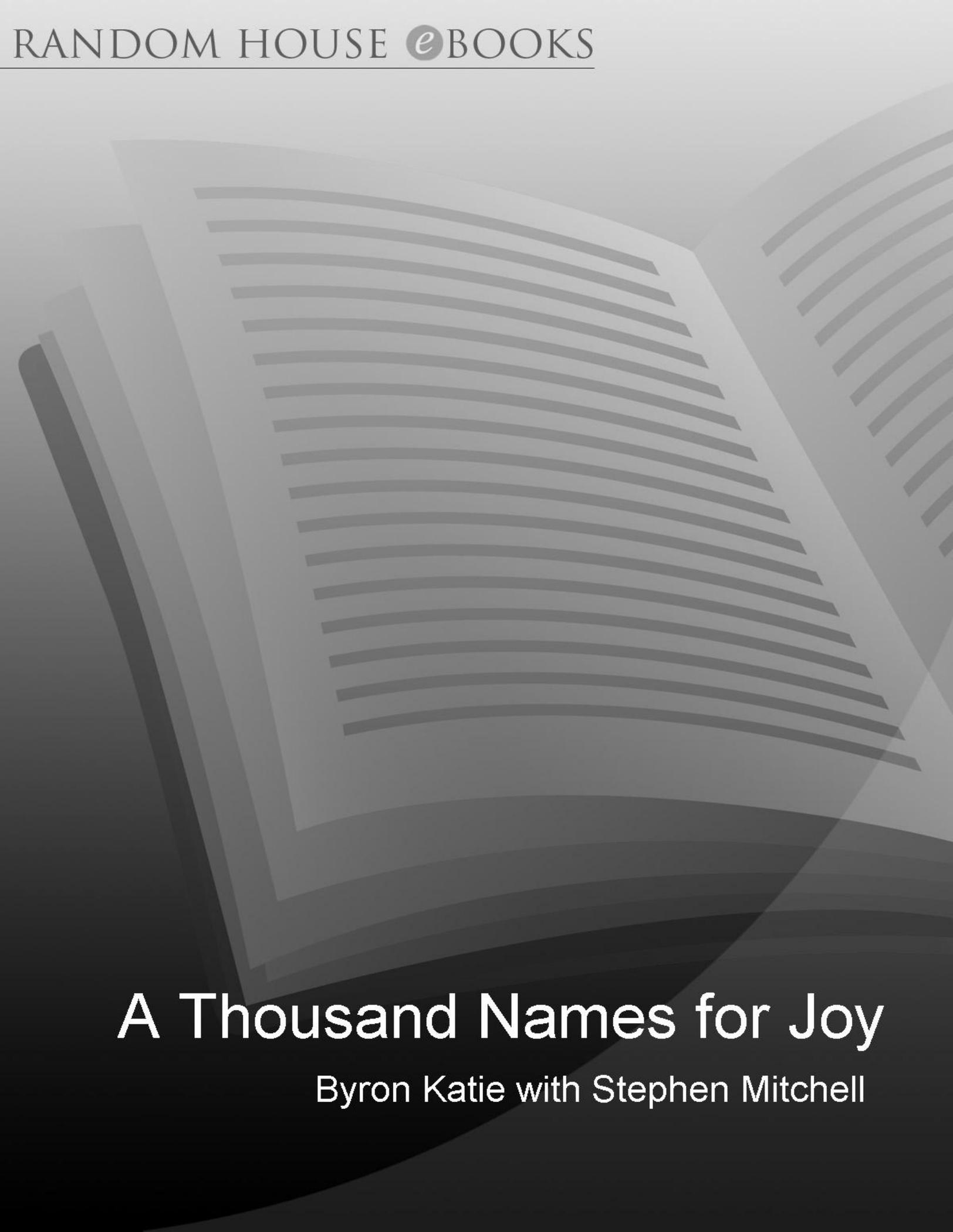


RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



A Thousand Names for Joy

Byron Katie with Stephen Mitchell

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

BYRON KATIE has been traveling around the world for more than a dozen years, teaching The Work directly to hundreds of thousands of people at free public events, in prisons, hospitals, churches, corporations, battered women's facilities, universities and schools, at weekend intensives, and at her nine-day School for The Work. She is the author of two bestselling books: *Loving What Is* and *I Need Your Love—Is That True?* Her website is www.thework.com.

