



An Introduction to Your Unique Self

An Excerpt from the Book:
Your Unique Self – The Radical Path
to Personal Enlightenment

Dr. Marc Gafni

CENTER FOR INTEGRAL WISDOM

Contents

Foreword by Ken Wilber	3
A Note to the reader	4
Preface: On the Enlightenment of Fullness, Individuation beyond Ego, Democratization of Enlightenment and Living in a Personal Evolutionary Context	6
Western Enlightenment:	6
Eastern Enlightenment:	7
Unique Self Enlightenment:	7
Introduction.....	9
Evolution beyond Ego.....	10
Chapter One: The Great Invitation of Your Life.....	14
Chapter Two: The New Enlightenment of Unique Self	16
Being God's Verb	17
God Is Having a Marc Experience	17
The God of Unique Self	18
Chapter Three: Two Visions of Enlightenment and Their Higher Integration in Unique Self	22
Two Images of Light	23
The Biology of Unique Self	24
The Democratization of Enlightenment	26
Answering the Call.....	27
Enlightenment Is Sanity.....	28
Unique Self Is Not a Concept.....	31
Enlightenment Is Not Impersonal	31
The Personal Face of Essence.....	32
Chapter Four: Eight Stations of the road to Unique Self.....	33
Station 1: Pre-personal Self	33
Station 2: Separate Self: Level One Personal	33
Station 3: False Self	34
Station 4: True Self—Classical Enlightenment: Impersonal	35
Two Notes on True Self	36

Station 5: Unique Self—The New Enlightenment: Level Two Personal	37
Evolutionary Unique Self	38
Station 6: Unique Shadow	39
Station 7: Your Unique Gift	40
Station 8: Unique Vow, Unique Obligation	41
The Five Great Awakenings	42
1) Ego Awakening: Pre-personal to Personal Awakened Self.	43
2) The Awakening to the Unity Principle:.....	44
3) Awakening from Separate Self to True Self:	44
4) Awakening from True Self to Your Unique Self.....	44
5) Evolutionary Unique Self Awakening.	45
A Clarifying Note on the Eight Stations	45
A Short Recapitulation of Unique Self Doctrine	45
Notes	51

Foreword by Ken Wilber

DR. MARC GAFNI'S INTEGRAL UNIQUE SELF TEACHING IS SEMINAL. What you hold in your hands is a radically exciting and ground-breaking book that will change forever not only how you think about enlightenment, but how you understand, from a post-metaphysical perspective, the very nature of human life itself. The Unique Self work is magnificent, and it belongs among the "great books." It offers what may arguably be one of the most significant contemporary evolutions of enlightenment teaching. Unique Self brings together East and West in a higher integral embrace of stunning implications. Unique Self is a pivotal step toward an authentic Enlightenment.

The teaching in this book has been evolved primarily by Marc Gafni for over three decades and draws from his own realization, insight, and the enlightenment lineage in which he stands. In Gafni's reading of this lineage, brilliantly articulated in his three-volume opus, *Radical Kabbalah: The Enlightenment Teaching of Unique Self, Nondual Humanism and the Wisdom of Solomon*, (forthcoming) which I read in several highly excited nights, Unique Self is a nondual realization of Unique Perspective. This realization expresses itself both as the Unique Perspective on a text and as the Unique Perspective of the realized individual—what Gafni terms, in Lainer's thought, the Judah Archetype, whose perspective is a unique incarnation of unmediated divinity and therefore overrides all previous text, including even the Torah itself. In essence, the realized individual, whose True Self has been disclosed, expresses that True Self through his or her Unique Perspective—what Gafni originally termed "Unique Self." Hence, what Gafni calls the nondual humanism of Unique Self is rooted in this equation, in my wording:

$$\textit{True Self} + \textit{Perspective} = \textit{Unique Self}.$$

Unique Self brilliantly articulates the idea that within each of us is a post-egoic nondual realization of unique perspective, a unique incarnation of unmediated divinity. The Unique Self re-inhabits all the natural capacities of the human body-mind and all its multiple intelligences. It embraces its capacity for math, for music, for introspection, for love and interpersonal connection—all the talents and capacities given to human beings—without dismissing the True Self, the One Spirit condition that connects us all. Unique Self drenches and permeates the entire system of what is known as Eastern and Western forms of enlightenment.

The full crystallization of this New Enlightenment/Unique Self teaching that Dr. Gafni initiated, in which he and I have partnered, emerged through a series of many important dialogues that we had over nearly a decade. Through these dialogues, a highly significant new chapter in Integral Theory has emerged. These conversations were coupled with intensive discourse that Marc and I had with other leading Integral Spiritual teachers and thinkers, including, initially, Diane Hamilton in a catalytic role and later Sally Kempton. World Spirituality based on Integral principles is an entirely new lineage—a trans-path path. Unique Self models the emergent World Spirituality based on Integral principles in that it includes all the good stuff of previous paths, but adds a whole new level of emergence. And that is something that is extraordinary, historic, and not to be denied.

A Note to the reader

WELCOME.

THIS SHORT NOTE IS TO HELP YOU EASILY NAVIGATE THIS BOOK.

Please do not skip this note. It will guide you through the book.

There are two different ways to read this book. Let's call them Track One and Track Two. The first track is simply to follow the order of the chapters. The advantage of this approach is that Part One and Two unpack the core enlightenment teachings that ground the rest of the book. However— and this will be important for readers primarily interested in the practical application of these teachings—you can also choose to take another road through the book. Read the first three chapters, which will take you about one hour. Then, skip directly to Parts Three, Four and Five, which contain the chapters immediately applicable to your day-to-day life. These are the chapters on sacred autobiography, living your story, love, shadow, sexing, joy, evolutionary relationships and much more. Once you've read these, you can circle back and read the core framework teachings on Unique Self enlightenment in Parts One and Two, which will add profound depth to your understanding and embodiment of the latter part of the book.

Each part of this book deals in depth with a different dimension of Unique Self:

Part One lays down the core teaching or model of Unique Self enlightenment.

Part Two places the Unique Self model in a larger evolutionary context and unpacks a global vision of what it means to live your “evolutionary Unique Self.”

Part Three teaches you what it means to live your story and incarnate the infinite dignity of your sacred autobiography—or a Unique Letter in the evolving cosmic scroll.

Part Four deploys the Unique Self teaching toward a radical re-under- standing of Love, Joy, and Shadow in our lives. The sections of love and the two chapters on shadow are key as they significantly evolve our understanding of shadow integration, which is presently an essential but profoundly misunderstood dimension of the spiritual path.

Part Five offers a critical new understanding of sexuality and relation- ships in light of Unique Self. The section on sexing presents a new map of six forms of sexing, which re-orient and deepens the sexual in a significant way. The chapter on Unique Self encounters outlines seven principles of evolutionary Unique Self meetings, and it re-visions the essential nature and skill of all relationships.

Part Six deploys the Unique Self model in relation to parenting, malice, and death in a way that fundamentally changes our understanding of all three. And finally, the Epilogue places the realization of Unique Self in the context of the emergence of a Global Spirituality based on Integral principles.

Please use the table of contents and index. They are very detailed and will be helpful to you in identifying a particular topic you are called to or in finding a particular section after you have finished your first reading.

Last, there is a footnote section in the back that is particularly important for those interested in Integral Theory as it relates to Unique Self. If you are not a theory person or an academic intellectual type just skip the foot- notes. You do not need footnotes to get the point of the book. However, for those of you, myself included, who love footnotes, know that the footnotes contain academic and intellectual citations as well as deeper dives into the sources, the intellectual history of Unique Self, and the broader context of the conversation.

Preface: On the Enlightenment of Fullness, Individuation beyond Ego, Democratization of Enlightenment and Living in a Personal Evolutionary Context

UNDERLYING THE VISION behind democracy is the recognition that every individual has dignity, adequacy and worth.

Western Enlightenment:

This democratic understanding of the worth and standing of the individual lies at the core of what the West calls enlightenment. The Western idea of enlightenment, rooted in the great vision of the Biblical prophets, is generally understood to have entered mainstream consciousness through the political democratic movements of the mid-18th century. Western enlightenment is primarily concerned with the democratization of political power. This signified a quantum leap in the evolution of consciousness. For the Western enlightenment introduces a new structure stage or level of consciousness sourced in the recognition of the individual as an irreducible self-validating essence. The original emergence of human rights was rooted in the ontological dignity of the separate self. All ethics virtue and responsibility welled from the affirmation of the irreducible value of the separate self. The suffering imposed by the mythic levels of consciousness, which refused to grant dignity and rights to the individual outside the particular contexts of church, tribe, state or empire, was overcome in this realization of the Western enlightenment. The separate self-individual became an independent locus of value, adequacy and dignity. Western enlightenment was seen as the path beyond suffering.

It was not long, however, before Western individuality was cut off from its sources in essence. For this evolutionary movement of spirit paradoxically coincided with the emergence of a narrowly materialistic view of reality. This flatland view took root within the Western psyche. The individual lost the sense of being an expression of essence, and began to experience herself as “separate self,” what some referred to as a skin-encapsulated ego. Individuals began to be seen as but an expression of their personal, social and psychological conditioning. The infinite inner dimension of the individual was reduced to the individual as a bounded and hopefully balanced ego structure. Democratic human rights were won but their source in infinite individual depth was lost. Individuality was exiled into the separate self and personal essence was reduced to ego identity. This opened the door to the lost, dislocated experience of the contemporary human struggling, often vainly, to find his or her place in the larger context of Eros and essence.

Eastern Enlightenment:

Classical enlightenment, sometimes called Eastern enlightenment because it was greatly emphasized in the East, is about the individual merging into the greater one. The appearance of separate self is an illusion, which must be overcome as the individual realizes that are really not separate at all but part of the one. The Buddhists call this form of awakening, the enlightenment of emptiness. This view holds that emptiness actually contains all, but in the all there is virtually no recognition of the individual's irreducible uniqueness. This opened the door to the West's dismissal of classical enlightenment as irrelevant. The individuality of ego and separate self, which Western enlightenment viewed as essential to human dignity and rights, was viewed by the East as the source of all suffering. The goal of Eastern enlightenment is moving beyond the grasping ego and desperately seeking separate self by attaining a state of consciousness in which the illusion of separateness was dissolved in the greater one. This path of classical enlightenment is seen as the path beyond suffering.

Unique Self Enlightenment:

Unique Self enlightenment brings the Eastern and Western understandings about enlightenment together, into a higher Integral World Spirituality embrace. Based on series critical distinctions that I unfold in this volume, a new evolutionary vision of enlightenment begins to emerge. Unique Self enlightenment is based on your commitment to transcend separate self into the one, even as you realize that essence sees through your unique perspective, i.e. Your Unique Self. Unique Self enlightenment is what I have called the Enlightenment of Fullness. It begins with the recognition that every individual is both part of the one and uniquely incarnates the personal face of Essence, or God.

Because it is based on the irreducible uniqueness and hence value and dignity of every individual as an expression of essence, Unique Self opens the door to the potential democratization of enlightenment. That does not mean that everyone is enlightened in the same way—or that there is no hierarchy of qualitative distinctions in every person's level of enlightenment. Quite the opposite. Enlightenment always is Unique. Enlightenment always has a perspective, your perspective. But it does mean that enlightenment is a genuine option and therefore genuine invitation and even delightful obligation for every individual.

Aligning with your Unique Self is the change that changes everything. Awakening to your Unique Self fundamentally shifts your worldview, your purpose, and your internal experience of yourself, your relationships, your sexuality, your shadow, and the way you love. Unique Self enlightenment relocates you in a larger evolutionary context. It enacts in you new leadership ability, and fosters your capacity to form relationships that are both unique and evolutionary.

In contemporary culture where scientific materialism is the default world view of so many, truth is too often regarded as accessible only in the form of purely objective scientific information. In this view truth must be verifiable through the third person empirical and logical methods of the hard sciences and mathematics. This modern view of reality is true but partial; that is, it has an incomplete understanding

of truth. In reality there are three perspectives and not one. These might be rightly described as first, second and third person views of reality. Science favors the knowledge that results from a third person perspective. This is reality as observed from the outside. Relationships yield knowledge from a second person perspective. Meditation and all forms of introspection yields knowledge from a first person perspective. Each perspective yields its own truths. The truth of every perspective is then verified by the validity tests appropriate to that perspective. For example, one verifies the distinction between the internal experience of love vs. infatuation through a number of internal introspections (checking the nature and quality of your own feelings) and second person inquiries (talking to trusted friends) that would be irrelevant if the goal were to verify a mathematical equation. Unique Self is hinted at in third person through the uniqueness of the cellular signature of every individual. In second person, love is a Unique Self perception. Love is the faculty of perception that reveals Unique Self. In first person, Unique Self is primarily accessed as an enlightened experience of Self. Unique Self shows up as the personal face of essence living in you, as you and through you. In first person one experiences the self as an irreducible and unique expression of Self. This is what I have called Unique Self. That is the first person view. To awaken to your Unique Self is to be lived as God, which, in truth, means to be lived as love.

Introduction

WHEN I WAS SIXTEEN, my teacher at seminary school, Pinky Bak, died. I was very close to him. Pinky was for me somewhat of a cross between a big brother and surrogate father. I came from a painful first thirteen years of life, and he felt who I was beyond the trauma. He said to me, “You have gifts to give. Your life is valuable. You are needed.” He was the first one who invited me to believe in the possibility of possibility.

Pinky was thirty-two when he died. He fell down right next to me in the middle of a rollicking religious holiday party. As was his custom, he was dancing like a wild man—ecstatic, alive, on fire, and contagious. He half looked up for a moment and said, “Go on without me. I will get up in a second.” He then died instantly of a brain aneurysm.

I was numbed with shock and my heart was broken. Later that week, the dean of the school asked me to give the eulogy on behalf of the student body, because everybody knew that I was very close to Pinky. The auditorium was packed. I was lost in grief because my teacher had died, and scared out of my mind because I had never talked in public before. But as I walked up to the podium, something happened. It was like a window from heaven had opened up. In my talk, the words flowed out effortlessly from a place beyond me. They felt like wings, lifting and falling, carrying us all to a place where pain was not king, and broken hearts were healed. I spontaneously promised—not knowing where the words had come from—to pick up the baton that Pinky had dropped, to become a teacher of wisdom in the world. It was done.

The place was silent when I finished. Not silence of absence, when there are no words left to cover over the emptiness. Rather, it was Silence of Presence, when words are insufficient to hold the fullness of a moment. Although at the time I could not name the quality, this was my first genuine experience of Eros, of not only praying to or beseeching God, but also of knowing that I was part of, not separate from, the larger divine field. In a moment of Eros, what I call in this book the Unique Self had shown its face. My Unique Self had shown its face. As it often does, it had made itself known in a peak moment.

And so began, at age sixteen, my calling as a teacher. As is often the case, however, my ego then partially hijacked my Unique Self revelation. I was, on the one hand, sincerely committed to teaching, sharing, and even evolving the wisdom of my lineage, but mixed with that sincere and sacred intention was an egoic need that used my speaking and teaching skill to cover up an aching emptiness. My childhood pain had not been healed or addressed. Instead, I had contained it, tucked it away in some supposedly safe place. This, I believed, was what a good person is supposed to do. I barely remembered where I had stored the container.

So public speaking and teaching, for which I had a gift, welled up from mixed places in my consciousness—from a pure instinct to express the good, but also from an isolated, vulnerable ego,

passionately yearning for the wave of embrace and affirmation that came from the public's response to my teaching. At that point in my life, my need for a home and for the aliveness of public recognition unconsciously affected key decisions I made, but in very disguised and subtle ways. The good and sincere intention was so strong that I did not detect the ego's bad advice insinuating itself.

My false core sentence at the time was probably "I am not safe." Your false core initially emerges to cover the pain of alienation and the shock of apparent separation. You then develop a false self to soothe the pain of the false core.ⁱ

The false self is precisely the personality that you unconsciously deploy to hide, deny, or fix your false core. The paradox of the false self is that it usually reflects much that is true about you. The problem is that—at least in part—the false self is motivated by the ego's neediness and not by the authenticity of your Unique Self. The false self is false in the sense that it is not sufficiently motivated by the deeper truth of your own gorgeous and authentic being.

So if my false core sentence was "I am not safe," then my false self at that time probably sounded something like this:

I am a rabbi, committed to outreach to unaffiliated Jews. I am filled with love, passionately committed, creative, and brilliant. I give my life to God. I serve my people and the tradition. Everyone is beautiful. I am committed to seeing only the beauty in people. If I just love people enough, I can do anything and take care of anything that comes my way. If I love people, they will feel loved by God. No one could possibly betray or distort my love.

Of course, none of this was fully articulated or even conscious. My false self was true, partially. But it was clouded by the ego's neediness.

I was asleep.

Part of what kept me asleep was—paradoxically—the depth of the teaching, the sincerity of my intention, and my sense of the innate goodness of myself and others. All of this was real, but it was happening at an early stage of egoic unfolding, when I was still, at least in part, identified with my false self. Since part of my energy was running in a false self track, it ultimately could not sustain itself. The false self may well be telling the truth about your beliefs and intentions. But since it rests on top, and is motivated to hide, deny, or heal the false core sentence "I am not safe," it never connects with the ground of your being and is therefore never stable or secure. I was headed for a series of dramatic train wrecks, with no idea that they were coming.

Evolution beyond Ego

In order to genuinely move beyond ego, beyond the false self—or even more precisely, beyond exclusive identification with ego—you need authentic and sustained contact with the transcendent, with the

intention of facilitating your own evolution. You also need rigorous and unflinching self-inquiry, which includes some process of sustained shadow work. Prayer, chanting, contemplative study, and meditation are part of the path. In my early years, as for many young teachers, they were my entire path. But beware of parts pretending to be wholes. These paths may not be enough for you. They were not enough for me.

As I moved from my twenties to late thirties, my separate egoic self began to clarify through a mixture of chant, intense sacred study, and deep pain. By my early forties, the clarification process was becoming more intense and dramatic. But I still was not sufficiently clarified in the full realization of my enlightened Unique Self. Events then took place in my life of such pain and proportion that I almost died of heartbreak.