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Also by Byron Katie

I Need Your Love—Is That True?
(with Michael Katz)

Loving What Is
(with Stephen Mitchell)

A
THOUSAND NAMES
FOR JOY



How to Live in Harmony with the Way Things Are

Byron Katie

WITH Stephen Mitchell



LONDON • SYDNEY • AUCKLAND • JOHANNESBURG

To you.

PREFACE

THIS BOOK IS a portrait of the awakened mind in action. It is also Byron Katie's response to the Tao Te Ching (pronounced *Dow De Jing*), the great Chinese classic that has been called the wisest book ever written.

Lao-tzu, the author of the Tao Te Ching, may have lived in the sixth century B.C.E., or he may be entirely legendary. I like to imagine him in frayed robes, an old man with a wispy beard, who spends much of his time in delighted silence, always available to people, serenely observing the infinite ways in which they make themselves unhappy. In many chapters of the Tao Te Ching, Lao-tzu describes himself through a figure called "the Master," the mature human being who has gone beyond wisdom and holiness to a world-including, world-redeeming sanity. There's nothing mystical or lofty about the Master. He (or she) is simply someone who knows the difference between reality and his thoughts about reality. He may be a mechanic or a fifth-grade teacher or the president of a bank or a homeless person on the streets. He is just like everyone else, except that he no longer believes that in this moment things should be different than they are. Therefore in all circumstances he remains at ease in the world, is efficient without the slightest effort, keeps his lightness of heart whatever happens, and, without intending to, acts with kindness toward himself and everyone else. He is who you are once you meet your mind with understanding.

A little about the author of this book. Byron Kathleen Reid (everyone calls her Katie) became severely depressed in her early thirties. She was a businesswoman and mother

living in a little town in the high desert of southern California. For almost a decade she spiraled down into paranoia, rage, self-loathing, and constant thoughts of suicide; for the last two years she was often unable to leave her bedroom. Then, one morning in February 1986, out of nowhere, she experienced a life-changing realization. In the Buddhist and Hindu traditions there are various names for an experience like this. Katie calls it “waking up to reality.” In that instant of no-time, she says,

I discovered that when I believed my thoughts, I suffered, but that when I didn't believe them, I didn't suffer, and that this is true for every human being. Freedom is as simple as that. I found that suffering is optional. I found a joy within me that has never disappeared, not for a single moment. That joy is in everyone, always.

Soon afterward, rumors arose about a “lit lady” in Barstow, and people started seeking her out, asking how they could find the freedom that they saw shining in her. She became convinced that what they needed, if anything, was not her personal presence, but a way to discover for themselves what she had realized. Katie's method of self-inquiry, which she calls The Work, is an embodiment, in words, of the wordless questioning that had woken up in her on that February morning. It is a simple yet extremely powerful method and requires nothing more than a pen, paper, and an open mind. As reports spread about the remarkable transformations that people were experiencing through The Work, Katie was invited to present it publicly elsewhere in California, then throughout the United States, and eventually in Europe and across the world. She has been traveling for fifteen years now, sometimes nonstop, and has brought The Work to hundreds of thousands of people at free public events, in prisons, hospitals, churches,

corporations, battered women's facilities, universities and schools, at weekend intensives, and at her nine-day School for The Work.

Katie doesn't know much about spiritual classics; in fact, before we met, she had never even heard of the Tao Te Ching. But she does know about joy and serenity, and she knows about the mind: how it can make us miserable, how we can use it to get free. So, from her point of view, Lao-tzu is a colleague, someone who has the same job, someone to have a conversation with, never mind that he's dead. This book is that very interesting conversation. Proceeding, like the Tao Te Ching, as variations on a theme, it expresses the same fundamental realization in many ways, under many circumstances.

Here's how the book came about. When I first met Katie, I was profoundly impressed by her openness of heart and her wisdom, which seemed to be a kind of transparency. She was a total innocent: she had read nothing, she knew nothing, about Buddhism or Taoism or any other spiritual tradition; she just had her own experience to refer to. The most wonderful insights would pop out of her mouth, sometimes straight from a sutra or an Upanishad, without any awareness on her part that anyone had ever said them before. Early in our marriage, partly out of curiosity, I began reading to her from the great spiritual teachers: Lao-tzu, the Buddha, the Zen masters, Spinoza, and others of that ilk. (She calls them "your dead friends.") Katie would take in their words, nodding sometimes, or saying, "That's accurate," or "Yes, it's exactly like that!" Occasionally, to my surprise, she would say, "That's true, as far as it goes, but it's a little 'off.' Here's how I'd say it."

Eventually I read her my version of the Tao Te Ching, all eighty-one chapters of it, and wrote down her responses, which were the raw material for this book. Sometimes, at my prompting, she would respond to every line; often she would focus on one passage, or elaborate on just a few

lines. (The epigraphs that begin each of the following chapters quote the lines from the Tao Te Ching that are most relevant to what she is talking about.) Along the way, I would ask her to refine or expand upon something in the text, or I would point her in a particular direction that seemed helpful. Sometimes she had no reference for a question, and I felt as if I were asking a fish what it's like to live in water. I suggested the specifics for "beautiful" and "ugly" in chapter 2, for example, since I adore Mozart and I don't yet appreciate rap. It's useful that I have these strong likes and dislikes; it gives Katie a reference for concepts such as "noise," which are outside her experience of reality.

When we first began talking about the text, Katie asked me what *Tao* means. I told her that literally it means "the way," and that it's a word for ultimate reality, or, in her own terms, the way of it: what is. She was delighted. "But," she said, "I don't understand concepts like 'ultimate.' For me, reality is simple. There's nothing behind it or above it, and it holds no secrets. It's whatever is in front of you, whatever is happening. When you argue with it, you lose. It hurts not to be a lover of what is. I'm not a masochist anymore."

I have known the Tao Te Ching since 1973, and with particular intimacy since 1986, when I wrote my version. I respect it as much as any book in the world, I owe it a great deal, and I know its power. (A friend told me that when he was in emotional trouble as a young man, what saved him was that he read my version from cover to cover—notes included—every single day for a whole year.) It's wonderful to discover that there is such a thing as a manual on the art of living, a book this wise and this practical. But it is one thing to read about being in harmony with the way things are, or even to understand what that means, and quite another to actually live it. Even the wisest of books can't give us its wisdom. After we have read the profound insights and nodded our heads—"Stop trying to control,"

“Be completely present,” “See the world as your self,” “Let go,” “Have faith in the way things are”—the central question remains: But how? *How* can we learn to do that?

Katie has written two books that show how to end suffering by questioning the thoughts that create it, the thoughts that argue with reality. No one knows how to let go, but anyone can learn exactly how to question a stressful thought. When you’re feeling upset, for example, and it seems impossible to let go of that feeling, you can question the thoughts that say, “I’m not safe,” “I can’t do this,” “She shouldn’t have left me,” “I’m too fat,” “I need more money,” “Life is unfair.” After that questioning, you can’t ever be the same. You may end up doing something or doing nothing, but however life unfolds, you’ll be coming from a place of greater confidence and peace. And eventually, once your mind becomes clear, life begins to live itself through you, effortlessly, with the joy and kindness that Lao-tzu points us toward. Though reality itself is unnamable, Katie says, there are a thousand names for joy, because nothing is separate, and joy, deep down, is what we all are.