My own genuine mistakes and misjudgments provided a seemingly plausible cover to enable betrayal, public distortion, falsification, power plays, and behind-the-scenes malice. Whatever was not clarified in my person gave a hook to the projections of others, and my world came tumbling down. Held in the burning furnace of false complaints and public humiliation, by grace, I somehow remained alive. But for a full year, I could barely breathe. Not more than a half hour would go by without my heart welling up with tears. I was not able to utter the words of prayer. Only with great pain could I chant, and that very rarely. The visceral heaviness of my heart virtually stopped my life force several times a day. Enduring the pain of sudden rupture from all I held dear, and the insanity of National Enquirer, like poisonous lies on the Internet,ⁱⁱ for which there is little recourse, were more than the small egoic self of Marc Gafni could hold. The only analogy I can think of that holds the pain of that time is something like the pain of losing the ones closest to you and then being falsely accused of their murder.

All of this came together as a gift of terrible grace.

I was forced to fully step out of my story. Out of my pseudo story. Out of my ego. Out of my small self. It was simply too painful a place to live.

All the spiritual work of the past twenty-five years came to my aid. But it was grace, known by many names, that shattered all vessels and cracked me open to a new level of light and love.

For the first time in my life, I found a place inside of me in which it was totally OK if I never taught again. I was able to locate myself outside of my gifts. I did not even know if I would be able to keep them. I was so cracked open that, for a long period of time, sitting in a rocking chair on the porch of some small house seemed like pure bliss. Pain, moments of loving, involvement in details of the world, spaciousness, taking refuge in the Buddha, and flashes of intense enlightened awareness all burst in at regular intervals, always expanding and often dissolving my small self into profound ecstasy.

This went on for almost three years. And as time passed the vessel expanded. I spent many hours in the first year after the tragedy reading Psalms, by myself or together with my friend Dalit. “Reading” is not quite the right word for what I did. It was more like intense wracked sobbing while reading the text as prayer.

I felt the psalmist and his God close to me, holding me, understanding it all, and lifting me up. And the gifts came back. At some point, I began teaching again, but from a more spacious place, a wider place. The meeting with nonexistence had worked me. The knot of the heart had been untied.

Yet it is not over. Knots can tangle up again very quickly. I untie the knots every day anew.

Something, however, had shifted in a way that is virtually indescribable. It was, on the one hand, slight, modest, small, almost unnoticeable. And yet it was everything, All-That-Is—grand and glorious beyond imagination.

I had experienced in a new way the depth of transformation that is possible when the ego opens up in sweet surrender to the luminous love-light of the One. Only then, after stepping beyond identification with ego—or more accurately, being thrown out of ego—was I able to take the next step. To truly live from Source as Unique Self, passionately committed to evolutionary manifestation, yet increasingly unattached to the results of my effort. There was no choice. There is never really a choice.

So how do you live as Source? How do you allow yourself to be lived by love as a force for healing and transformation? Not by leaving your story behind, but by entering the full depth of your story. Not your ego story—but your Unique Self story. It is on this essential distinction that your enlightenment and very life pivot.

This book speaks dangerous words. Dangerous to your sense that you are small; to your feeling that you are alone and invisible; to your belief that you are worthless, inadequate, or bad; to your belief that you are too much or not enough.

I invite you to listen dangerously.

As William Blake writes, “No bird soars too high if he soars with his own wings.”ⁱⁱⁱ What it means to soar with your own wings is the New Enlightenment teaching of Unique Self, which I am honored to transmit to you in these pages.

PART ONE

*Every person must write a unique letter in the
Torah. Your letter in the Torah is your song.*

—ISAAC LURIA

*As king fishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selve—goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
Crying What I do is me: for that I came.*

*I say more: the just man justices; Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—Christ.
For Christ plays in ten thousand places, Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.*

—GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

*You might as well be yourself.
Everyone else is taken.*

—OSCAR WILDE

Chapter One: The Great Invitation of Your Life

EVERY PERSON IS RESPONSIBLE for their own awakening. In the same way every generation is responsible for its own evolution of consciousness. There is a covenant of partnership between generations. Each generation commits to contribute its own unique insights to the ongoing transformation and evolution of consciousness. At its core, consciousness is love—the evolution of consciousness is therefore nothing less than the evolution of love. If you then realize that God is synonymous with love, you begin to understand that the evolution of love is no less than the evolution of God. God is the infinite. The infinite is the intimate. God is the infinity of intimacy.

To be awake is to be a lover: alive, aflame, and open as love.

Therefore, at its heart, to be a lover means to be willing to participate in the transformation of consciousness.

Consciousness = God = Intimacy = Love.

Love is the spiritual technology operating through you as the expansion and transformation of identity itself. Enlightenment is no less than the ultimate transformation of identity, permanently widening and deepening the radius and depth of your love.

I come from a tradition of evolutionary mysticism. Evolution is the creative impulse inherent in the kosmos, to unfold toward ever higher levels of complexity, consciousness and goodness. The great teaching of my mystical lineage, confirmed by my own realization, is that the motive force of evolution is love. To awaken is to know that, as Dante put it, love moves the sun and other stars. As the new biology and physics are beginning to implicitly suggest, love is the interior kosmic force that animates and drives the evolutionary impulse. Love is the strange attractor, the allurements that holds the Uni-verse together. Alfred North Whitehead said that evolution is really the gentle movement toward God by the gentle persuasion of love.^{iv}—and sometimes far from gentle.

This book intends to unfold the teaching of Unique Self. What is your Unique Self? Unique Self is the individualized expression of the love-intelligence that is the very Eros of evolution and that lives as you. To realize your Unique Self then is your contribution, your gift, to the evolution of love—which, as we have already seen, is no less than the evolution of God. It would therefore be fair to say that to awaken as your Unique Self is to participate in the future of God. It is no small thing to participate in the future of God.

This book is written as a serious book of enlightenment teaching, as a passionate love letter and as transmission of love from me to you.

This is not a book of spiritual information. Instead, it is designed to give you a transmission that can shift your consciousness. This shift can bring many gifts to your life and make you a gift to the life of All-That-Is.

You could keep your distance and read from a safe place. Or you could say, “I am here. I am ready to undergo a momentous leap in my own personal evolution. I am willing to engage in the work of self-creation. I am ready for a transformation of identity. I am ready to leave my small self behind. I am ready to recognize my true self, incarnate my Unique Self and live as the evolutionary force of love.”

This book speaks dangerous words. I invite you to listen dangerously. Dangerous words means dangerous to your sense that you are small, to your feeling that you are small, to your feeling that you are alone and invisible, to your belief that you are inadequate or bad, to your belief that you are too much or not enough.

One of the great Unique Self mystics, Isaac Luria, taught that every person has an obligation to write their own letter in the kosmic scroll. This means that the ultimate purpose of your life is to bring forth and live the unique expression of love-intelligence and life force that can only be manifested by you. In other words it means to incarnate what I call your Unique Self.^v

Unique Self is partially foreshadowed in several spiritual traditions, West and East, and the teaching of Unique Self woven from three distinct strands.

The first strand consists of the intimations of Unique Self teaching found in some of the great spiritual traditions, such as the Kabbalistic citation from Hebrew mystic Isaac Luria in the previous paragraph.^{vi} I have also found important intimations of unique self teaching in Sufism, mystical Christianity, Kashmir Shaivism, and even Vajrayana Buddhism.

The second strand is the pivotal insight of modern and postmodern wisdom streams,^{vii} which posits understanding of “perspective” as the core element of reality.^{viii}

The third strand is my own lived recognition and realization, born of practice and grace. These arose in introspection, study, conversation with colleagues and radical immersion in the transmission of the Unique Self lineage masters. All of these together helped birth the evolutionary emergent that I call Unique Self.

An evolutionary emergent is an idea whose time has come. It always comes at a time when the world can no longer live without it. It sits atop all that has come before, yet it adds something undeniably new. This book is an invitation for you to understand, realize and practice Unique Self in the story of your life—for all of this is just words, until we learn it in the stories of our own lives.

Chapter Two: The New Enlightenment of Unique Self

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY UNIQUE SELF? Your Unique Self is not merely ego or personality. It is the essence that lies beneath and beyond your personality. More precisely, it is the personal face of essence. It is the unique God-spark living in you and as you. Your Unique Self is the infinite love- intelligence, which is All-That-Is—living in you, as you, and through you.^{ix} The higher your level of consciousness, the more fully you are able to realize your Unique Self.

And Unique Self is revealed and realized throughout your life, in moments of flow and grace, regardless of your level of consciousness. Yet it is only after you have begun to move past the grasping of your separate self ego, and realized your nature as indivisible from the infinite, unqualified field of consciousness, that Unique Self is revealed as the full and stable realization of your enlightenment.

In other words, there's a process involved in the New Enlightenment of Unique Self. You first realize that you are part of the seamless coat of the Uni-verse. You then realize that the Uni-verse is seamless but not featureless—and that you are one of its essential features.^x You see that you are irreducibly unique, and therefore irreplaceable as a unique expression of All-That-Is.

You realize that your personal existence, your being, is utterly distinct, worthy, and needed.

Unique Self is the enlightened realization that you are both absolutely one with the whole, and absolutely unique. You are more and more free from the contractions of your personality, even as you experience yourself as personally engaged in the great evolutionary unfolding of consciousness.

Realizing your Unique Self will fundamentally change the way you understand virtually every facet of your awakened life. Once we've engaged the core teachings of Unique Self, we will look separately at how these teachings fundamentally reconfigure and dramatically re-vision our understanding of love, joy, shadow, sexuality, parenting, death, relationships, loneliness, evolutionary spirituality, malice, ego psychology, and the integration of East and West.

Your Unique Self is God's love-signature written all over you. God loved you so much, He personalized himself as you. You are the individualized heart and mind of God. This is your Unique Self.

The creative process that mysteriously moves from nothing to something is the God-impulse. To live as your Unique Self means to align yourself with that process, with the ecstatic evolutionary impulse that initiated the kosmos, with the ecstasy of God, which re-creates all of reality in every second of existence.

Are you ready to respond to this invitation, to offer yourself to the infinite love-intelligence that wants desperately to show up in the world through and as you?

Then keep on reading . . .

Being God's Verb

The God you do not believe in does not exist. By "God" I mean All-That-Is, in all of its infinite and personal faces—the love-beauty that initiated and animates All-That-Is. That love-beauty wants to see with your eyes, touch with your hands, and love with your heart. Big Heart, the Tao, the Great One, the Universal Mind—by whatever name—wants to come into its fullest expression of being as each and every one of us. For this to happen, you have to be willing to hear the call of the evolutionary impulse of the kosmos beating personally in you and as you.

You are God's verb. To be God's verb, you do not need to leave your small separate self ego behind. You only need to leave your identification with your small self ego behind. You will then be able to identify with the unlimited and unfathomable mind of God, coming into its own by manifesting through and as you.

Are you tired of feeling trapped in the maze of your own self-contraction? Of being a side effect in your own life? Are you tired of your constant reaction, which creates your constant contraction? Are you tired of feeling like little more than a living cluster of habits and preconditioned reactions? Or are you here to survive in your physical body? I hope not, because you will not. Or to get rich or get famous? I hope not, because as mama said, "You can't take it with you."

You are here to be the poem that only you can be. You are here to sing the song that only you can sing. You are here to be the Unique Presence of Being and Becoming in the world that no one else but you can be. To live aligned with the highest intention of God, allowing God to live you.

God Is Having a Marc Experience

When I live my Unique Self, then God is having a Marc experience. When my oldest son lives his Unique Self, then God is having an Eytan experience. The same is true for you. When you live your Unique Self, God is having a "you" experience. God is devastated when Marc, instead of living the great mythic story of Marc, tries to be John or Rob.

This causes what the kabbalists call the "Exile of God."

The great realization of Western mystical consciousness is that God "desires" a Marc experience. Something is evolved in the Godhead when you live your Unique God-spark by incarnating your Unique Self. God is delighted, what the kabbalists called Sha-a-'Shua, the eros of divine pleasure. It is the divine pleasure in the evolution of God, catalyzed by the awakening of Unique Self.

Reveal yourself. Manifest your mystery through your Unique Self.

The God of Unique Self

God is not merely without but within the system. God is the system, the infinite living, intelligent depth of the system. God is the Suchness and ground of all Being. In Alfred North Whitehead's wonderful phrase, "God is the seamless coat of the Uni-verse," of which we are all a part. To awaken to the stunning realization, power, and responsibility of your Unique Self, you must remember that "seamless" does not mean "featureless." Every Unique Self is a particular feature of the Uni-verse, a particular letter in the kosmic scroll, a distinct and gorgeous manifestation that is both a part of the whole, not separate from the whole, absolutely necessary for the whole, and not so swallowed up by the whole as to lose its distinct nature.

All the great traditions tell us about two selves: a "true" self, and a "false" or "fallen" self. Your everyday ordinary self is known as the separate self. Your false self is a distorted or unhealthy expression of your separate self. This might involve a distorted self-understanding due to false core sentences or belief structures. For example, "I'm not safe," "I'm not good," or "I'm not enough" are false core sentences that unconsciously filter our perception of reality.^{xi} False self also expresses itself in one's identification and "stuckness" in their typology. The Enneagram, for example, does not tell us who we are, but rather precisely who we are not. The Enneagram essentially maps the pattern of navigating egoic reality that the separate self may have developed in order to overcome the shock and pain of separation.^{xii}

Even after we clarify the distortion of our false self and access our healthy separate self, a fundamental distortion still remains in place. This distortion is the illusion that our separate self is all that we are. From this perspective, our separate self is also our false self in that it is our limited identity with our personality or ego—it is the cluster of needs, drives, memories, fears, and expectations that you typically refer to as "me." It is a painfully finite self, born into the illusion of separation. It is a life cast in shadows, like a prisoner in Plato's cave.^{xiii}

But while your false self is trapped in time and therefore destined to die, your True Self is eternal. It is the infinite Spirit within, the effortless expanse of awareness behind all your experiences. It is forever unblemished by the pains and ecstasies of time, for it exists completely outside of time.

The overall number of True Selves in the Uni-verse is one. Whenever someone realizes their True Self, that person is literally in a state of at-one-ment, communing with the infinite singularity of Being. There is only One. However—and this is the central realization of Unique Self—the One True Self shows up differently through every pair of eyes. In the old enlightenment, True Self was understood to erase all distinction. In the New Enlightenment, we realize that enlightenment always has a perspective.^{xiv}

Human beings used to think we were directly engaging reality as it is. This is why every spiritual system thought that it owned the truth, that it was seeing reality itself. But this was only half true. At some point, we began to realize that there is no reality without perspective. To put it another way, reality itself is fundamentally constructed from perspectives.^{xv}

In the old, dominant paradigm, we assumed that perception was a faculty that showed each of us the same picture and revealed the True Nature of things. In the new paradigm, we understand that our

perspective is like the pair of glasses through which our vision takes place. Wear red-tinted glasses, and the world is bathed in red. Wear Christian-tinted glasses, and see Jesus in your meditations. Wear Hindu-tinted glasses, and see Shiva or Kali in your meditations. Wear Buddhist glasses, and see everything as empty. Wear Jewish-tinted glasses, and see all of reality as an apparition of the Shekhinah.

The new paradigm is in-formed by the deconstructive insights of philosophers from Hume to Kant to Saussure and everyone who wrote in their wake, by relativity, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, the new physics and biology, by multiculturalism, and more.

The recognition that every culture—and indeed every individual—holds a Unique perception of the world is an evolutionary emergent.^{xvi} Our conclusion, however, is not that of the post-modern deconstructive thinkers who were among the champions of this insight. Deconstruction wrongly assumed that when perspective is revealed to be part of the process of meaning making, there is no longer any real meaning. Rather, when we understand perspective, we understand that every culture and every great tradition of spirit has its own Unique Self. Perspective reveals a plenitude of meaning and not a dearth or death of meaning. All cultures perceive essence, but each unique perspective gives a particular resonance and cast to essence. Loyalty to one's religion and culture is not, therefore, (as modern and post-modern fashions sometimes suggest), primitive or fundamentalist. It is rather partially true, in that it is how my culture is intuiting essence. The pre-modern mistake was the failure to realize that every religion has a particular perspective, and therefore not to realize that no religion can claim that its intuition of ultimate truth is the only truth. Now that we understand that every great tradition and culture perceived essence through a particular perspective, we can avoid the tragic mistake of deconstructing the traditions as meaningless. Instead, we understand that every tradition is a particular perspective, a particular instrument in the symphony of spirit that is indeed making sacred music. All of the perspectives come together to create a symphony. And at that point, there is the possibility that the followers of each tradition can begin to realize that their particular religion is not the music but an instrument of the music.*

In Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam, Unique Self might be expressed as the Unique perspective and radiance of your eternal soul. In Buddhism, Unique Self would manifest as the unique perspective and radiance of your enlightenment; in Hinduism, as the state of open-eyed samadhi.^{xvii} Yet for all of these, the same evolutionary equation holds true:

$$\text{True Self} + \text{Perspective} = \text{Unique Self}^{\text{xviii}}$$

Every evolved culture and every evolved individual may realize Unique Self when True Self awakens to its Unique Perspective. An early expression of this equation is sourced in premodernity in the great teachings of the kabbalists. For these masters, the sacred text of the Torah is the word of God. Yet, paradoxically, in Hebrew mystical teaching a human being who is deeply grounded in True Self while fully incarnating his or her own uniqueness, also speaks the word of God. Human insight, however, is considered the word of God and, given the status of Torah, only when it derives directly from the clarified unique perspective of a human being who is connected to the ground of true self. In this radical teaching the supreme identity between the human being and the godhead is only realized through the

paradoxical portal of radical human uniqueness. Irreducible uniqueness, the full inhabiting of unique perspective or voice, is revealed to be an absolute quality of essence. In modernity and especially in postmodernity, the early realization of the kabbalists in regard to the primacy of perspective takes center stage. There is an emergent cultural realization, placed front and center in Integral Theory, that perspectives are foundational. But in postmodernity, perspectives have too often been used as the key tool of postmodernity's deconstructive project. The sentence used to deny all truth is, "That's just your perspective."