In the following chapters, when Katie uses the word *inquiry*, she specifically means The Work. The Work consists of four questions and what she calls a turnaround, which is a way of experiencing the opposite of what you believe. The questions are

- 1. Is it true?**
- 2. Can you absolutely know that it’s true?**
- 3. How do you react when you believe that thought?**
- 4. Who would you be without the thought?**

When you first encounter them, these questions may seem merely intellectual. The only way to understand how they function is to use them yourself. But witnessing other people use them may give you a glimpse, even an experience, of their power. When they are answered

honestly, they come alive; they mirror back truths that we can't see when we look outside. In the following pages you'll be able to read some extended examples of people applying The Work to their stressful thoughts, with Katie's lovingly incisive guidance. (You can find instructions on how to do The Work in the Appendix, and more detailed instructions on her website, www.thework.com, or in her book *Loving What Is*.)

The Work has been called self-help, but it is far more than that: it is self-realization, and it leads to the end of suffering. As we investigate a stressful thought, we see for ourselves that it's untrue; we get to look at the cause-and-effect of it, to observe in sobering detail exactly what modes of pain and confusion result from believing it; then we get a glimpse into the empty mirror, the world beyond our story of the world, and see what our life would be like without the thought; and finally we get to experience the opposite of what we have so firmly believed. Once we deeply question a thought, it loses its power to cause us pain, and eventually it ceases even to arise. "I don't let go of my thoughts," Katie says. "I meet them with understanding. Then *they* let go of *me*."

Questioning thoughts that seem to be true—thoughts that may even feel like part of our identity—takes courage, and in *A Thousand Names for Joy* Katie gives readers the powerful encouragement of seeing, in detail, the freedom that lives on the other side of inquiry. As you may have realized already, this book is more than a commentary on the Tao Te Ching. It is a glimpse into the depths of being, and into the life of a woman who for twenty years has been living what Lao-tzu wrote. The profound, lighthearted wisdom that it embodies is not theoretical; it is absolutely authentic. That is what makes the book so vivid and compelling. It's a portrait of a woman who is imperturbably joyous, whether she is dancing with her infant granddaughter or finds that her house has been emptied

out by burglars, whether she stands before a man about to kill her or embarks on the adventure of walking to the kitchen, whether she learns that she is going blind, flunks a “How Good a Lover Are You?” test, or is diagnosed with cancer. With its stories of total ease in all circumstances, it doesn’t merely describe the awakened mind; it lets you see it, *feel* it, in action.

You may believe that although freedom was attainable thousands of years ago by a few enlightened masters, such a state is beyond the reach of anyone living in the modern world, and certainly beyond you. *A Thousand Names for Joy* has the power to change that belief.

—STEPHEN MITCHELL

NOTE: “Tao Te Ching” is shorthand for my book *Tao Te Ching: A New English Version*. You don’t need to know anything about it in order to enjoy *A Thousand Names for Joy*. But even though this book is meant to be read as an independent text, each chapter relates to the corresponding chapter in my *Tao Te Ching*, and it’s instructive to read them side by side.

INTRODUCTION

THE TAO TE CHING is a wonderfully accurate description of the mind in harmony with the way things are. Ancient China, modern America—what does it matter? There's no time or space. When you don't believe your own thinking, life becomes effortless.

In my experience, confusion is the only suffering. Confusion is when you argue with what is. When you're perfectly clear, what is is what you want. So when you want something that's different from what is, you can know that you're very confused.

As you inquire into your own thoughts, you discover how attachment to a belief or story causes suffering. The mind's natural condition is peace. Then a thought enters, you believe it, and the peace seems to disappear. You notice the feeling of stress in the moment, and the feeling lets you know that you're opposing what is by believing the thought; it tells you that you're at war with reality. When you question the thought behind the feeling and realize that it isn't true, you become present outside your story. Then the story falls away in the light of awareness, and only the awareness of what really is remains. Peace is who you are without a story, until the next stressful story appears. Eventually, inquiry becomes alive in you as the natural, wordless response of awareness to the thoughts that arise.