The kabbalists foreshadow our post, postmodern World Spirituality reconstructive project. Nothing is true, says postmodernity, because every-thing is contextual. For the kabbalist, the opposite is correct. When you fully inhabit your unique perspective you become Source. You not only speak the word of God, you incarnate the word of God. World Spirituality based on Integral principles, including the first principle of Unique Self, understands that Uniqueness reveals essence through a particular prism creating not a dearth of truth, but a magnificent kaleidoscope of truth. Every authentic insight deriving from Unique Perspective is true but partial. No part is reducible to the whole but no part stands alone. It is this insight of Unique Self that is the foundation of the great reconstructive project, which is Spirit's Next Move.

Your Unique Self expresses itself in your drive to reach your limitless potential. It is your authentic desire to move beyond your exclusive identification with your small self, and to realize something within you that is both unique to you and infinitely larger than you. In this process, the first step is to dis-identify with your small self, your ego, and identify with the larger field of existence. You understand that you are part of a larger whole.

The ego that we are referring to here is the tendency to identify all that you are with your body-mind personality. It is like the story of the biker who irrationally picked a fight with someone who touched his bike. When pressed afterward to explain himself, he said, "When you touch my bike, you touch me." This is precisely the overreach of your ego when it claims to be the fullness of your identity. In this sense, the ego is an expression of your false self.

Classically, enlightenment is the move from false self to True Self. The motivation to dis-identify with your egoic false self is the evolutionary impulse of love.^{xix}

Evolutionary love is not an emotion but a perception.^{xx} It is the capacity that allows you to perceive your own True Nature as far more vast, stunning, and spacious than your "skin-encapsulated ego." Love realizes that your small self is not isolated, alienated, and alone—it is a spark in the inferno of love and evolving consciousness that we sometimes call God.

It is the force of evolutionary love that drives you to transcend your separate egoic self and move toward union with the whole.

However, the realization that your separate self is one with the whole is a stage on the journey, not its endpoint. The New Enlightenment moves one step beyond classic enlightenment. In the New Enlightenment, you realize that the spark is not merely absorbed in the larger light. Even as the spark

dances in the roaring flames of heart-melting and searing divinity, it does not lose its unique character. As identification with separate self disappears, your clarified individuality, your Unique Self, appears. The dross of grasping separateness is burned away so that the luminous character of your unique light can shine resplendent.

This is the realization of what I am calling the New Integral Enlightenment. Since we now realize that all perception, even the realization of True Nature, has perspective, we now realize that True Self never appears without Unique Self.^{xxi} This is the realization of Unique Self. It is the realization that:

Your enlightenment has a perspective. Your perspective.

Your Unique Self.

Chapter Three: Two Visions of Enlightenment and Their Higher Integration in Unique Self

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, when the sages and mystic philosophers have looked at consciousness, two very different understandings about the self have contended with each other for dominance. Each has termed its understanding of the self “enlightened.” The first conception is that of classical mystical consciousness. This view understands the separate self—or ego—as being essentially false and the source of suffering, while proclaiming impersonal consciousness (often called True Self, or Inner Self) to be the essence of your True Nature or identity.

While this view is often correctly identified with classical nondual Eastern teaching, it is not limited by geography. True Self has gone by many signifiers, including rigpa in Tibetan Buddhism, mochin degadlut, or Expanded Mind in Kabbalah, antar atman (Inner Self) or tat (That, as in the aphorism tat tvam asi “Thou Art That”) in Hinduism, and Christ Consciousness in Christianity. This realization of the True Nature of self is what is classically termed “enlightenment.” It has also been called self-realization (Shankara, Abulafia), Liberation (Ramana Maharshi), or being awake, the state the Buddha famously attained under the Bodhi tree. This understanding about the True Nature of self that I am calling “classical enlightenment” is indeed true^{xxii} But it is also partial.

The second understanding, which also calls itself enlightened, makes almost the directly opposite claim. This teaching, which flowered in the West during the so-called Age of Enlightenment in the mid-eighteenth century, asserts that your personal, separate self—your identity as a distinct individual—is your essential nature. This is seen by Western enlightenment thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau as the basis of all human rights and responsibilities. Thus, the Western enlightenment conception sees the failure to recognize the autonomy of each individual as the source of all suffering. This is the core understanding behind almost all of Western psychology.

The understanding of self as the large, impersonal Ground of Being suggested by mysticism is either ignored, denied, or deemed irrelevant and even immoral by the Western enlightenment conception. As with the nondual understanding of the self, the Western enlightenment conception is true but partial.

The recognition of Unique Self transcends and includes the true but partial insights of both visions of enlightenment, and for the first time in the history of consciousness allows a higher Integral embrace of both.^{xxiii} In Unique Self enlightenment, you recognize and realize your nature as indivisible from the larger field of consciousness, even as you know your- self to be an absolute unique expression of True Self, unlike any other. True Self always looks out through a unique set of eyes, which reveals a radically one-of-a-kind and special perspective. In this way, you transcend the limitation of separate self while affirming the autonomy, value, and infinite dignity of your Unique Self.

True Self + Perspective = Unique Self

Two Images of Light

In the old scientific paradigm, light was thought to be of one quality and nature. In the old paradigm of awakening, to be enlightened was to be absorbed in the unqualified field of light, which is one. In the new science paradigm, we realize that every beam of light vibrates at its own unique frequency. To be enlightened, then, means to consciously live the radiance and purpose of your singularly unique frequency of light. This is the core teaching of the New Enlightenment.

Classical enlightenment, the old enlightenment, viewed uniqueness as the enemy. The belief was that your experience of uniqueness would obscure the realization of your identity with All-That-Is. That ego or separate self is something to be surrendered, pushed aside, utterly dissolved in the timeless Absolute. There is an element of truth to this—the ego must be trance-ended. You must end the trance of the ego.

You will always experience yourself in part as a separate self—that is as it should be. If you did not, you would be psychotic or otherwise deranged. What you need to trance-end is your exclusive identification with your egoic separate self. For it is your sense of being, but a skin-encapsulated ego, that creates the sense of suffocation, fear, and drabness that passes as your life. This fundamental error in identity is the root of virtually all suffering. Your disconnection from your larger context, and the aliveness it holds for you, gives birth to every form of egoic grasping and addiction.

But the ego contains within it more than a glimmer of truth. As we'll see later, the ego bears gifts that require clarification.

Clarification takes place through contact with the transcendent, resulting in the revelation of the larger whole of which the separate self ego is but a part. The gifts of the ego, which are the intimations of your infinitely valuable uniqueness, can then flower in your higher realization as Unique Self.

We must love and nourish our egos, not destroy them altogether. Ego prefigures and points toward Unique Self.

We are wholes unto ourselves, as well as parts of even larger wholes. To be part of a larger whole does not mean to be so absorbed that you lose the unique nature of your part-ness. You can fully engage in deep communion and even union with the divine, even as you retain the integrity of your uniqueness.

Once you can transcend exclusive identification with ego, realize True Self, and celebrate your Unique Self, you are at the portal to your full enlightenment. Once you shatter the tyranny of the ego's dream, even as you awaken to your unique calling of radical love, beauty, and obligation, you begin to live as source, naturally manifesting your deepest authentic desire.

Your Unique Self is your birthright. In your Unique Self, you begin to live as Source, carrying the evolution of love and the transformation of consciousness one generation forward. It is from this place that you discover your ultimate purpose in living, where you remember your most sacred vows, taken long before

you were even born—promising to bring as much love and light as you possibly can to a world that is so desperately in need of your extraordinary gifts.

The Biology of Unique Self

Unique Self expresses itself in all dimensions of reality. It begins at the base atomic level of matter, or what the Buddhists call form: “Physical atoms each have their own specific energy signature. Similarly, assemblies of atoms radiate their own identifying energy patterns. So every material structure in the universe, including you and me, radiates a unique energy signature.”^{xxiv} And, “Each atom is unique, because the distribution of its positive and negative charges coupled with its spin rate generates a specific vibration or energy pattern.”^{xxv}

Ascending the great chain of being from matter to body, we come to what we might call the biology of Unique Self. To be clear, I am not suggesting that this is evidence of the enlightenment teaching of Unique Self in the formal sense. Rather, it suggests an expression of Unique Self on a biological level. Human beings used to think that consciousness was a higher level of reality than the material plane of matter. We now realize that this is not quite true. It is more accurate to say that every human event has an interior and exterior face, an inside and an outside expression. The outside viewed through the third-person mechanisms of science and empirical verification is matter. The inside, accessed through introspection and other forms of internally directed forms of knowing, is consciousness.

So we would naturally expect uniqueness, which appears at the interior level as the awakening of your unique consciousness, to also appear at the exterior plane, the level of form. Looking specifically at biology, we see that of course uniqueness does appear in biology in highly dramatic and unmistakable ways. Every single human being is biologically unique, with a unique molecular and cellular signature. The cellular signature is comprised of two distinct dimensions of uniqueness, which together comprise what we might fairly call the Unique Self perspective of a cell.

One type of molecule that exists in a cell is the DNA molecule. DNA is the star of genetic research, and its double-helix structure contains the objective biological codes of Unique Self. This, however, is but one dimension of the unique complex cellular signature that comprises every human being. There are a host of other factors that interpret the DNA. It is these factors and not the objective genetic information that have the most impact on the actual life of a person. That is, it is the prism or perspective through which the genetic information is received that makes virtually all the difference.

This is the object of study of perhaps the most dynamic field in molecular biology today—epigenetics, which literally means “control above genetics.” These factors include at least two major components. The first is a host of environmental factors that interact with the cell. This is what has often been referred to as “nurture as opposed to nature.” As biologist Frederik Nijhout writes, “When a gene product is needed, a signal from the environment, not an emergent property of the gene itself, activates the expression of the gene.”^{xxvi} The second factor is the proteins in the cells:

By far the single most important component of living organisms is the proteins. The body's proteins are the essential building blocks of life. Our cells are in the main an assembly of protein building blocks. So one way of looking at our trillion-celled bodies is as protein-run systems deploying over 100,000 different kinds of proteins.^{xxvii}

The proteins contain identity receptors that receive environmental signals, and together they are the prism or perspective through which the unique DNA of an individual manifests in the world. In effect, you might say that the proteins are the hermeneutic prisms of the DNA. The DNA together with the proteins and the environment comprise the perspective of a cell that forms the core of cellular uniqueness. It is in the interaction between the unique proteins, the unique DNA, and all of the environmental variables that what might be called the Unique Self perspective of a cell is formed.

Clearly, uniqueness from this biological perspective is much more than mere social or psychological conditioning. Rather, uniqueness is the cellular reality of life. The core building block of life is the unique perspective of a cell that is formed by a number of diverse factors, including DNA, the environment, and the unique structures of the proteins and their receptors.

Proteins are utterly unique, very much like a puzzle piece. When the protein puzzle-piece “encounters a molecule that is an energetic and physical complement, the two bind together like human-made products with interlocking gears.”^{xxviii} And, “The meeting or binding that takes place between the receptor protein and a resonant molecule is described by biologists as a lock and key.”^{xxix}

Cells possess a unique “tuned” receptor protein for every environmental signal that needs to be read. Receptor proteins are the way the cell “perceives the environment.” One scientist described receptor proteins as “units of perception.”^{xxx}

Each unique cell's set of identity receptors is located on the cell membrane's outer surface, where they act as antennae downloading the complementary environmental signals. “These identity receptors read a signal of self, which does not exist within the cell” but comes from the cell's unique reading of the “environmental signals.”^{xxxi}

The analogy offered by Robert Lipton compares the human identity to the image on the screen of a television set. But your image does not come from inside the television. “Your identity is an environmental broadcast that was received via an antenna that is downloading the complementary environmental signals” to the antenna, much as the self-identity receptors download signals from the environment. Let's say that one day your television blows. Your image is no longer on the screen, but your Unique Self has not disappeared. All you need to do is “get another television set, plug it in, turn it on, and tune it to the station you were watching before the picture blew out . . . The physical television in this analogy is the equivalent of the cell. The TV's antenna, which downloads the broadcast, represents self- identity receptors that download the environmental signal.”^{xxxii}

It is the perspective of the cell, formed in large part by the interaction of the identity receptors with the environment and DNA, that expresses the Unique Self. The evolutionary realization that the core structures of Unique Self are rooted in the very cellular level of human beingness suggests that Unique

Self is not merely an elite expression of enlightenment, but is, at least in potential, an awakening that is possible for every human being. This is but one more indication that it is time for a radical democratization of enlightenment.

The Democratization of Enlightenment

It is time for a radical democratization of enlightenment.

It used to be that enlightened living was for the elite. The few great lovers, saints, and sages throughout history reminded us that something more was possible, that there was a better way to live, that joy and overflow- ing love could and did exist, at least for some, as the animating essence of everyday life.

This tiny elite of subtle and evolved minds and hearts held alive for all of us the possibility that human beings could genuinely realize a transformation of identity, that they could truly evolve from their small constricted egos into spacious, dynamic, enlightened beings.

In days gone by, we relied on this elite to guide our world. Today, that age has passed. The old elite no longer has the power to guide us. We can no longer hope that in some room somewhere, in the halls of spiritual power or the inner chambers of an ashram or temple, there are holy, wise people upon whom we can rely for our salvation.

In a globally interconnected world, one person acting alone or a small group of ignorant individuals has the ability to literally destroy humanity. This is a pointing-out instruction by the universal love-intelligence. Said simply, reality is telling us something that we desperately need to know. The lesson is clear. For better and for worse, the age of ruling elites, be they spiritual or political, is over. Democracy is the evolutionary unfolding of love-intelligence in our era. It began with the democratization of governments. Now it must move to the democratization of enlightenment. This is the enlightenment of your True Self beyond personality and ego, which then expresses itself in the full glory and power of your Unique Self. The Unique Self principle is an implicit potential in the genetic source of consciousness. To show up in life means to show up as your Unique Self. In order to show up, you must both grow up and wake up. Unique Self enlightenment is to grow up to your highest possible level of development in which you spontaneously inhabit the full power of your unique perspective. Unique Self enlightenment is also to wake up beyond exclusive identification with ego to your higher identity as True Self, an indivisible part of the larger conscious whole. Every human being is radically unique. Every human being is part of the One True Self.

Enlightenment is a genuine possibility, and therefore a sacred obligation, for every single person. You are not obligated from without. You are obligated in love by your own highest possibility.^{xxxiii}

The disciples of one master liked to explain this radical Unique Self principle with a story:

A precocious child was convinced that the king was not as wise as people claimed. And so he set out—as young people are wont to do—to prove his point. He came before the king with a question. “Sire,” he said with great audacity, “it is said that you know the future and can answer any question posed. Well, I have a question for you.” The assembled court gasped at his insolence. But the boy went on. “I have in my closed hand a butterfly, sire. Tell me, is it alive or dead?”

The boy thought to himself, “If he says ‘alive,’ I will simply squeeze and kill it, and if he says ‘dead,’ then I will open my hand and let it fly away.”

The sage was silent for a moment, even as the room grew very silent. When he finally spoke, it was with the gentlest voice the boy had ever heard. “My son,” said the king, “whether the butterfly lives or dies depends on you.”

It depends on us. On each and every one of us uniquely.

Answering the Call

Once you understand at the very cellular level of your being that your uniqueness is not a historical accident but an intentional expression of essence, then you realize that enlightenment is a genuine option for every human being—including you! The living universe took 13.7 billion years of intentional evolution to manifest the new and original evolutionary potential of your

Unique Self. When you realize this, and remember that your Unique Self is God having a You experience, everything in your essential experience of life changes.

Once you understand that your uniqueness is not the haphazard result of your cultural, social or psychological conditioning, but that all of these are necessary conditions for the emergence of the personal face of Essence that is You, your essential experience of life transforms. You move from having a desperate need to escape your life to the radical embrace of your life.

When this happens, fate is transformed to destiny. Every detour becomes a destination. Desperation becomes celebration. Grasping becomes purposeful action and resignation becomes activism. The contracted smallness of your frightened suffering self becomes the expanded joyful realization of Your Unique Self. At such times you know that the irreducible uniqueness of every awakened human being is a sign that reality actually invites, and even lovingly demands, your enlightenment. Reality yearns for a full and authentic expression of your uniqueness, for you to live in the world as God’s verb. Unique essence, living in you, as you and through you, is the essence of enlightenment.

It is from this place that you answer the call of Unique Self. It is from this place that you give the world your desperately needed unique gifts, those charismatic endowments that arise from your Unique Self. This is what I mean when I talk about Unique Self enlightenment. This is what it means to answer the call.

Unique Self enlightenment is a genuine possibility and therefore a responsibility for every human being. For there is no separation in essence. Every unique expression of essence is part of the seamless coat of the uni- verse. Seamless, but not featureless. So, we could say that failure to clarify the contours of your Unique Self is not a failure of the contracted ego but a failure to love God. For to love God is to let God see through your eyes. Through the unique perspective of essence which is You. And remember, the god you don't believe in doesn't exist. God is the eros of evolution—the love intelligence and love beauty—that animates and drives all of existence to higher and higher levels of complexity, consciousness and love.

Realizing Your Unique Self and giving your Unique Gifts, as we said at the outset, is the evolution of love that is the evolution of God upon which the future of God depends. There are two key steps involved.

Firstly, you clarify your realization to know that you are not a separate self but a True Self, inseparable from the All.

Secondly, you realize that your True Self has a Unique Perspective. True Self + Perspective = Unique Self. Your Unique Self is able to address a Unique Need that can be addressed by no one else in the world that ever was, is or will be, other than you. No one has the capacity to address this unique need in the way that you are able to do. This is your Unique Gift.

In sum, your obligation and joy in being alive is to clarify your Unique Perspective, realize your Unique Self and give your Unique Gift. This is how you Answer the Call. Transforming your awareness of self to Unique Self- consciousness is the change in your life that changes everything.

As we have already seen, democratization of enlightenment, therefore, does not mean that everyone is enlightened, but rather that a full expression of authentic unique essence is a genuine possibility and therefore a genuine expression of love-obligation for every living being. In other words, awakening to your Unique Self it is the joy and responsibility of answering the call.

Enlightenment Is Sanity

The future of our world depends on your enlightenment. A genuine shift in your consciousness will effect a similar shift in the consciousness of many of the people with whom you come into contact, and will spread enlightenment in ever-widening circles. The ease and urgency of enlightenment is contagious and exhilarating.

This transformation of consciousness is serious business. It is also an urgent, ecstatic, contagious, absolutely necessary, gorgeous, and delightful business. It is no more or less than the transformation of your identity.

Enlightenment means no more and no less than sanity.

To be enlightened is to know reality. To know reality is to be sane. The core of your reality is your identity. A correct understanding of your identity is core to your sanity and joy.

One old Aramaic text states, “Anyone who sins has been seized by a spirit of insanity.” In the original, “to sin” does not mean to be bad. It means literally to miss the mark. Modernity threw the word “sin” out of our vocabulary because it was hijacked by all sorts of fundamentalist communities who used it to make the body evil. We threw it out because it became associated with teenage masturbation and failure to assent to particular dogmas and doctrines. But now we need to reclaim the core meaning and space of insight held by this word. To sin is to miss the mark, to not properly understand the nature of reality. Sin is a form of ignorance, a false or partial relationship to reality. Ignorance is not realizing you are in a forest, because your attention is fixated on one tree.

The experience of sin is the feeling that things are not holding together. As Yeats wrote,

The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold,^{xxxiv}

To be enlightened means to be sane: so-called normal consciousness is insane. “Normal” consciousness rooted in the grasping ego produces suffering. “Normal” consciousness killed 100 million people in the last century. That is not normal. “Normal” consciousness is insane. To be sane is to be in right relationship with yourself and with all of the larger frameworks and contexts in which your self lives and breathes.

One of the simplest definitions of sanity used in the psychological literature is to know who you are. To be sane is know your identity, to recognize your name. For example, if I tell you that my name is Ken Wilber when my name is really Marc Gafni and I insist on being called Ken Wilber, there is a fairly good chance that I am more than a bit insane. Clearly, I don’t know my true identity.

But the distance between the identity of Marc and Ken may be less wide than the distance between my experience of myself as a separate, skin- encapsulated ego-self, and the experience of my True Self. From the place of True Self, I am able to access much more than my limited personal power, knowing, creativity and love. Rather, all of the power, knowing, creativity and love in the universe flow through me. When I see from the place of True Self, there is no reason for me to be jealous of you, to lash out at you or to do anything other than love you as myself. In some sense, you are myself. The pathological competition, the grasping and violence produced by contraction are deconstructed in the emergent glory of True Self. Instead, you access a spacious sense of peace, joy and harmonious equilibrium with all other expressions of being and becoming on the planet. The world literally becomes a different place. These are the gifts of what has classically been called enlightenment.

So here is the great question. If enlightenment is so great, why isn’t everyone seeking it? If enlightenment is the answer to our suffering, if it actually delivers on all of its wildly amazing promises – which it does – why is the world not lining up for intensive enlightenment studies?

Some enlightenment teachers explain that this is because of the clever obfuscations of the ego, which does everything in its power to avoid its own death. In other words, since the ego does not want to die, it attaches you to a narrow identity as a small self. Other teachers say that the work of practice required to liberate into True Self beyond ego is simply too demanding for most people. Still other teachers may

blame the seductions of culture and society, which so entice you with their pseudo-comforts that it is hard to free yourself from the game.

All of these explanations certainly carry some weight. But at the core of things the problem is not with the seekers of enlightenment. Instead, there is a core defect in the way classical enlightenment is being presented.

The teaching of classical enlightenment often points to a state that, at its core, appears boring, dislocating and alienating. It is dislocating because it leads a student to ask, quite rightly, “If I give up my separate self-ego identity, then who am I?” Many enlightenment teachers respond to this natural question by pointing out that it comes from the voice of the ego. In other words, they imply that once you’re enlightened, it doesn’t even arise. The price for enlightenment, as they say in the Zen tradition, is “Die to separate self!”

In one sense, that is true, but it is also partial. If enlightenment meant only disappearing into the undifferentiated oneness of True Self, it would seem to deny the sacred dignity of the individual. And besides, (as many seekers intuit), it would be boring. The sense of creative edge, vitality and becoming that are the ground of our aliveness would be lost in the being-ness of it all. If to be enlightened means to lose “me”, then it becomes irrelevant to most of the world.

Unique Self enlightenment teaches you how to lose “me” at the level of ego only to reclaim a higher and deeper “me” at the level of Unique Self. The Unique Self enlightenment teaching points out that to be enlightened—to know who you really are, your true identity—is not merely to recognize True Self, that which is only One (the total number of True Selves is, in fact, only one!) Rather, unique self enlightenment demands that you move beyond your separate self to True Self, while understanding that the realization of True Self is the ground for the awakening of your Unique Self. As an individual, you correctly sense that the source of your dignity and value is your irreducible uniqueness. And, the Unique Self teachings confirm that enlightenment is not a loss of individuality. It is the reclaiming of your infinite individuality as the unique expression of Essence that lives as you. To be enlightened means to realize your True Nature as an utterly unique perspective and manifestation of consciousness. It is to live at the energized edge of your evolutionary creativity and your capacity for becoming that is both indivisibly part of the greater One, and, at the same time, ecstatically You. This is sanity. This is what it means to live in a larger context as an evolutionary lover. This is enlightenment. This is your true identity. Enlightenment and sanity are one.

To be enlightened means to realize your True Nature as an utterly unique perspective and manifestation of consciousness.

To be enlightened means to be in love. Sometimes agonizingly, sometimes blissfully, but always in love. To be enlightened means to be living a life of ecstatic expression, aligned obligation, and unique meaning and fulfillment. Enlightenment is the life of pleasure, for the enlightened person knows how to discern between pleasures. There is no greater pleasure, even when painful, than your enlightened life manifesting as your Unique Self.

In Sanskrit, dharma means something like “truth,” “law,” and “path.” When you access the truth of Unique Self, the individualized law of your life reveals itself, and the path that is only yours to walk opens up and welcomes you.

When you realize the dharma of Unique Self, your relationship to love, malice, sex, joy, pleasure, relationships, parenting, ethical failures, jealousies, anger, all forms of acting out, death, reincarnation, heartbreak, and the very purpose of your life on earth will all evolve dramatically.

A realization of your Unique Self shifts everything, as you begin for the first time in your life to live and generate as Source.

Unique Self Is Not a Concept

Unique Self has been pointed to by Sufis as essence or the Diamond Body. It has been alluded to in Buddhism as the Eternal Drop, and by Hindus as the Inner Self (atman) or inner God.

Kabbalists call it Soul Root, and for some it is the personal manifestation of the Absolute. It is the lure of your own hidden being and becoming. It is the movement from personality to essence.

Personality is, in part, the pseudo-story you tell to make sense of the pain of your existence. Personality is not bad. It is both necessary for you to navigate the world and an essential stage of your development. Moreover, in personality are glimmerings of your Unique Self. Unique Self is found when you get beneath and beyond your personality.

Personality should not be confused with the personal. We seek to move beyond the personality, but not beyond the personal. Unique self is your personal response to the call of the transpersonal.

Enlightenment Is Not Impersonal

The goal of the New Enlightenment is not impersonal. You do not disappear in your enlightenment. You begin for the first time to appear, for your enlightenment takes on a perspective held for God only by you.

You harbor a greater life than you know. Give your little, private, convulsive, reactive self a rest in order to find the greater Self that is there.

In Unique Self practice, you allow yourself to become available to the extraordinary capacities beyond your imagining that you contain. You gain access to knowing beyond your experience. You are connected to perceptions and practices far beyond the capacity of your small self.

To recognize your unique qualities is simply to be present to what is. Unique Self is the unique feeling, a personal knowing, of your full presence.

The Personal Face of Essence

Some mystics refer to Unique Self as *ani atzmi*, best translated as “Essential Self.” Essential is that which is most substantial and real. Essence is what makes something what it is. The wonder of your irreducible uniqueness is your essence.

*Would that you could know yourself for a time.
You will be shocked by your delight.*

—RUMI

The Persian poets Rumi and Hafiz wrote their verse to recall you to your essence. Essence is your enlightened state expressed in its Unique form. Your Unique Self is not an object. It is the personal face of essence. To realize your essence is to realize your enlightenment. Let yourself be seduced by essence, and your life in all of its passing moments becomes filled with glory. Unique Self is not a mental construct or a concept: the Unique Self is the fullest flowering of your humanity and the blooming of your divinity. It is both the omega point and the dynamic purpose that drives us toward realization.

Unique Self is a direct manifestation of who you are. It is also your gift to the world. Your expression is unique, and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium. If you do not realize your Unique Self then all that only you can and must offer the world, all that the world needs from you, will be lost.

In Unique Self practice, you allow yourself to become available to the extra-ordinary capacities we each contain. You unleash extra-ordinary possibilities beyond your imagining. You gain access to knowing beyond your experience. You are connected to perception and practices far beyond the capacity of your small self. It is the individuation of your Unique Self that is the main task of your life.

You are the only perfect expression of what and who you are. So you might as well be yourself. In any event, everyone else is taken.

Too often, people never quite recognize themselves, because they are busy trying to be something or someone else. There is great shock and delight at self-recognition. Unique Self practice begins with a simple recognition of basic qualities of your Unique Being and Becoming. Unique Self is not a reaction. It is the spontaneous expression of Self being Unique.

The willow is green, flowers are red.

—ZEN SAYING

Chapter Four: Eight Stations of the road to Unique Self

THERE ARE EIGHT DISTINCT STATIONS in the evolution of identity on the path to your Unique Self. You will recognize them as you encounter them on your journey. I will now outline the stations to give you a view of the whole picture. Do not worry about fully understanding each station as you read it for the first time. The meanings and contours of the key stations will become clear as we explore them over the course of the book.

Station 1: Pre-personal Self

The first station appears at the beginning of life, before you have developed a sense of your personal separate self. In individual development, this is the station of the infant who is not yet individuated from their mother or environment. However, this pre-personal station doesn't disappear completely after infancy; it remains with us and reappears later in life in different forms. It is, for example, the station of someone who loses their autonomy and sense of identity in an abusive cult or lynch mob or someone caught in the group- think of politically-correct victimology. Falling in love also requires you to move—at least for a time—from the clear boundaries of the personal to the fusion of the pre-personal. It is for this reason that Freud, in his less romantic moments, viewed falling in love as regressive. Deeper insight reveals that this “falling” is an absolutely necessary, if temporary, first station of love. It gives the lover a temporary glimpse into what might be possible. In the next station, boundaries snap back into place as the personal reasserts itself. This is the station where lovers must decide if they are willing to stay and do the work. If all goes well you then evolve to station three, true love, when the infatuation of fusion is transmuted into the ecstasy of union. But the initial infatuation with another is one of the places, long after infancy, in which the pre-personal reappears in our lives.^{xxxv}

Station 2: Separate Self: Level One Personal

In this station of development you move from the pre-personal to the first personal stage of human development. This is when the personality, sometimes referred to as the ego, or separate self, comes online. The formation of personality and ego is a wonderfully healthy and necessary stage. You learn to experience yourself as a separate entity among many other separate entities, with your own boundaries and identity. The separate self is born. You feel joy at your success and frustration at your failure. At this station, the distinction between your false self, True Self, and Unique Self does not yet appear.

In this station you are wonderfully caught up in the glory of your story. In the best expression of this station, you are not thinking about your story; you are simply living it. There is great potential depth at this level of consciousness, expressed in part by a direct and unflinching recognition of what is. There comes a time when, in order to grow, you need to get over the fantasy of your idealized life and start

recognizing the story of your life for what it is. You embrace your life in all of its complexity, ecstasy, and pain. You can bear it all, and you delight in it all, because it is your life. And in claiming your life as it is, you start to feel something deeply right about it and about yourself. There emerges in you a willingness to take absolute responsibility for everything that happens in your life. You are fully identified with your story. You are a player in your life and not a victim of its circumstances.

Many teachers like to say, “You are not your story.” They are right, but only partially. They fail to distinguish between the ego story and the Unique Self story. But there is also great wisdom in this first level of the personal, the station of ego and personality. The ego prefigures the Unique Self. And as we shall see, there are many important stations through which you must still evolve toward your full depth and enlightenment. In the next stages of development, you will need to first clarify your story and then to dis-identify with it, in order to return to your ego story at a much higher level of consciousness, the level of Unique Self. While first glimmerings of Unique Self appear at this level of separate self, it can only fully be realized when ego gets over itself.

Station 3: False Self

False self is the unhealthy form of separate self. In this station, you take an essential step in the transformation and evolution of your identity. It is here that you begin to consciously deploy what Freud called the observing ego. Your ability to see the inner structure of your personality comes online. As you separate and look at the story of your life as an object, its contours and patterns begin to become clear to you. You begin to recognize some of the core beliefs that have defined and sometimes deformed your life. Certain core mind-sets start to stand out. You see that you have a particular way of fixing your attention, of stabilizing yourself with familiar and deeply held beliefs.

In this station, the essential practice is that of “making subject object”: Just as we get settled in the story of who we are, something amazing, something startling happens. We see that we have been telling a story. The entire narrative that we have formulated, the one that we have become so accustomed to, so comfortable with, slips from our subjective experience and becomes an object, an artifact. Remember Robert Kegan’s insight: the subject of one level of development becomes the object of the next level of development. The understanding of this stage of the journey is based in part on the pioneering work of the great psychologists Robert Assagioli, Oscar Ichazo, and others, which reveals how the fixation of attention, which creates a false sense of self, is the very mechanism that prevents us from uncovering our deeper nature. Your fixation is the particular prism through which you see the world, the way in which, very early in your life, your attention fixated into a very particular pattern. This fixation of attention into a particular slant of seeing will naturally produce a distorted picture of your identity, which is your false self. Your false self is the unhealthy and distorted expression of your separate self.

Your false self fixation often expresses itself in a sentence or series of sentences: “I am not safe.” “I am not enough.” “I am bad.” “I am too much.” You live inside your sentence. You need to step outside of your sentence in order to genuinely realize your True Self.

The model of the Enneagram type describes another kind of fixation. It is a distorted pattern of perceived meaning upon which you fixate early in your life, which then shapes and determines your experience of reality.

Recognizing these patterns, trance-ending them, and deploying them skillfully is the next critical step in your evolution. To walk toward your enlightenment, you must recognize your fixations, break their hold on you, and cleanse the doors of your perception.

To recognize your false self, you must first see it. This is the process of making subject—your false self—into object; your false self becomes an object that you can see and therefore change.

The discernment of the observing ego allows you to take the first steps out of your false self into your real life. You still identify with your separate self, but without the distorting smoke and mirrors of your false self.

Station 4: True Self—Classical Enlightenment: Impersonal

In this station we make the momentous, freeing leap from the personal to the transpersonal. This has been called by some the liberation from the personal and the great realization of the impersonal. It would be more accurate to say that it is liberation from the ego personality, which is only level one of the personal. This level of the personal is transcended only to reappear in clarified form at the level of Unique Self, but first we must realize our True Selves.

We are ready and even yearning to evolve beyond our separate-self ego. We are no longer able to adhere to an identification with self that is painfully limited. The space beyond the story, the awareness beyond the fixations of attention, and the contracted conception of self now become the foreground instead of the background. This is the classical stage of ego dissolution. You realize your True Nature. Your identity shifts from your separate-self ego to your True Self. You move to trance-end your personality and identify with your essence. This is the change that changes everything.

Sometimes this dissolution occurs spontaneously, sometimes through overwhelming pain or extreme fatigue; at other times, it emerges as the fruition of years of dedicated study and practice. Yet even at this stage of development, the ego does not disappear. Rather the ego is freed from its own narcissism and becomes an ally. You never evolve beyond ego. You evolve beyond your exclusive identification with ego.

As you begin to dislodge from your exclusive identification with the separate self, as you become disillusioned, you may be fearful or anxious, longing for the old, solid ground of your narrow identity. At the same time, your growing sense is that you are part of an infinitely larger context, that you are part of the “seamless coat of the Uni-verse.”

Understand that this is not a one-time event, but a continuous process of death and rebirth at each and every moment.

At this station, you engage in spiritual practice in order to dislodge your identity from the hell of separation, and you begin to realize your identity as the eternal Witness, as Big Mind/Big Heart, as the effortless spacious awareness behind this moment and every moment. You recognize your profound interconnectedness with others and the world. You realize that you are part of the larger field of love, intelligence, and creativity underlying All-That-Is. You reach beyond time and taste eternity, stepping out of the stream of past, present, and future, consenting to the full presence of the unchanging Now.

Two Notes on True Self

The first note concerns one's level of True Self-realization and the relationship between True Self and Unique Self. Clearly there are different levels of True Self-realization. Our evolution beyond exclusive identification with ego is an ongoing process, and it is fueled by regular practice. Many people have glimmerings of True Self-realization at several different times in their lives and then remain faithful to the lived memory of that experience. (In fact, one definition of faith could be "living with fidelity to those moments when you authentically realize the true nature of yourself and the universe"!)

All this means that levels of True Self-realization vary greatly from person to person. It is fair to say, however, that there is a direct relationship between the level of your True Self-realization and the clarity of your Unique Self awakening. The more deeply you know your True Self, the more you can be sure that your experience of a distinctive self-sense is at the level of Unique Self and not merely the grasping of ego. The more experiences of True Self you have, especially if you ally them with certain practices (witness practice, surrender practice, and others), the more you are able to discern between the voices of your child-ego and the experience of self that comes from true alignment with the divine in you.