When the Tao Te Ching talks about "the Master," it is describing someone with a peaceful mind: a lover of what is. In this book I use the term *Master* because it's in the Tao Te Ching, and I use the pronoun "she" because all I can talk about is my own experience. But *Master* or *teacher* is

not a word I normally use. It implies that we all don't teach equally. And that's not true. Everyone has equal wisdom. It is absolutely equally distributed. No one is wiser than anyone else. Ultimately, there's no one who can teach you except yourself.

I don't give advice. I know that everyone knows his own way, and I trust that. For forty-three years I was clueless, and then I found the way, or I was open enough for the way to find me. That's why I trust that you can find the way, too. No one is more special than another. There are no gurus who can magically enlighten you. But if a spiritual master is someone who has a happy life, who doesn't argue with reality, moves with every moment, effortlessly, delightedly, and loves it just as it is, then (if I existed anywhere) who knows, I may be a spiritual master.

I'm open to all that the mind brings, all that life brings. I have questioned my thinking, and I've discovered that it doesn't mean a thing. I shine internally with the joy of understanding. I know about suffering, and I know about joy, and I know who I am. Who I am is who you are, even before you have realized it. When there's no story, no past or future, nothing to worry about, nothing to do, nowhere to go, no one to be, it's all good.

1

The tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.

YOU CAN'T EXPRESS reality in words. You limit it that way. You squeeze it into nouns and verbs and adjectives, and the instant-by-instant flow is cut off. The tao that can be told isn't the eternal Tao, because trying to tell it brings it into time. It's stopped in time by the very attempt to name it. Once anything is named, it's no longer eternal. "Eternal" means free, without limit, without a position in time or space, lived without obstacle.

There's no name for what's sitting in this chair right now. I am the experience of the eternal. Even with the thought "God," it all stops and manifests in time, and as I create "God," I have created "not-God." You can substitute anything here—with the thought "tree," I create "tree" and "not-tree"; the mechanism is the same. Before you name anything, the world has no things in it, no meaning. There's nothing but peace in a wordless, questionless world. It's the space where everything is already answered, in joyful silence.

In this world before words, there is only the real—undivided, ungraspable, already present. Any apparently separate thing can't be real, since the mind has created it with its names. When we understand this, the unreal becomes beautiful, because there's nothing that can threaten the real. I don't ever see anything separate called "tree" or "you" or "I." These things are only imagination, believed or unbelieved.

Naming is the origin of all the particular things that make up the world of illusion, the dream world. To break

off part of the everything and name it “tree” is the first dream. I call it “first-generation thinking.” Then thought begets thought, and we have “tall tree, beautiful tree, tree that I want to sit under, tree that would make good furniture, tree that I need to save,” and the dream goes on and on. It takes a child just a moment to fall into the dream world, the dream of a world, when she first connects word with thing. And it takes you just a moment to question it, to break the spell and be grateful for the Tao of everything—tree, no tree; world, no world.

When the mind believes what it thinks, it names what cannot be named and tries to make it real through a name. It believes that its names are real, that there’s a world out there separate from itself. That’s an illusion. The whole world is projected. When you’re shut down and frightened, the world seems hostile; when you love what is, everything in the world becomes the beloved. Inside and outside always match—they’re reflections of each other. The world is the mirror image of your mind.

Not believing your own thoughts, you’re free from the primal desire: the thought that reality should be different than it is. You realize the wordless, the unthinkable. You understand that any mystery is only what you yourself have created. In fact, there’s no mystery. Everything is as clear as day. It’s simple, because there really isn’t anything. There’s only the story appearing now. And not even that.