The second note concerns the nature and method of True Self-realization. If you can only realize True Self by attaining the ultimate realization of Buddha, and if Unique Self comes online only after one has attained that level of True Self-realization, then only a very few people could ever realize Unique Self. That would make Unique Self-realization practically irrelevant for most human beings. Yet we know that True Self is accessed through many different means, not only through a nondual realization, born of first-person meditative practice, as in the classical Zen kensho or Hindu samadhi. Realizing True Self can happen through non-meditative experiences like prayer, ecstatic dance, spontaneous visionary experience, or even during a tennis game or a car accident. A sense of being enmeshed in and intertwined with invisible lines of connection that link all of reality may be accessed through direct contact with many forms of the transcendent, including contact with personal, second-person forms of the divine such as Christ or the divine mother. You can access glimmerings of True Self in the course of living for a higher social purpose or artistic vision, or by incarnating values like service and kindness. For example, my grandmother was a profoundly awake woman who experienced herself as selflessly committed to the highest good of all beings, and connected to all beings. Her compassion was vast, and her consciousness was full of God-awareness. She never meditated or had a nondual satori realization in her life. Indeed, she never heard of meditation. Her major formal spiritual practice was praying, reading psalms, and absorbing the laws and stories of the great Jewish masters, along with the ritual practices of

Jewish teaching. All of this served to produce in her what can only be described as an enlightened consciousness, which had profoundly trance-ended separate self. There are many like her, who have had enough experience of contact with True Self to be able to awaken to their Unique Self, and to discern the difference between Unique Self and ego.

Station 5: Unique Self—The New Enlightenment: Level Two Personal

At the fifth station you witness the emergence of Unique Self. The personal comes back online at a higher level of consciousness. You realize that your True Self is not merely an indistinct part of a larger unification, but expresses itself uniquely, and that you have a unique role to play in the evolutionary unfolding. The personal face of your True Self is your Unique Self. You are able to consciously incarnate the evolutionary impulse toward healing and transformation that initiates, animates, and guides reality. No one else in the world can respond as you can to the unique need of All-That-Is, that is yours and only yours to address, and the place of your full liberation and power.

Awakening to your Unique Self has been called the “Pearl beyond Price” by the Sufi adherents, or “ani after ayin” by Kabbalists. It is alluded to as “Kosmic Consciousness assuming individual form” in the Yoga Vasistha of Hinduism.

Unique Self is not just another subtle disguise of the ego.

Not in the least. Unique Self is rather the personal face of True Self. Unique Self is the antidote to the grasping of ego. In one moment you are fully alive, dynamically reaching for love and manifestation, and yet you are willing to let go of any attachment in the next moment. Your ego is still present, but you have moved beyond exclusive identification with your ego. The ego points toward Unique Self. Your Unique Self, which begins to reveal itself at the level of personality, comes to full flower only after freeing itself from the grasping of ego through genuine and repeated experiences of ego clarification and trance-ending. Unique Self appears gradually and in direct proportion to the level of egoic clarification and trance-ending. Unique Self also shows up fleetingly in peak experiences in conjunction with parallel appearances of True Self. An example of this might be a moment of “flow” or an Eros experience, sometimes called “being in the zone,” when ego temporarily drops, and a felt or even lived experience of Unique Self becomes temporarily available to the person.

In classical enlightenment, we move from an experience of ourselves as a-part, to a felt experience of ourselves as an indivisible expression of the larger oneness, where the sense of the part dissolves and the wholeness even shift of emphasis, we evolve to an even deeper depth of realization. At this station, we begin to experience ourselves as the part again, but from the place of vast awareness, we realize that the part is not separate. We realize that we are not a separate but rather a unique part of a larger whole. And you realize that whole living in you, in part. Your awakening or enlightenment has a perspective that is held only by you.

True Self + Perspective = Unique Self

This stage is hinted at in the Tenth Oxherding picture in Buddhism, one of ten snapshots of enlightenment. In the tenth picture, the man walks back to the marketplace—and I would add “in order to offer his Unique Gifts and to perform the unique bodhisattva obligations that can and must be fulfilled by him alone.”

Evolutionary Unique Self

It is not enough, however, to awaken only to your Unique Expression of True Self. As we will unfold in more depth in Chapter 8, there is a second critical dimension of awakening that is essential to Unique Self-realization. I received a direct transmission of this second dimension of Unique Self enlightenment from my lineage teachers who are best described as evolutionary mystics.

Isaac Luria, the teacher of my teachers, the great evolutionary mystic of the Renaissance period, taught that every action that a person takes must be with the explicit consciousness and intention of tikkun. Tikkun is best translated as the evolutionary healing and transformation of all of reality. Every action must be invested with evolutionary intention. In Luria’s language it must be *leshem yichud*, meaning for the sake of the evolutionary integration and transformation of all of reality.

Said simply in the language of the evolutionary mystics themselves, to awaken to your Unique self is to “shift your perspective.” The way the evolutionary mystics say it is simply to shift your perspective from “your side” to “God’s side.” To the evolutionary mystics, to awaken means not necessarily to have a profound mystical state experience in which you feel all of being living in you; rather, to awaken is to dramatically, yet simply, shift your alignment. To no longer align with your will, but with God’s will.

We do not mean God here in the old mythic sense of the ethnocentric God who created the world in six days and is anti-science, vengeful, and anti-humanity. By God, Luria refers to the evolutionary process of unfolding which drives and animates the kosmos on every level of existence. God’s will is the will of the kosmos. God is what Aurobindo refers to in his great work *The Future Evolution of Man* as the evolutionary imperative or what has been more recently renamed as *The Evolutionary Impulse*¹. It is the creative force of the kosmos, which is, intends, and moves All-That-Is toward healing and transformation. It is the evolutionary impulse that lives in you, as you, and through you.

To awaken to your Unique Self means to awaken to the impulse to evolve, which is the divine creativity surging in you at this very moment, reaching toward the good, the true, and the beautiful. To awaken to your Unique Self is to realize—as the evolutionary mystics taught us—that you live in an evolutionary context. To awaken to your Unique Self is to realize that your True Self is not static. When we thought that the divine field was an eternal absolute, then naturally we felt that the realization of True Self was the awakening to your unqualified eternal, absolute, and unchanging consciousness. The evolutionary mystics, however, from Luria to Schelling to Kook to Aurobindo, awakened to the evolving nature of spirit. As we moved into modernity and Darwinian science, the contemporary evolutionary mystics

¹ *Barbara Marx Hubbard, *Conscious Evolution: Awakening our Social Potential*, 1998

realized that their initial insight into the evolution of spirit applied not only to spirit, but also to the evolution of the biosphere, of the physical world. As my teacher Abraham Kook writes, “all of reality” — matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit—“is always evolving.” To be a mystic is to know something of the interior face of the kosmos. The novice knows today what only the most advanced souls knew five hundred years ago, that evolution is the inner mechanism of mystery.

For example, Renaissance mystic Isaac Luria and his school of Kabbalists had a deep knowing of the inner evolutionary process of spirit. They knew through deep mystical contemplation that the awakened human being was actively and consciously engaging in the evolution of all of reality. In their more audacious nondual formulations, these evolutionary mystics, writing in the 16th century, realized that man is responsible for the evolution of God.

They understood and clearly articulated that the specific privilege and wild responsibility of the human being is to awaken to conscious evolution. And, these very evolutionary mystics are the original inspiration for the core teaching of Unique Self. This is substantively different than what my colleague, Andrew Cohen, calls Authentic Self. For Authentic Self in his teaching is an “awakened impersonal function.” By contrast, Unique Self is the personal after the impersonal and is characterized by irreducible uniqueness.

In this broader evolutionary mystical context, it is possible to say simply that in the awakened Unique Self, evolution becomes conscious of itself. It is the awakened Unique Self feeling the imperative of evolution consciously alive in herself that is therefore called to give her Unique Gifts for the sake of the evolution of all of reality. So, the Unique Self in full realization might be more accurately termed the evolutionary Unique Self. The awakened Unique Self who has evolved beyond exclusive identification with ego is constantly being called by the evolutionary impulse. Indeed, it is in consciously aligning his Unique Self will with the evolutionary will of the kosmos that the human being is pulled beyond ego to True Self, and then to the personal face of True Self—Unique Self. One does not escape ego by awakening to the evolutionary Unique Self. Ego is always present. However, by identifying with the infinitely larger context of the evolutionary Unique Self, the limited identification with ego is gloriously trance-ended.

(For a graphic representation of these stations of consciousness, see the chart at the end of this chapter.)

Station 6: Unique Shadow

In the post-enlightenment experience, there are still layers to be shed. Even when we are most expansive, most identified with All-That-Is, small pockets of identity are kept out of our awareness, although they are experienced quite directly by everyone around us. You simply can’t see them directly, even though recognizing them would free up your energy and directly facilitate a more powerful and beautiful expression of your Uniqueness. This is what is called, both in some of the great traditions and in modern psychology, your shadow.^{xxxvi}

Learning to recognize and do shadow work is one of the challenges of the full journey of Unique Self. Although shadow work begins at the level of separate self, the full completion of your shadow work is directly connected to your realization of Unique Self. The common understanding of shadow is the negative material about yourself that you are unable to own in your first person. This negative material—your jealousy, pettiness, fear, rage, brutality—is understood to be generic. The same core material is said to show up and be repressed into shadow, to a greater and larger degree, by everyone. This is a true but highly partial understanding of shadow.

In Unique Self teaching, we evolve the shadow work conversation and realize that shadow is not generic—shadow is intensely personal. This is a critical evolutionary unfolding of our understanding of shadow.

Your personal shadow is your Unique Shadow. Your Unique Shadow is your dis-owned Unique Self, the unavoidable result of a life yet unlived. Shadow is not merely your repressed negative material. Shadow is your dis-owned, denied, or distorted Unique Self. Your Unique Self and your Unique Shadow are a double helix of light and dark coiled into the patterns of becoming.

Remember William Blake’s teaching on wisdom and folly: “If the fool would follow his folly, he would become wise.”^{xxxvii} In precisely the same way, you can follow the path of your Unique Shadow back to your Unique Self.

You can almost learn more about yourself through your darkness than you can through your light.

Station 7: Your Unique Gift

The obligation that wells up from your evolutionary realization of Unique Self is your responsibility to give the gifts that are yours alone to give, gifts that are desired and needed by the rest of creation. Every human being has a particular set of gifts to offer in the world. Your Unique Perspective gives birth to what I call your Unique Gift.

The ability to offer this gift freely and fully depends on your ability to free yourself of limiting and false notions of who you are, and to instead identify with your larger service. And beautifully, when this happens you are also able to allow others to be fully who they are as Unique Beings: complete, whole, and specific. This is one of the litmus tests of whether you are in Unique Self or in ego, whether you are able to joyously recognize and affirm the Unique Self of others without feeling that they are taking something that is yours.

Your Unique Gift is the particular contribution that you can make to the evolution of consciousness, which can be made by no one else who ever was, is, or will be. Both the overwhelming desire and ability to give your Unique Gift is a direct and spontaneous expression of your Unique Self-realization. Your Unique Gift, whether public or private, is your divine evolutionary gift to All-That-Is. It is the very face of God, the unique face of evolution alive and awake, in you, as you, and through you.

Some of our gifts are modest, private, and intimate; some are larger than life and have dramatic impact in the public sphere. Some of our gifts are actively given; others emerge from the very uniqueness of our being and presence.

This last point is subtle but essential. Unique Self contains in it something of the old idea of “answering the call” that is essential in Kabbalah and Protestant theology. But it is much more than that. Your Unique Self expresses itself in your Unique Being as well as in your Unique Becoming. Unique Self might have a public face, but it can also be utterly private. A hermit may live Unique Self no less than the president of the United States.

Station 8: Unique Vow, Unique Obligation

In the Buddhist tradition, the bodhisattva is one who seeks Buddhahood through practicing noble action. The bodhisattva vows to postpone his or her complete awakening and fulfillment until all other beings are awakened and fulfilled.^{xxxviii} In Kabbalah this same archetype is called the Tzadik. The determining factor in their actions is compassion, deployed by utilizing the highest insight and wisdom. The realization of Unique Self may be regarded as bodhisattva activity, the unique manifestation of wisdom and guidance. The Unique Self bodhisattva vow is an expression of evolutionary joy and responsibility, even as it is a commitment to the fulfillment of your evolutionary obligation.

Many of us recoil when we hear the word “obligation.” We identify obligation with arbitrarily imposed limitations set by the church or state that suffocate the naturally free human being. Let’s inquire for a moment what obligation might mean at a higher level of consciousness, rather than the obligation imposed by an authority external to you. This inquiry yields the deeper truth that obligation is the ultimate liberation. Obligation frees you from ambivalence and allows you to commit 1,000 percent to the inherent invitation that is the Unique Obligation present in every unique situation.

Obligation at this level of consciousness is created by the direct and clear recognition of authentic need that can be uniquely addressed by you and you alone. For example, let’s say you are stuck on a lush tropical island with another person. There is abundant food. The problem is, due to a physical ailment, this person is unable to feed herself. Are you obligated to feed her? Most people would agree that in this situation, you have an absolute obligation to feed her. Why is this so? It is based on what I call the fivefold principle of authentic obligation.

First, there is a need.

Second, it is a genuine and not a contrived need. Third, you clearly recognize the need.

Fourth, you are capable of fulfilling the need.

Fifth, you realize that you are uniquely capable; the need can be uniquely addressed by you and you alone.

The combination of these five factors creates your Unique Obligation to give the Unique Gift that can be given only by you in this moment. Generally we cringe at the word obligation. We commonly understand obligation to be the opposite of love. In the original Hebrew, however, love and obligation are the same word. Authentic obligation is a natural by-product of authentic love.

Every true obligation is sourced in love. Unique love creates a Unique Obligation to give your Unique Gift. While most of our gifts address more subtle hungers than food, there is no person who does not possess Unique Gifts that respond to unique needs. From a nondual perspective, it is your Unique Gift that creates your Unique Obligation. To live your Unique Self and offer your Unique Gift is to align yourself with the evolutionary impulse and fulfill your evolutionary obligation. The realization of your Unique Self awakens you to the truth that there is a Unique Gift that your singular being and becoming offers the world, which is desperately needed by All-That-Is, and can be given by you and you alone. There is no more powerful and joyous realization available to a human being. It is the matrix of meaning that fills your life and is the core of your Unique Self enlightenment.

The Five Great Awakenings

Another way to understand the core of these stations is through the prism of what I call the Five Great Awakenings.

A shared understanding, revealed by so many systems of knowing, whether pre-modern, modern or postmodern, is that we are asleep and need to wake up. But the fact that we are asleep is not an accident. It is not a cosmic mistake. Rather, it is the intentional nature of the living kosmos that we earn our attainment, as well as its by-products of joy and fulfillment, through the process of waking up. Everyone agrees: we need to wake up. The disagreement in culture, however, is this: In what way are we asleep, and consequently, in what way do we need to wake up? Each stream of culture, including psychology, spirituality, evolutionary theory and more, answers this question differently. Moreover, there are significantly different answers within each of the aforementioned streams. More confusing still, each one focuses on one form of awakening as the key to liberation, fulfillment, or some other great good of humanity, but ignores other forms of awakening.

As Integral philosophy wisely points out, no major stream of knowing is smart enough to be entirely wrong. Each claim in regard to the essential nature of the desired and required human awakening is true, but partial. The problem starts when a partial claim to truth claims to be the whole story. When parts pretend to be wholes, as we shall see, the result is cancer in the body or the body politic. But when we integrate the major streams of insight and view them as complementary, we realize that there are in fact five great awakenings in the journey of a human lifetime. All are necessary. Each form of awakening addresses a different level of reality, that is to say, a different way that humans have of being asleep. Each gives a different gift. Each requires a different process to awaken. Together, they might be seen to be an accurate map of the human journey that we are invited into at birth. Taken together, they might be said to point towards the core intention and purpose of our lives.

Although the numbering system is somewhat different, these awakenings closely approximate the map described in the eight stations that we have just unfolded. When we use different mapping systems, the number of levels or stages or stations nearly always differ, even in the best maps of spirit. Below, I will briefly correlate the two maps. But if you read closely, it becomes clear that they are covering the same ground.

So, what I share with you below is a very brief view of the Five Great Awakenings. It recapitulates, in different form, the journey to awakening we have just outlined. These Awakenings may serve to sharpen the contours of the Eight Stations in your mind and deepen their roots in your heart and spirit.

Each of these levels of awakening creates a deeper and more expanded sense of identity and consciousness. Each level of awakening takes place both within humanity as a whole and within every individual human being. Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.

1) Ego Awakening: Pre-personal to Personal Awakened Self.

The first great awakening takes place when the human being emerges from the slumber of immersion in the Great Mother. At the dawn of human existence, a separate sense of self has not yet emerged. Instead, the self was, to varying degrees, identified with nature and the immediate environment, with no sense of an individuation. At this level, there is no sense of larger frameworks of time beyond the immediacy of the present moment or the present day. So, the first level of awakening is to a separate self, or Level One Personal. You experience this awakening in your life in the beginning of your journey, as your baby self awakens to an individuated identity as a separate self-ego. This is the move from the pre-personal to the personal. It might also take place when you free yourself from any pre-personal context, such as a cult or a family system, that subsumes individual emergence.

One expression of this awakening crystallizes in Hebrew mysticism, which affirms the human being as a homo imago dei, a separate dignified self, rooted in the divine, and possessed of infinite dignity, value, and adequacy.

Once you have firmly stabilized your realization of separate self, you need to fully claim your story and your life. You need to clarify the true nature of your story and step out the limiting beliefs and distorted narratives of your false self. I call this the Awakening of Ego.^{xxxix} This is a stage of awakening. The ego is not merely a level to move beyond. It is a level to awaken. This is the first expression of a full integral enlightenment. It requires that all the parts of the self, all the voices, all the sub-personalities, be given their place. The protector, wounded child, controller, seeker, competitor and all other parts need to be seen with compassion and recognized for the gifts they give. It is only this recognition, which will allow the parts to let go of their attempt to pathologically hijack the whole. Once each part or voice is given its place and recognized, it more naturally takes its place in the larger whole and releases its destructive and pathological expressions. Shadow in the sense of any disowned parts of your consciousness needs to be surfaced and appropriately integrated. All of this is part of awakening to your separate self. On the Eight Stations map, this awakening takes place as part of Stations One, Two and Three.

2) The Awakening to the Unity Principle:

This is an awakening to the Absolute, the eternal divine principle, which is the ground of being. This takes place when you awaken to the reality that this unified principle, the organizing principle of the kosmos, holds you. If you are a theist, you might see this as the arms of the Great Mother or Great Father holding you. You may awaken to the unity principle and then realize that you are in the arms of the Mother, or held by the Father-God. Or you may awaken into the arms of God and then realize that she is the Unity Principle. This awakening begins in Station Two. As you evolve, however, in Stations Three through Eight your personal relation to the ultimate deepens in quality and depth.

3) Awakening from Separate Self to True Self:

This awakening is classically called enlightenment in the great spiritual traditions. It is possible to awaken to the unity principle and still experience yourself as a separate self. You can be in the arms of the Great Mother and still be in separate self. The awakening to True Self is the awakening described in the texts of classical enlightenment, where you realize not only that there is a unity principle, but that the unity principle is one with you. You realize that infinite no-thingness is who you are. This is the recognition: "I am part of the All, not separate from the ground of being. All the love that inheres in All-That-Is flows through me and incarnates in me." This awakening is a realization of the Absolute, the eternal divine principle, which is the ground of being living in you, as you, and through you. At this level, the human being at her core is realized as identical with the spacious ground of All-That-Is, incarnate as the essence of all life. This is the Supreme identity that is the secret teaching of all the great traditions. In the Eight Stations, this takes place at station four.

4) Awakening from True Self to Your Unique Self.

The fourth great awakening is the realization of your Unique Self, when you awaken to your identity as a radically singular expression of the single One. You realize that you are not only the process, but also the personal face of the process; you realize that God is having a You experience. You know that you incarnate a unique emanation of All-That-Is, with unique gifts to give to, the evolutionary process itself. You follow your unique shadow back to your Unique Self when you realize that your shadow is simply your unlived, or distorted, unique Essence. You recognize that awakening as Your Unique Self is the essential joy, obligation, delight, awesome privilege, and responsibility of your life. You commit to express your Unique Gifts. This is the great vow of your life. In the eight stations model, this level corresponded with stations five, six, seven and eight.

5) Evolutionary Unique Self Awakening.

The fifth great awakening is also an awakening to the ground of being. However, this time, the ground of being is understood to be constantly evolving. You awaken to the fact that you are living in an evolutionary context. You realize that the context is alive and conscious. This is an awakening to the divine nature of the evolutionary process. In some sense, it is an awakening of the process itself. The Unique Self awakens to his or her nature as evolution, as a unique expression of the evolutionary impulse. In this awakening, you realize that the evolutionary impulse lives in you, as you, and through you. You understand that your heart is identical with the evolving heart of the kosmos, that the heart of the kosmos beats as you and through you.

This is the level where you become an evolutionary mystic. This happens as you realize your identity with the impersonal creative energy of the divine, which has been called the evolutionary impulse.^{xi} Once this realization awakens as you, you live with evolutionary integrity, giving your unique gifts. Holding this infinitely wider context makes it easier for you to work with your shadow. Your contraction naturally expands. Evolution becomes conscious of itself and advances through the awakening of your Unique Self.^{xli} In the eight stations model, this corresponds with Stations Five, Six, Seven, and Eight.

In the best possible scenario, each level of awakening transcends and includes the previous rung of consciousness. The levels of development may happen in a different order than described here, but to freeze at any one level creates shadow—shadows of the personal and impersonal.

A Clarifying Note on the Eight Stations

Finally, it is important to understand that these stations and levels of awakening are not necessarily linear. The path is more mysterious and paradoxical than can be conveyed in simple, neat categories. For example, you might, as I did after my teacher Pinky's death, catch a powerful—if temporary—hit of Unique Self or True Self, even while your center of gravity is still at the station-two ego level. And conversely, you may have experiences of false self even after you have realized some significant level of enlightenment. Your Unique Shadow may attempt to hijack your best intention right after an experience of profound open heart and awakening. The pre-personal may appear to seduce you when you are convinced you are firmly rooted in True Self. Finally, it is important to note that the ego never disappears, even at the highest levels of consciousness. What disappears is the identification with the ego. So while these stations usually unfold one after the other, they also zigzag, skip levels, reverse direction, and may take all sorts of unexpected turns.

A Short Recapitulation of Unique Self Doctrine

In conclusion of this chapter I offer a brief recapitulation of the core of Unique Self doctrine. The Unique Self teaching evolves and qualifies the classic enlightenment teaching of many of the mystical traditions. The Unique Self-realization, which began to emerge with my Soul Print teaching (1986), has been a key lodestone in the dharma that I have tried to share in the world. In the last years 2003-2012) an intense

and delightful friendship and dharma dialogue with Ken Wilber further evolved and clarified the teaching within the context of Integral Theory. In the last ten years (2002-2012) the Unique Self teaching, has challenged and evolved the way enlightenment has been understood and taught in many, if not most, contemporary Western contexts. Many realized teachers, passionately committed to evolving truth, have encountered the Unique Self teaching, recognized its insight, and audaciously incorporated it into their own dharma.

The enlightened state, in the classic Eastern enlightenment traditions, is your awakening to the one True Self. The total number of true selves in the world is one. True Self is the realization of reality—which exists unconsciously in every state and in every level of consciousness—that there is only one True Self and every being has that True Self as its own essence. Awakening is when your unconscious reality of True Self becomes our conscious identity. You are enlightened when you have the shocking realization that your True Self is the True Self. You then further evolve to realize that the same is true for every other sentient being. You realize at the same time that your True Self is utterly one with everything that is, everything that ever was and everything that ever will be. The sensual knowing of this truth is what is usually referred to as enlightenment.

Enlightenment practices and processes teach you how to open the eye of the spirit and realize the truth that your essence is your True Self. You are aware of your body, your emotions, your thoughts, but you are not exclusively identified or defined by them. You are the consciousness that holds them and in which they arise. You are True Self. The more profound the enlightenment the more clear, powerful and stable the realization of True Self.

What we have added with the Unique Self doctrine is that your awakened True Self is not the same as anyone else's awakened True Self. This is a key truth that many of the great Eastern traditions, which have almost entirely dominated enlightenment teaching in the Western world, simply did not understand. They thought that your True Self and my True Self are simply the same. They understood True Self (or its awakened creative state, which have been called Authentic Self or Evolutionary Self) as fundamentally impersonal. My True Self and yours are therefore essentially interchangeable. Whatever uniqueness you might have is ultimately a function of your ego or your "cultural, social and psychological conditioning".

What Unique Self realizes in its genuinely evolutionary unfolding of True Self sees through a unique perspective. Once you understand that perspectives are foundational there is no way to escape this truth. Perspective is not less than but it is much more than merely your conditioning. Perspective is a property of your essence. While the same True Self exists in every one of us, each of us is awakened as True Self from a radically unique perspective. Each one of us has a personal perspective that is irreducible. Unique Self thus insists that enlightenment is ultimately not at all impersonal. Rather, Unique Self reveals the radically personal nature of enlightenment. For the classical enlightenment traditions enlightenment was the realization of the emptiness that is empty of all personal dimensions. I call this the enlightenment of emptiness. The new enlightenment of Unique Self is the realization of the radically

personal nature of your True Self, which is your Unique Self. For this reason I have called Unique Self enlightenment the Enlightenment of Fullness.

Your Unique Perspective forms your Unique Self. This is the unique expression not merely of your manifest self but also of your unmanifest self. This is what the Hebrew mystics called Ayin and the Buddhists called sunyata or emptiness. (This is why we deployed the term Unique Self instead of soul. While some texts refer to soul as I am using Unique Self, see for example, some passages in Gafni, Soul Prints, 2001. Other classical mystical texts refer to soul as the spiritual substance of separate self. Soul is thought in this usage to be the unique expression of your manifest self.) Unique Self, however, transcends and includes this understanding of Soul, for unique self is the infinite and irreducible uniqueness of both your manifest and un-manifest self. Your un-manifest essence, which was there before the big bang, is unique as it always looks out through a unique set of eyes. Your enlightenment has perspective. Your perspective.

Your perspective is the source of the irreducible dignity of your individuality. Your perspective creates your unique insight. Your unique insight creates the unique gifts of being and becoming that you have to bring to the world. The radical and irreducible uniqueness of your gifts is precisely what creates your Unique Obligation to give those gifts. You have a unique responsibility to give those gifts because they are yours and yours alone. There is no one else in the world that ever was, is or will be that can give those gifts.

The failure to realize Unique Self undermines the recognition of the infinitely special nature of every human being. It is only such a recognition that prohibits you from using another human being as merely a means for your end. To love a human being is therefore to recognize their Unique Self and support its emergence in the world.

Unique Self like True Self always exists. Unique Self only fully grows up into itself after awakening to some level of True Self and after evolving to higher levels of developmental consciousness. After I unfolded the core of the Unique Self teaching I was exposed to a plethora of developmental models, which confirmed that it is at the more evolved levels of consciousness – beginning at about World Centric and progressively deepening – that Unique Self is naturally and spontaneously experienced. At these higher levels of consciousness your True Self-consciousness awakens to its Unique Perspective of the world. So while Unique Self, like True Self, is present all the way up and all the way down in every stage and state of sentience, it comes online spontaneously as the natural property of the higher reaches of developmental consciousness.

Enlightenment then can be properly understood as having two distinct steps. The first step is waking up and the second step is growing up.

The first step is when the human being wakes up to their state of being fully identified with True Self. The realization that True Self—your awakened conscious knowing that the living essence of all that is, lives in you, as you and through you—is step one.

Step two is when True Self grows into the realization of its irreducible uniqueness. In growing up you realize that what you thought was your identity at the level of separate self-consciousness was an illusion. Your ego claimed that all sorts of expressions of self, which are illusory and fleeting, are your core identity. These might include your wealth, social status, physical prowess and the like. When you liberate those illusions of self into the realization of True Self you wake up.

You grow up when you reclaim every part of you, including the unique properties of your separate self, as an expression of your unique perspective. The natural and spontaneous experience of your unique perspective comes on line at the higher levels of developmental consciousness.

Pause for a second to review how we are deploying some of these terms. A state of consciousness, be it a mystical, orgiastic or drunken, is attained through free grace of practice. It is transitory and not stable. In a mystical state you feel in first person the true nature of your expanded identity. A level is not an awakened state but a structure stage of developmental consciousness. The simplest example might be the movement of moral consciousness to expand your circle of love from your self, to your tribe, to the whole world, including all human beings, and then even beyond. These expanding circles of caring, concern and love are often labeled ego-centric, ethnocentric and World Centric. Each is a distinct structure of consciousness that once you realize you virtually never lose.

Unique Self-Realization becomes a natural, spontaneous and stable expression of self at the higher levels of developmental consciousness beginning around the World Centric stage. Beyond the World Centric stage is where states and levels (sometimes called stages) arise together. This level of consciousness has been called Kosmoscentric. At this level one's circle of love includes not only human beings but all sentient beings and not only in the present but also all past and future. In parallel, in Kosmoscentric consciousness at its more evolved stages, you awaken to your real identity as True Self.

At Kosmoscentric consciousness the movement of waking up happens together with growing up as well. Growing up at Kosmoscentric occurs when you make the ultimate shift in perspectives. You move, as it were, from the human to the divine perspective. You become God's perspective. But not in the sense of being absorbed in the undifferentiated source. You do not become indistinguishable oneness or divinity. Rather, you shift to God's perspective through growing up fully into your Unique Self that is grounded in your unique perspective. When your unique perspective wakes up and grows up into itself, a new emergent quality of divinity that never was before comes into being and becoming. God has evolved.

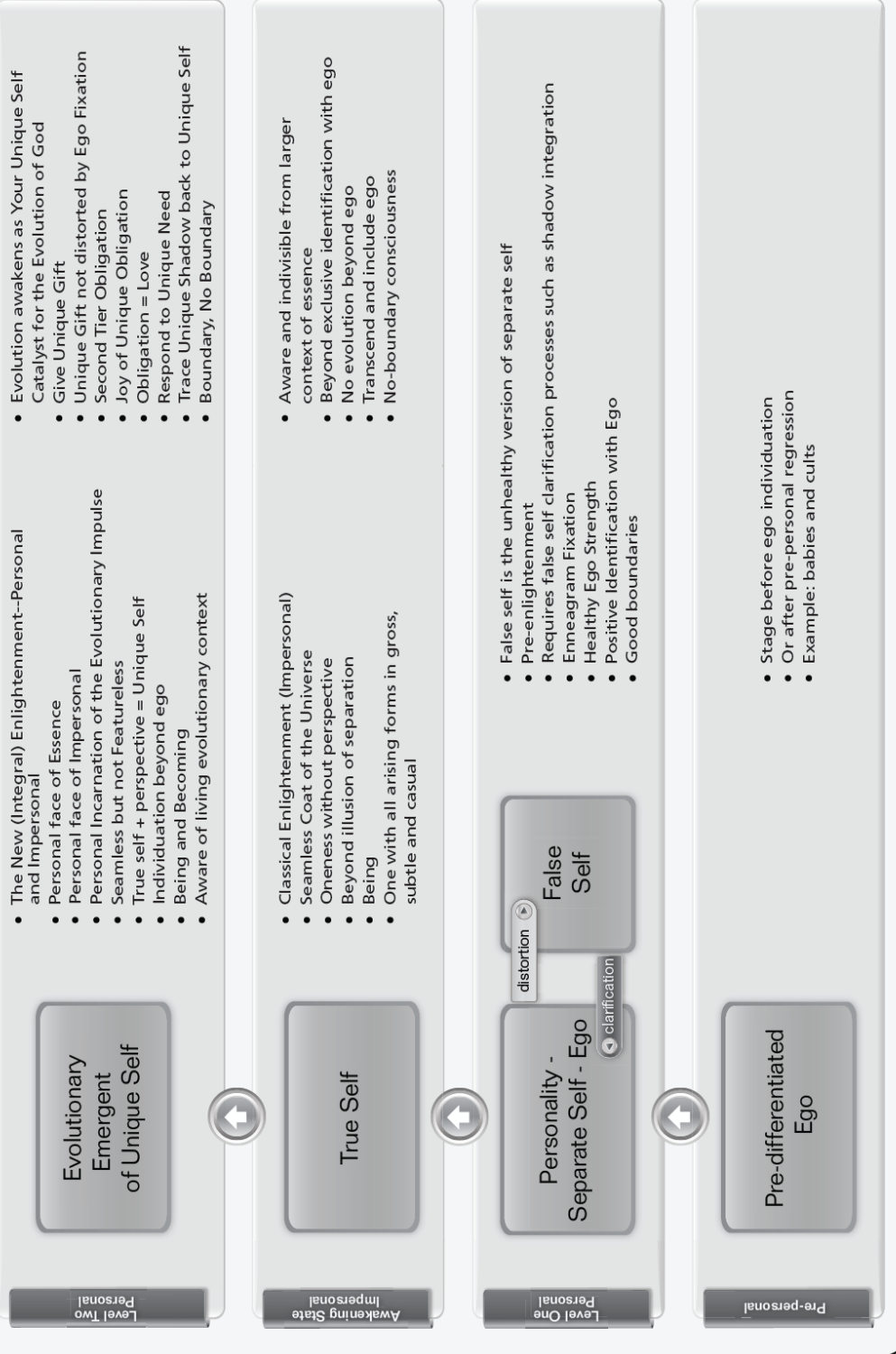
God evolves as and through the awakening of your Unique Self. This particular quality of essence that awakens in you when you fully grow up is your unique perspective that births your Unique Self. This is the radically personal face of both enlightenment and evolution.

When you grow into Kosmoscentric consciousness you become fully aware of the larger evolutionary context of ever emerging source, which seeks to awaken in you as you and through you. Your awakening as Evolutionary Unique Self is source's evolutionary awakening to itself.

Through you and only through you can a unique set of gifts be given to reality, gifts that are not extra or ornamental, but gifts which are desperately needed and passionately desired by all.

Paradoxically Unique Self also implies relationship. Irreducible uniqueness creates the face of the other that yearns to recognize and be recognized. Mutual recognition is realized in the face-to-face relationship. For Unique Self the paradoxical encounter with the second person of God is not dogma, but realization. Sufi master Rumi and Hasidic master Levi Isaac of Berdichev do not “believe” in the personal god. Rather, they know and taste the personal face of essence. Unique Self is paradoxically the unique expression of God in the first-person, what the Upanishads called, Thou Art That, known in Buddhism as I Amness, as well as God in the second-person, the unique face-to-face encounter of other with Source. At the same time Unique Self incarnates God in the third person, the conscious and unique expression of the evolutionary impulse, God having a You experience. Therefore, it would be most correct to say that in Unique Self-realization the three faces of God incarnate in paradoxical unity.

Station of Self



Notes

ⁱ For an extended discussion of false sentence, false core, and false self, see for example, Stephen Wolinsky, *The Way of the Human: The Quantum Psychology Notebooks* (Capitola, CA: Quantum Institute, 1999). Wolinsky focuses on the false core as that one conclusion you can make about yourself that organizes not only your entire psychology but also how you imagine the world sees you; and the false self, which compensates for this false conclusion. Volume 2 contains exercises, demonstrations, and protocols for dismantling the false core–false self complex (unpacking the core teaching of seminal thinker Oscar Ichazo, founder of the Arica school).