In the end, “mystery” is equal to “manifestations.” You’re just looking from a new perspective. The world is an optical illusion. It’s just you, crazed and miserable, or you, delighted and at peace. In the end, “desire” is equal to “free from desire.” Desire is a gift; it’s about noticing. Everything happens *for* you, not *to* you.

I have questioned my thoughts, and I’ve seen that it’s crazy to argue with what is. I don’t ever want anything to happen except what’s happening. For example, my ninety-year-old mother is dying of pancreatic cancer. I’m taking

care of her, cooking and cleaning for her, sleeping beside her, living in her apartment twenty-three hours a day (my husband takes me out for a walk every morning). It has been a month now. It's as if her breath is the pulse of my life. I bathe her, I wash her in the most personal places, I medicate her, and I feel such a sense of gratitude. That's me over there, dying of cancer, spending my last few days sleeping and watching TV and talking, medicated with the most marvelous painkilling drugs. I am amazed at the beauty and intricacies of her body, my body. And the last day of her life, as I sit by her bedside, a shift takes place in her breathing, and I know: it's only a matter of minutes now. And then another shift takes place, and I know. Our eyes lock, and a few moments later she's gone. I look more deeply into the eyes that the mind has vacated, the mindless eyes, the eyes of the no-mind. I wait for a change to take place. I wait for the eyes to show me death, and nothing changes. She's as present as she ever was. I love my story about her. How else could she ever exist?

A man sticks a pistol into my stomach, pulls the hammer back, and says, "I'm going to kill you." I am shocked that he is taking his thoughts so seriously. To someone identified as an I, the thought of killing causes guilt that leads to a life of suffering, so I ask him, as kindly as I can, not to do it. I don't tell him that it's his suffering I'm thinking of. He says that he has to do it, and I understand; I remember believing that I had to do things in my old life. I thank him for doing the best he can, and I notice that I'm fascinated. Is this how she dies? Is this how the story ends? And as joy continues to fill me, I find it miraculous that the story is still going on. You can never know the ending, even as it ends. I am very moved at the sight of sky, clouds, and moonlit trees. I love that I don't miss one moment, one breath, of this amazing life. I wait. And wait. And in the end, he doesn't pull the trigger. He doesn't do that to himself.

What we call “bad” and what we call “good” both come from the same place. The Tao Te Ching says that the source of everything is called “darkness.” What a beautiful name (if we must have a name)! Darkness is our source. In the end, it embraces everything. Its nature is love, and in our confusion we name it terror and ugliness, the unacceptable, the unbearable. All our stress results from what we imagine is in that darkness. We imagine darkness as separate from ourselves, and we project something terrible onto it. But in reality, the darkness is always benevolent.

What is the “darkness within darkness”? It’s the mind that doesn’t know a thing. This don’t-know mind is the center of the universe—it *is* the universe—there’s nothing outside it. The reason that darkness is the gateway to all understanding is that once the darkness is understood, you’re clear that nothing is separate from you. No name, no thought, can possibly be true in an ultimate sense. It’s all provisional; it’s all changing. The dark, the nameless, the unthinkable—that is what you can absolutely trust. It doesn’t change, and it’s benevolent. When you realize this, you just have to laugh. There’s nothing serious about life or death.

2

When people see some things as good, other things become bad.

WHEN THEY BELIEVE their thoughts, people divide reality into opposites. They think that only certain things are beautiful. But to a clear mind, everything in the world is beautiful in its own way.

Only by believing your own thoughts can you make the real unreal. If you don't separate reality into categories by naming it and believing that your names are real, how can you reject anything or believe that one thing is of less value than another? The mind's job is to prove that what it thinks is true, and it does that by judging and comparing this to that. What good is a this to the mind if it can't prove it with a that? Without proof, how can a this or a that exist?