ⁱⁱ See Harold Solave, *The Future of Reputation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

ⁱⁱⁱ William Blake, “Proverbs of Hell,” *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

^{iv} It is worth mentioning that the idea of love as an evolutionary catalyst can be traced to the great American philosopher Charles S. Peirce and his famous essay “Evolutionary Love,” [*The Monist* 3 (1893): 176–200]. Peirce offers one of the first and best post-Darwinian evolutionary metaphysics, and his ideas foreshadow much of contemporary complexity, chaos, and dynamic systems theorizing. But his vision, unlike that of most disciplines, was of a universe with depth, and one moving toward love. He was an important Integral progenitor. (According to Zachary Stein in his article “On the Normative Function of MetaTheoretical Endeavors” [*Integral Review* 6, no. 2C (July 2010): 5–22], “Peirce [articulated] a broad evolutionary vision of the universe where the strivings of humanity are continuous with the evolution of the kosmos. It was a sophisticated and empirically grounded evolutionary ontology where all events are semiotic processes that co-evolve toward increasing complexity, autonomy, self-awareness, and possible harmony. Peirce’s pansemiotic evolutionary theory was a unique [postmetaphysical] view insofar as it was explicitly offered as a hypothesis amenable to correction in light of forthcoming empirical data. It greatly influenced Whitehead and continues to intrigue and inspire scholars in the physical and biological sciences and philosophy.”)

This understanding of evolution allowed Peirce to bring his overarching normative concerns about the trajectory of academic discourses in line with a venerable philosophical tradition that articulated the radical significance of humanity’s cultural endeavors in terms of a cosmic evolutionary unfolding. Ultimately, Peirce, with a look in Kant’s direction, envisioned humanity as capable of multitudinous self-correcting intellectual and ethical endeavors, which ought to result in an ideal communication community coterminous with the kosmos. In this postmetaphysical eschatology, the ideals of harmonious love between all beings and unconditional knowledge about all things stand as goals to be approached asymptotically. With this thought, Peirce rearticulates a philosophical motif that can be traced back through Emerson, Schelling, and Kant to the obscure cipher of Böhme’s mystical Protestant religiosity and its ancient Hebraic and Neoplatonic roots.

Evolutionary love is later a major motif in the world of Teilhard de Chardin and in many of the contemporary evolutionary thinkers who write in his wake. Notable among them is the work of Brian Swimme, who writes in the wake of Thomas Berry and who speaks of the allurements that is the very glue of the Uni-verse. The contemporary understanding of love at the cellular level augments the understanding of the great traditions, some of which also saw love as the primary motivating force of the kosmos. This is the primary position of the Kabbalists, such as my lineage teacher Lainer of Izbica, rooted in Luria and in the earlier Zoharic texts, as well as of many Christian thinkers like St. Thomas and Dante, who talks of *l’amor che move il sole e l’altre stele*, the “love that moves the sun and the other stars.” For St. Thomas the “dynamic pulse and throb of creation is the love of all things for the infinite” (Huston Smith, 78). Spiritual teacher and scholar Sally Kempton points out that in the Hindu text of *Spanda-karikas* and other major texts of the Kashmir Shaivism and other Indian traditions, love is described as the intrinsic motivator of the substance of creation. A text called the *Mahartha Manthari* describes how Shakti, the creative power of the divine, leaping forth in her own bliss, manifests this universe as an expression or even an outpouring of love.

^v Ken Wilber and I, in the final discussions before ISE (Integral Spiritual Experience 2010) and Ken in his keynote at ISE, termed “Unique Self: An Evolutionary Emergent.” In earlier discussions in 2005–6 and in one of our first Unique Self Dialogues in 2009 (see Integral Life website, Unique Self, Ken Wilber, Sally Kempton, Marc Gafni), Ken and I talked about Unique Self as resonant if not identical with the Buddhist image of enlightenment captured in the Tenth Oxherding picture. On the Tenth Oxherding Picture as an expression of Buddhist enlightenment teaching, see for example, Lex Hixon, *Coming Home: The Experience of Enlightenment in Sacred Traditions* (Bordett, NY: Larson Publications, 1978), 60–92.

My teaching on Unique Self developed from the Talmudic and Kabbalistic traditions. A. H. Almaas describes what he terms “Personal Essence” in Sufi teaching in terms that are remarkably close to my Unique Self teaching. Having said that, the full implications of individuality have evolved with the advent of modernity and postmodernity, particularly in light of the dignities of modernity, foremost among them democracy and its sociopolitical implications, as well as the contextual realizations of self in postmodernity. The heightened appreciation of the postmetaphysical “ontology” of perspectives that characterizes postmodernity also needs to be taken into account in the formulation of Unique Self. All of these have served to evolve our understanding of Unique Self, which is why Unique Self is termed an evolutionary emergent. It is in this sense, as well, that the Unique Self models World Spirituality as an integration of the best practice of pre- modern, modern, and postmodern streams of gnosis. (See Epilogue.)

“My thinking on Unique Self, drawn from Hebrew mystical sources, originated in 1989, which was the first time I taught about what I then termed “soul prints.” I still have the video of the first time the term “soul prints” “came down” in a teaching, when I was twenty-six years old, giving a Hebrew dharma talk at the Temple Emeth Synagogue in Delray Beach, Florida. There were five hundred senior citizens at that talk, and I was seeking to communicate to them the Hebrew mystical intuition that their lives were infinitely and uniquely significant, and that therefore they should not spend the last decades of life adrift in the regressive atmosphere of mahjong and card games that dominated the culture of Delray Beach. I said to them, “Not only do you have a fingerprint, you have a soul print,” and at that moment something shifted in the subtle energy in the room, and many of us there knew that some deep knowing had been named. This became a core part of my teaching for the next ten years.

In my book *Soul Prints: Your Path to Fulfillment* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), I formally coined both the term “soul prints” and “Unique Self.” On the term “Unique Self,” see *Soul Prints* (p. 160): “The address of the divine commands us each to realize our Unique Self.” In context, this referred to the internal divine voice that lives in and as the interior face of consciousness. The second mention (p. 164) refers to Unique Self as the expression of the human being living in an evolutionary context. I label Unique Self the core human evolutionary mechanism: “The only path to survival is the path of the Unique Self.” The third usage of Unique Self in *Soul Prints* (p. 301) is in the context of the obligation to present one’s Unique Self in what is termed there a “Soul Print” or “Unique Self encounter.” The ethical question in such a meeting is framed as “Have I brought my Unique Self to the table?” In the *Soul Prints* book and teaching, the enlightened nature of post-egoic individuality as an expression of nondual realization is explicit in a number of passages (see for example p. 49 and p. 50) but not sufficiently highlighted.

In what was originally my doctoral dissertation on Nondual Humanism and the Unique Self in the teaching of Mordechai Lainer of Izbica and in the Talmudic and Kabbalistic tradition from which he emerged, the distinction between egoic and enlightened Uniqueness became more dominant as one of the pivoting points of the Unique Self teaching. For Lainer, an essential part of the process of what he termed *berur* might well be understood as precisely this clarification of Uniqueness beyond egoic separate self. See my discussion of *berur* in Gafni, *Radical Kabbalah: The Enlightenment Teaching of Unique Self, Nondual Humanism and the Wisdom of Solomon* (Chapter 10, “The Nature of Berur”). This work originally appeared as my doctorate, taken at Oxford University under the co-supervision of Professor Moshe Idel and Dr. Norman Solomon.

Ken Wilber and I dialogued and debated about the nature of Unique Self enlightenment for some time. When I sent this work to Ken (who had already read my more popular work *Soul Prints* the night after our first meeting), he immediately evolved his position, and in a series of conversations and emails recognized the Unique Self teaching as a significant New Enlightenment lineage that has much to offer the Integral teaching enlightenment. Ken then invited me to give a featured address to a group of some fifty leading spiritual teachers at the Integral Spiritual Center in 2006 on the nature of Unique Self enlightenment. In a series of conversations between Ken Wilber and myself as part of the preparation for the ISC teaching, we sharpened the distinction between egoic individuality and post-egoic individuality.

In the months after ISC, a number of teachers who were moved by the Unique Self-realization began to incorporate it into their teaching. These included John Kesler, Viddeyuva, Sofia Diaz, John Forman, and others. It was, however, my friend Diane Musho Hamilton who began to facilitate the voice of Soul Prints/Unique Self as part of the Big Mind process developed by her teacher, Genpo Roshi. Diane, in conversations with Ken and myself, was pivotal in the full transition in the Integral world from the term “Soul Prints” and its third-person, metaphysical implications, to the term “Unique Self,” which more readily expressed Unique Self also as a first-person realization. Her teacher, Genpo Roshi, following her lead, integrated the voice and term “Unique Self” into the Big Mind process

and into the official Big Mind book. See Dennis Genpo Merzel, *Big Mind, Big Heart* (McLean, VA: Big Mind Publishing, 2007), 122–24. It was Ken, in a call in January 2006 before the Integral Spiritual Center meeting, who suggested that I prefer the term “Unique Self” over “soul prints” in my upcoming presentation, so that the Unique Self teaching would not be confused with the separate-self soul teaching of exoteric Western religion.

Other teachers, like Sally Kempton, helped identify in their traditions teachings that resonated with the core intuition of Unique Self. The distinction between Unique Self and other teachings like the Authentic Self teaching of Andrew Cohen were clarified in a number of direct engagements with Andrew, beginning with a shared public teaching in Tel Aviv in 2006, followed by an exchange of emails with Andrew after that teaching, and then again in a 2010 dialogue between Andrew and myself, as part of the Future of Love series hosted by iEvolve and Integral Life. This dialogue is slated for publication in *Future of Love: Dialogues on Evolutionary Integral Relationships*, Eds. Marc Gafni and Diane Hamilton (forthcoming). A transcript of that dialogue appears as well in the *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2011). After this Integral Spiritual Center gathering, explicitly drawing on my Unique Self term and teaching, my friend and colleague Terry Patten added a chapter on Unique Self to the almost-complete *Integral Life Practice* book. The chapter is entitled “Unique Self” in integrallife.com (Boulder, CO: Integral Books, 2008).

Unique Self further evolved the Integral space in 2010, when I was privileged to lead an effort, together with Ken Wilber, Robb Smith, Diane Hamilton, and Sally Kempton, to reinvigorate the Integral Spiritual Movement. The focal point of the effort was a series of Integral Spiritual Experiences. Because Unique Self had by that time begun to emerge as a new chapter in Integral Theory, we held the event around the teaching of Unique Self. In a series of dialogues both public and private leading up to the event, the teaching on Unique Self evolved even further. For some of these conversations with myself, Ken Wilber, Sally Kempton, Diane Hamilton, Lama Surya Das, Jean Houston, and Alex Grey, see Marc Gafni, contributors page, *JITP* (Spring 2001). During the months leading up to the event, I wrote the eight stations of the Unique Self, which were featured in the attendee guide for the conference and which form the crux of this book. At this event, in a series of keynote presentations given by myself and Ken, and through Big Mind/Unique Self facilitations by Diane, as well as a True Self/false self plenary by Sally Kempton, the Unique Self teaching deepened once again. For these presentations, see the ISE 1 media package, available at integrallife.com.

vii These include certain schools of developmental psychology and the deconstructive schools of literature, which are rooted in Saussure and ultimately Kant.

viii The modern notion of perspectives is foundational in the Lurianic one-letter tradition of Kabbalah. For a discussion of the Lurianic one-letter tradition and its influence on Unique Self, see Marc Gafni, *Unique Self and Nondual Humanism* (forthcoming), Chapter 4. For an intellectual history of Unique Self within Hebrew wisdom, surveying Talmudic, Zoharic, Lurianic, and Hasidic sources, see Chapters 1–4, 8, 9, and 14.

ix Living “in you, as you, and through you” means that Unique Self is refracted through all the prisms of your consciousness.

An Integral View of Unique Self

Overview

Unique Self is a liberating realization that promises to integrate the so-called trans-egoic, No-Self teachings of Eastern traditions with the individuality emphasized in the West and the uniqueness that is inherent to all human beings. We would offer Unique Self as a living koan; an inquiry meant to provoke curiosity, exploration, and presence, rather than an attempt to reify or fix our self-understanding.

We understand that Unique Self can and will be interpreted differently according to personal inclination and constitution, cultural orientation, and differences in stages of development. For example, a Benedictine monk, whose realization validates an eternal transcendent soul, may understand Unique Self as an expression of that unique soul. A Zen Buddhist, whose realization does not posit a reified transcendent, may experience Unique Self as the freedom to manifest exactly as we are: complete, whole, empty, and unique.

In another example, a secular materialist might understand Unique Self as an expression of one's unique perspective and abilities to succeed and develop.

In each case, we would hope that the Integral practitioner would see that classical enlightenment, in the formulation of the great traditions as a realized state of unity with the oneness of all ever-present reality, is recognition of what might be called "True Self." This realization finds that the total number of True Selves only and always is one. This, however, is only true in unmanifest oneness. There is no True Self anywhere in the manifest world. At the same time, every person's awakening to this oneness arises through their own unique perspective. In this way, True Self plus my own perspective equals My Unique Self.

In developmental-psychology terms, the fullest flowering of Unique Self might best be articulated as a living glimpse into the "Indigo" stage of human consciousness and self-identity: this is the stage of evolution of human consciousness at which my felt ever-present unity of reality—a state of ongoing "flow presence," if you will—and the unique characteristics of my own life and perspective—the unique evolutionary features of my life—clearly intersect and find a cohesive and stabilized integration. At second-tier and third-tier, perspectives are inherent in awareness. It is an inherent aspect of what emerges at Turquoise and Indigo. So even though Unique Self was present from the earlier stages of consciousness, it can seem to emerge at second-tier and third-tier. Perspective is an inherent part of the realization of the Indigo structure. When someone develops to Indigo, they know that they are looking through a particular perspective even as they recognize other perspectives, and are even to some extent able to disidentify from their own. And my own perspective is never absent, even as it is progressively clarified and deepened through the evolution of self to Self. It is important to note, however, that proto-expressions of Unique Self appear in significant ways in earlier stages of consciousness as well.

Our Intent

Our efforts at ISE are meant to provide a vibrant, open, and enlivened look into the emerging potential of the possibility for humanity at this stage in our evolution. In the first-person perspective, Unique Self is a practice of recognizing the profundity of your own life, the preciousness of your specific perspective, history, and talents, and the opportunity to become fully who you already are—I am uniquely this. In the second-person perspective, Unique Self is minimally an opportunity to see and support the Uniqueness of others' gifts and to foster a durable community that supports the evolutionary possibilities of humankind—I see who you uniquely are. At a higher level of intersubjective space the collective intelligence of evolutionary Wespace becomes possible. This is one of the core features of Unique Self encounters. (See Chapter 21, The Seven Laws of Unique Self Encounters.) And in the third-person perspective, Unique Self can be understood as an evolutionary emergent—a subtle, gentle, yet powerful and compelling whisper from the emerging future of humankind—this is who we can become.

The Foundation of Unique Self

World Spirituality based on Integral principles provides a foundational program upon which to reconstruct spiritual insights and human meaning-making in a modern world that has transcended merely literal interpretations of religious mythology and seeks to transcend the nihilistic and narcissistic assertions of atheistic scientism and postmodern relativism. Unique Self rests squarely on the "postmetaphysical" core of Integral World Spirituality.

Tenet 1: Perspective is foundational.

Integral World Spirituality maintains that the deep structure of reality is composed of perspectives. Whether we take this commitment as "strong" (ontologically real) or "weak" (usefully descriptive), we can still easily understand that all sentient creatures have a perspective.

Tenet 2: Uniqueness is obvious.

All human beings and perhaps all sentient beings will have a unique perspective. This perspective will be unique on the one hand due to different location—all perspectives have a unique angle of perception—but also due to the different psychology, biology, culture, and history of each creature and its context. According to the realization of the eye of the spirit, human uniqueness is essential, and that human beings' location reflects the unique dimension of divinity that literally births the individual. (See Gafni, "Unique Self and Nondual Humanism," Pt. 2, forthcoming.)

Tenet 3: Perspectives evolve.

Going further, we see that all sentient creatures have their being arise in four quadrants—those of subjective experience, biological, cultural, and social dimensions—and that each of these quadrants is holonic in nature. Therefore, each aspect of reality evolves over time and thus perspectives will also evolve over time.

Tenet 4: “Conventional” metaphysics is unnecessary.

There is no necessary metaphysical aspect to perspectives. At the same time, while a metaphysical perspective is not necessary to an engagement with Unique Self, there is nothing about perspective that precludes ontological revelations. Perspectives thus create a common ground up and down the spiral. In the postmetaphysical view they arise, for example, in human beings and evolve over time, inexorably influenced and cocreated by the evolution of all four quadrants. We need not make any necessary reference to any transcendental concepts or extra-evolutionary features to describe Unique Self. At the same time, Unique Self does not exclude communities who hold a set of realizations that they signify as pertaining to the transcendent (e.g., God). Thus every perspective grounded in direct experience supported by a valid community of interpreters has an honored, if partial, place at the Integral table.

Tenet 5: Ego need not be transcended or obliterated.

“Ego” is a term that is used in many ways. We will use “ego” in this context to mean the general patterns of self-understanding and self-identity that developmental psychologists have tested and articulated using Integral’s Zone 2 research methodologies (the outside view of an individual-interior reality). Of course, viewed from within our own subjectivity (i.e., Zone 1), these same patterns “look and feel” as purely phenomenological realities. Because this usage of ego is around an enduring line of self-development that extends up and down the first-person holonic spectrum, it is inaccurate to think of ego as being transcended *per se*. Rather, ego expressions become more inclusive, subtle, refined, and expansive with each successive stage of development and envelopment. When the West first ran into the Eastern traditions, particularly Theravada Buddhism, and first met the whole notion of transcending self, the ego was made bad in all ways. You had two columns. In one column was ego, which was equated with the devil, and in the second column was non-ego, which was equated with God. The critical Western insight of ego being the functional organizing center of conventional awareness, which is utterly essential in the finite world, was effaced. This was a disaster because if you get rid of ego in the finite world, you are borderline or psychotic. You’re not enlightened.

Tenet 6: We are never outside of a state, and always within a stage.