For example, if you think that only Mozart is beautiful, there's no room in your world for rap. You're entitled to your opinion, of course, but other people think that rap is where it's at. How do you react when you believe that rap is ugly? You grit your teeth when you hear it, and when you have to listen (maybe you're a parent or a grandparent), you're in a torture chamber. I love that when mind is understood, there's room for rap as well as for Mozart. I don't hear anything as noise. To me, a car alarm is as beautiful as a bird singing. It's all the sound of God. By its very nature, the mind is infinite. Once it has questioned its beliefs, it can find beauty in all things; it's that open and free. This is not a philosophy. This is how the world really is.

If you believe that anyone's action is bad, how can you see the good in it? How can you see the good that comes out of it, maybe years later? If you see anyone as bad, how can you understand that we are all created equal? We're all teachers by the way we live. A blind drunk can teach more about why not to drink than an abstinent man in all his piety. No one has more or less goodness. No one who ever lived is a better or a worse human being than you.

A mind that doesn't question its judgments makes the world very small and dangerous. It must continue to fill the world with bad things and bad people, and in doing so it creates its own suffering. The worst thing that ever happened exists only in the past, which means that it doesn't exist at all. Right now, it's only a stressful thought in your mind.

Good things, bad things; good people, bad people. These opposites are valid only by contrast. Could it be that whatever seems bad to you is just something you haven't seen clearly enough yet? In reality—as it is in itself—every thing, every person, lies far beyond your capacity to judge.

Once you no longer believe your own thoughts, you act without doing anything, because there's no other possibility. You see that all thoughts of yourself as the doer are simply not true. I watch the hand that I call mine move toward the teacup. It has such intelligence, glides through the air so purposefully, arrives at the cup, fingers close around the handle, hand lifts cup, brings it to the lips, tilts it, tea flows into mouth, ahh. And all the time, no one is doing it. The doer is quite another, the one beyond the story of "I am."

Things seem to arise, and the Master lets them go because they're already gone. This apparent letting-go is not some saintly act of surrender. It's just that nothing ever belonged to her in the first place. How could she not let go of what doesn't exist except as the story of a past or a future?

She has only what she believes herself to have, so she has nothing, she needs nothing. She acts and waits for the miracle of what is, expecting nothing that would spoil the surprise. When her work is done, she forgets it, because there's nothing to remember. It's done. It's gone. She can't see what doesn't exist. Was her work good or bad? How ridiculous! Did it penetrate deeply or have no effect whatsoever? As if that were any of her business! Will it last forever? Did it last even for an instant?

3

Practice not-doing, and everything will fall into place.

IF YOU OVERESTEEM great men, you can't recognize the greatness within yourself. Any quality that you esteem in others is what *you* see, after all, and what you see comes from you. You undervalue yourself when you displace it and separate it from its origin. Admire Jesus' compassion or the Buddha's wisdom all you want, but what good can their qualities do you until you find them in yourself?

The mind is always looking for value. When it projects qualities away from itself, it robs itself of its own value. It starts traveling out of itself to find what it thinks it lacks, and its travels are endless, and it can never find its home.

The Master leads simply by being. "Being" looks like doing the dishes, answering the phone and the e-mail, shopping, going to work, driving the kids to school, feeding the dog, doing one thing at a time, without a past or future. She doesn't empty people's minds. She doesn't have to (even if that were possible). The way she helps people is by living out of don't-know, can't-know, no-need-to-know, not-possible-to-know, nothing-*to*-know. People are attracted to a life lived with such weightlessness, such lightness of heart. They begin to notice where they are, *who* they are, looking into the living mirror without their stressful thoughts.

I'm preparing a salad. I see flashes of colors. My hands begin to reach for what calls out to me. *Red!* and I reach for the beets. *Orange!* and I reach for the carrots. *Green!* and my hands move to the spinach. I feel the textures, I feel the dirt. *Purple!* and I move to the cabbage. All of life is in

my hands. There's nothing lovelier than preparing a salad, its greens, reds, oranges, purples, crisp and juicy, rich as blood and fragrant as the earth. I move to the countertop. I begin to slice.

Just when I think that life is so good that it can't get any better, the phone rings and life gets better. I love that music. As I walk toward the phone, there's a knock at the door. Who could it be? I walk toward the door, filled with the given, the fragrance of the vegetables, the sound of the phone, and I have done nothing for any of it. I trip and fall. The floor is so unfailingly there. I experience its texture, its security, its lack of complaint. In fact, the opposite: it gives its entire self to me. I feel its coolness as I lie on it. Obviously it was time for a little rest. The floor accepts me unconditionally and holds me without impatience. As I get up, it doesn't say, "Come back, come back, you're deserting me, you owe me, you didn't thank me, you're ungrateful." No, it's just like me. It does its job. It is what it is. The fist knocks, the phone rings, the salad waits, the floor lets go of me—life is good.

Reality unfolds without desire, bringing with it more beauty, more luxury, more exquisite surprises than the imagination could ever devise. The mind, as it lives through its desires, demands that the body follow after it. How else can it mirror back original cause? Anger, sadness, or frustration lets us know that we're at war with the way of it. Even when we get what we wanted, we want it to last, and it doesn't, it can't. And because life is projected and mind is so full of confusion, there is no peace. But when you allow life to flow like water, you become that water. And you watch life lived to the ultimate, always giving you more than you need.

I wake up in the morning and see very little. I was able to see last night, but now it's all a blur, like seeing through a smogged-up window. (I was recently diagnosed with a degenerative condition of the cornea called Fuchs'

dystrophy. There's no cure, and it has gotten a lot more intense over the past year.) I'm in a new hotel room, and I need to brush my teeth, shower, and pack. Where's the suitcase? And it comes to me; my hands know. The world is gray, but through the gray I can distinguish differences, and through these differences and the textures, I see everything I need to see in order to find my clothes. I feel my way to the bathroom, find the toothpaste and toothbrush, and squeeze the tube. Ooh! I've squeezed a huge gob of toothpaste onto the bristles, which brings a smile to my face: it seems that my teeth needed some extra help this morning. Then I step into the shower. It's tricky to understand the differences in bathroom fixtures, where the hot water is, which direction to turn the lever, how to convert the water from the spigot to the showerhead. Is the shower curtain tucked inside the tub so that the water won't run onto the floor? The lid to my bottle of soap is gone. Is it sitting on the ledge? Did it flush down the drain? Was the drain open or closed? I feel along the ridges of the tub for the lid. Do I have the right amount of shampoo in my hands? I'm sure it's fine, since not enough and too much are always the perfect amount. The water is hot. This is working. I'm so grateful as I step out of the shower onto the ... is it my robe or the bath mat?

Makeup is interesting. I use three items only: one for eyes, one for cheeks, one for lips. I do my best with the woman thing, it feels right, it's over, for better or worse. This face is the way of it. It's prepared. It will do its job. "Sweetheart, do these things go together? Is this top brown or black or blue?" Through Stephen's eyes, my clothes seem to be coordinated, and that works for me. I have an interview. I'm glad he can show me the way, beyond what he can know. Without words, through his actions, I know where the doorknobs are, where the stairs are, where the path is. Eventually, in the afternoon, my eyes begin to clear up, and *they* begin to show me the way. I love how it all

works. I love how the mornings prepare me for life, and how my afternoon vision gives me glimpses into what was only imagined in the first place.

4

It is like the eternal void: filled with infinite possibilities.

WE CAN CALL the Tao “reality.” We can also call it “mind.” Mind is a natural resource that never comes to an end. When it no longer believes its thoughts, it has entered the dimension of the unlimited. It’s like a bottomless well: you can always draw from it, and it will always give you the water of life. Because it is completely open and sees that nothing is true, it is filled with more possibilities than we can ever imagine.

Lao-tzu says, “I don’t know who gave birth to it.” I do. *You* give birth to it every time your own mind opens to what is beyond what you think you know. And when your mind opens, what is beyond knowing, what is older than “God,” streams in as a gift. There is no end to that gift.