All “structure-stages” of consciousness get enacted only within the ontology of present-moment states. We are never outside of the now. So states describe a “substrate of awareness” in which the real arises (and gets interpreted), and stages of consciousness can be understood as the large-scale characterizable patterns of these moment-to-moment interpretations. So we can discuss a state of deep presence, flow states, or nondual identity. But as any uniqueness of self comes into the picture, there will always be a stage particularity to the interpretive act. It makes no sense to talk about Unique Self as a state outside of a particular developmental stage. Unique Self is always interpreted through the prism of stage development.

Tenet 7: Unique Self is fully expressed at an “Indigo” stage of consciousness. After considering all other tenets above, it is clear that Unique Self therefore can best be described as the stage at which general patterns of ego development evidence an integration between stabilized “No-Self” insight (e.g., cosmic identification) and one’s own felt-sense of uniqueness in their life, talents, and history (i.e., their four-quadrant evolution). This stage has been empirically mapped and articulated using Zone 2 methodologies as the “Indigo” self.

We might describe the subtle and refined ego of the Unique Self understanding as one that has let go of the exclusive identification of the subject with its separate self. The transcending of the egoic separate self through repeated access to “presence-flow” states is the goal of classical enlightenment teaching. This, however, does not mean that the ego is annihilated. Rather, the exclusive identification with the egoic separate self is overcome. We are able to experience our fundamental identity—not as an ego isolated from other, nature, community, and All-That-Is—rather, as part of a larger whole. Note the similarities of this description with how researchers have characterized the Indigo stage of ego development:

[They] experience themselves and others as part of ongoing humanity, embedded in the creative ground, fulfilling “the destiny of evolution” and are in tune with their lives and their shared humanity “as a simultaneous expression of their unique selves.” (Cook-Greuter 2002)

That is, these individuals are capable of integrating the unity of reality realized only in deep presence-states (the “creative ground”) and their own uniqueness as a living expression of a dynamic evolutionary process that continually will call on them for their special contribution (“the destiny of evolution”). We allow for the possibility that glimmerings of this stage of consciousness, where Unique Self has emerged as this integration, can appear up and down the spiral of human development.

A more rudimentary version of the following note was occasioned by a debate between me and Robb Smith from the postmetaphysical nature of Unique Self enlightenment. The original version of this note was coauthored by me, Robb, Diane Hamilton, Ken Wilber, and Sally Kempton. It appeared in the ISE1 attendee guide.

In our discussion of the Indigo level of consciousness, a potential distinction between the premodern realization and postmodern Indigo realization of Unique Self suggests itself. For much of the premodern world (excepting many of the great realizers and their inner circles who founded new schools of thought), Unique Self was a deduction that went something like this:

“Since we all view the mountain from a different perspective, we all have a unique perspective.” At the postmodern, second-tier, and third-tier consciousness of Indigo, Unique Self is not only a deduction but a realization. Every person at Indigo has direct access to what only the great realizers were able to access in the premodern world.

× “Seamless but not featureless” originally appears in R. H. Blyth, *Zen and Zen Classics*, 5 vols. (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1970).

×ⁱ See Wolinsky, *The Way of the Human: The Quantum Psychology Notebooks*.

×ⁱⁱ See Stephen Wolinsky, *Trances People Live: Healing Approaches in Quantum Psychology* (Putney, VT: Bramble Books, 2007).

×ⁱⁱⁱ Naturally there can be healthy and unhealthy prisoners in the cave. The West focused on making the prisoner in the cave healthy by clarifying the false self, taking back shadow projections, and so on, in order to have a healthy separate self. The problem with this approach is that the prisoner is still in the cave, which is the source of suffering. The East focused on getting the prisoner out of the cave by moving from separate self to the realization of True Self. The problem with this approach is that the realization of True Self does not heal all the neurosis or pathological dysfunction of separate self. It is only in Unique Self that we embrace both the individual uniqueness of the self, which naturally requires clarification, and at the same time realize the True Nature of the individual as an indivisible part of True Self, the seamless coat of the Uni-verse.

×^{iv} Any experience of formless True Self, when it manifests as any object at all, manifests as the Unique Self. So to repeat, there is no True Self any-where in the manifest world. There is always a perspective—that is to say, True Self always manifests as Unique Self. That means Unique Self is always the source of awareness, “all the way up and all the way down.” Of course, Unique Self is always present as the witness of consciousness at all levels of awareness, because awareness or consciousness is always embodied in form, and therefore always has a perspective. Unique Self, however, becomes progressively more conscious and full in direct proportion to one’s level of True Self-realization. The base awareness of Unique Self is True Self. True Self is the actual origin of awareness at all levels of development, even though it only comes online as conscious awareness with the stage of enlightenment, or what Integral Theory has referred to as third-tier growth. The point is that there is no True Self in the manifest world. The True Self is *always* looking through a perspective. So in the manifest world—that is to say, in the only world we know—there is only the Unique Self. Only pure, formless unmanifest awareness is pure perception without a perspective. In this unmanifest state there are no objects, only consciousness without an object, so there is nothing to take a perspective on. This can be said to be unqualifiable True Self. But we live—always—in the world of manifestation. Once the awareness of True Self manifests, it does so through a particular perspective. That is always the Unique Self.

×^v With the emergence of second-tier and particularly third-tier structure stages of consciousness, perspectives themselves become noticed. So at this stage the conscious realization of Unique Self fully emerges. It was of course present all along but tended to be confused with True Self because perspectives were not yet fully conscious. But when the full awareness of

perspectives emerges, the awareness of Unique Self emerges. Then any experience of formless True Self, when it manifests as any object at all, manifests as the Unique Self.

^{xvi} The centrality of perspective was simply not understood in the premodern world the way we understand it in our postmodern context. We used to think we were directly engaging reality as it is. This is why every spiritual system thought that it owned the truth. Every system thought it was seeing reality itself. This was only half true. At some point we began to realize that there is no reality without perspective—or put another way, reality itself is *fundamentally constructed from perspectives*. There is nothing we see that is not filtered through the prism of perspective. True Self cannot exist independent of your Unique Perspective. Thus, every enlightenment realization is defined in part by the unique perspective of the practitioner.

Of course, perspective itself can be understood from many perspectives. Perspective might imply ontology, methodology, or epistemology. All of these understandings of perspective appear in the old Hebrew texts, which unfold perspective as the central hermeneutic category of textual interpretation, which is the essential spiritual act of the Talmudic *homo religiosus*.

In the matrix tradition of Unique Self, which is that of Talmud and Kabbalah, taking different perspectives on the sacred text is a central spiritual practice. Judaism is first and foremost a textual tradition. The nature of a textual tradition is that competing readings of the text need to be explained, especially if the text is said to be divine. How can it be, it is asked, that different readers of the text, with different and often mutually exclusive readings, all express the word of God?

This question is answered in a number of ways. Each is based on a different reading of the idea of perspectives. The champions of methodological pluralism claim that in fact only one reading of the text is correct, and the other readings are granted equal status simply because we lack an appropriate method to inform us which reading is correct. In this reading, what is emphasized is the limited nature of each perspective on the one hand, and the hierarchy of perspectives on the other; namely, one perspective is better than the others because it more clearly captures the true intention and meaning of the divine text.

On the far other side of the spectrum are the champions of an ontological pluralism, who assert the radical ontology of perspectives as the core tenet to be recognized and affirmed. This position is rooted in both the classic Hebrew legal and mystical traditions, for whom the text was thought to be a living expression of divinity that did not exist independently of the perspective of its reader. “God, Torah, and Israel are One,” is an old Kabbalistic dictum, which essentially means, “Reader, God, and text are One.”

In one expression of this teaching, this ontology of perspectives is thought to originate at the source event of revelation, the theophany of Mount Sinai. In this teaching, every person standing at Mount Sinai during the time when the divine voice was heard is said to have stood at a different angle in relation to the mountain. As a result, each person heard a different voice of revelation. And in a nondual matrix of realization, each Unique Perspective on the mountain is understood to have yielded a unique voice of God. This is an ancient version of the New Enlightenment teaching of Unique Perspective, which creates Unique Self. For the Kabbalists who assert ontological pluralism rooted in perspectives, the validity of the hermeneutic is based on the unique perspective of the interpreter who is situated at a unique angle toward—and therefore experiencing and incarnating a unique expression of—the divine face. It is this unique angle that dictates a person’s Unique Letter in the cosmic scroll. This original insight of perspectives in regard to revelation becomes the matrix for a sophisticated ontological pluralism in Talmudic and Kabbalistic sources.

Related to this pluralism in regard to the voice of revelation, there emerges what has been called the one-letter teaching of Lurianic Kabbalah. In this teaching, each person is regarded as having their own letter in the Torah. In one-letter theory, your letter in the Torah is both the ontological source and purpose of your existence. Your individual existence is both rooted in, nourished by, and intended to realize your Unique Letter in the Torah scroll. Your Unique Letter is your Unique Self, your Unique song whose notes are formed by your Unique Perspective.

^{xvii} Echoes of Unique Self appear in the understanding of Agape love penetratingly language by Christian mystic Paul Tillich: “Agape seeks that which is concrete, individual, unique, here and now. Agape seeks the person, the other one who cannot be exchanged for anything or anyone else. He cannot be subsumed under abstractions. He must be accepted in spite of the universals which try to prevent his acceptance, such as moral judgments based on general norms, or social differences justifying indifference or hostility, or psychological characteristics inhibiting full community with him. Agape accepts the concrete in spite of the power of the universal which tries to swallow the concrete.” Thanks to Dr. Wyatt Woodsmall for this reference.

^{xviii} In an email correspondence with Ken Wilber, after much conversation at his loft and over the phone in 2005, I formulated the core understanding of Soul Print/Unique Self as perspective, as emergent from Hebrew mystical sources on the ontology of perspectives. In this understanding emerging from Hebrew mysticism and from deep conversations with Ken, including his radical emphasis on perspective, Soul Print/Unique Self was understood as the perspective attained at the post-egoic enlightenment level of consciousness. I have kept my note to Ken in its original form to capture some of the energy and excitement of these early conversations:

Giga Pandit,

So much love to you! In terms of Soul Print/Unique Self.

It is very important to understand that soul prints do not emerge from the world of ego or soul but rather from radical nonduality. Soul Prints is an expression of the Self with a capital S. The way I teach it to my students, Story and non-Story are one. Or in the expression of the great vehicle of Buddhism, Emptiness is form and form is emptiness. Or in classic Kabbalistic expression, *Keter* is *Malkhut* and *Malkhut* is *Keter*. This is what I refer to as “a nondual humanism” in the fullest sense of the word.

To explain what I mean, let me offer a simple map of the three classic levels of transpersonal consciousness that—as you [Ken] have pointed out—show up one way or another in virtually every system. We can call them Communion, Union, and Identity. Communion, which Scholem felt was critical in Hebrew mysticism, is ultimately dual. God in the second person. Union moves toward nonduality, and full nonduality is achieved in Identity. Or we might use the more classic terms, which you deploy in your wonderful essay “The Depths of the Divine”—psychic, subtle, casual, and nondual. Or we might call them Ego, Soul, and Self. Or we might call them *ani*, *ayin*, *ani*. Or we might use Eastern terms in which “psychic” and “subtle” might be roughly equivalent to *savikalpa samadhi*. At the highest edge of *savikalpa samadhi*, the way I understand it, there is already a glimpse of the formless void of the next stage.

This next stage of formless union, what for some Kabbalists would be called *ayin*, the realm of the impersonal, approximates the Eastern state of *nirvikalpa samadhi*. This is a stage of formless awareness that is beyond the personal. You call this stage the causal state.

The highest and deepest stage is, however, beyond even the formless state of *ayin*, *nirvikalpa samadhi*; this is the non-dual that is the very Suchness of all being. It is the Suchness of both emptiness and form, both personal and impersonal. This is the world of One Taste or *sahaj* in Eastern terms, or the *shma* declaration of *hashem echad*, “God is one” in Judaic consciousness.

The way to reach the ultimate nondual realization—for example, according to my teacher Mordechai Lainer of Izbica—is through the prism of soul prints or Unique Self. Soul prints is the absolute and radical uniqueness of the individual, which is the expression of emptiness in form; it is *ein sof*, revealing itself in the only face we know—the face of unique form. It is not only that there is absolutely no distinction between the radically personal and the radically impersonal; it is also that in terms of stages of unfolding, the radically personal is the portal to the embrace and identity of the absolute one. Moreover, the absolute one expresses itself only through its infinite faces, or what have been called its infinite soul prints (or Unique Self).

Another way to say this might be to borrow the image suggested by the Midrash in this regard, that of the ascending and descending ladders on Jacob’s Ladder. For the Kabbalists, this is the ladder of nonduality. On the ladder are angels of God. “Angel” in biblical Hebrew refers to a divine entity or to a human being. What they share in common is that each is a radically unique messenger of God. Or said differently, each is a radically unique perspective. One ascends to the divine through soul print, and the divine descends through soul print (Unique Self). Indeed, all human reality as we know it is soul print (Unique Self).

But even this language is insufficient. For in the experience of nonduality, soul print (Unique Self) is the divine. So one ascends to the divine through the divine soul print (Unique Self). And divinity descends to the divine world of form through

the divine soul print (Unique Self). All faces of divinity are kissing each other. What the sages of old called *nashkei ar'a verakia*, “the kiss of heaven and earth.”

Now, another term for soul print might be “perspective.” As we have pointed out many times, the classic image for unique form or soul print in Hebrew consciousness is *panim*, face. “Face” is an expression in Talmudic language for what we moderns and postmoderns might call perspective. This is what the ancient sages meant when they taught: “There are seventy faces to Torah.” Torah contains objective God-givens and yet can only be read through the prism of perspectives.

Ultimately in Hebrew mysticism, each human being is the bearer of a Unique Face that is by very definition a unique perspective (Unique Self). This is a radically particular perception of the world, which is shared exactly by no other being. In this sense, the person is the eyes of *ein sof*, of the absolute. The person is the eyes of the absolute in a way shared by no other being on the planet. This is the source of our grandeur, our infinite adequacy and dignity, and occasionally our almost unbearable loneliness, which for this very reason can only be ultimately quenched in the caress of the divine.

How does one get there, to the soul-printed merger with the absolute?

In Hebrew mysticism, through erotic merger with the Shekhinah.

This might take place through many methods of practice, including the concentrated, intense, and ultimately ecstatic study of sacred text (Hasidei Ashkenaz, in the twelfth century, and the Kabbalah of the Vilna Gaon and his school), the intense meditation of sacred chant and song (classic Hasidic practice), the rigorous and uncompromising process of introspection and dialogue, with results in the clarification-purification of motive and desire called *berur*, out of which the Unique Self naturally emerges (Luria, Izbica, Mussar), classical mystical techniques of letter combination, soul ascent, meditation, crying, and more. Total Love, Total Good!

Mega Reb

My note to Ken, emergent from our many conversations, clarifies both the post-egoic nature of Unique Self—that is to say, Unique Self is fully realized only as an expression of True Self—as well as the identification of Unique Self with Unique Perspective. At Integral Spiritual Experience 2010, both Ken and I gave keynotes on Unique Self in which we crystallized many of our conversations, and for myself, twenty years of writing and thinking in this regard. Ken's wonderful formulation in his keynote was “True Self + Perspective = Unique Self.”

It is also critical to note that from an Integral developmental view your perspective on the world is largely informed by your level of consciousness, and indeed it is refracted through the entire prism of AQUAL, all quadrants, levels, line types, and states—the core matrix of Ken Wilber's Integral Theory.

^{xix} This realization of love as the motive force—as the very feeling and glue of the kosmos—is the underlying enlightened realization of Unique Self mystic Isaac Luria and his school. Luria's school includes perhaps the most important, profound, and influential teachers of Western mysticism, who inform the core teaching of evolutionary spirituality that would later emerge in the writings of the great German idealist Schelling and his colleagues. This mystical insight is slowly finding its way into the leading-edge discourse of science and spirit.

^{xx} This is the second-person expression of evolutionary love in the intersubjective context. In third-person evolutionary love, will appears as the Eros that coheres and persuades the kosmos toward unfolding. See the discussion of evolutionary love in Chapter 8, “Unique Self and Evolutionary Spirituality.”

^{xxi} What modernity—beginning with Kant, deepened by Saussure, and driven home by the postmodernists—has realized is the truth of perspective and context. Everything we see is through a perspective. Nothing lives independently of its context. Naturally this does not mean what the extreme postmodernists claimed it did. In their ecstatic confusion, intoxicated as they were with their own revelation of contexts, they thought that reality was only perspectives. This is not the case. There is a reality independent of perspective. But it is always mediated through a perspective. What is true is that perspective really matters.

Now let's apply this insight to the enlightenment teachings of True Self. The same way that the scientist is seeing reality through a particular perspective, so is the spiritual teacher, the church, and everyone else. The enlightened master is seeing reality through perspective just like everyone else. Just like the church and the scientist. In the premodern world the enlightened masters thought that when they realized their True Nature—their True Self—it was reality as it was, not mediated by any prism. Today we realize that this is simply not the case. True Self is always mediated by Unique Perspective, hence there is no True Self that ever appears without Unique Self. Precisely, Unique Self is the nature of True Self in the manifest world.

^{xxii} It also appears in spiritual liberation traditions like Hinduism and mystical Judaism and Christianity as the communion of the separate self with the divine. Similarly, the Western enlightenment tradition, which affirms the separate self in some versions, affirms the goal of the communion of the separate self with the divine.

^{xxiii} The mystical understanding of enlightenment, East and West, focuses on what Integral Theory has referred to as *states* of consciousness. Enlightenment is some form of satori, metanoia, redemption, or awakening. It is a state of consciousness that is at once always already present and at the same time requires realization.

In contradistinction, the exoteric Western deployment of the idea and term “enlightenment,” the idea that produced democracy and human rights, is referring not to a state but to a *structure stage* of consciousness. By structure stage, we refer to an internalized worldview that represents a particular level of development, for example, magical, mythic, rational, pluralistic, or integral. These levels of consciousness have been extensively described and evolved in the context of developmental and Integral Theory.

The West has pushed into what have been termed by developmentalists orange/rational structure stages of consciousness (Graves, 1974), which express themselves in areas like representational democracy and human rights. The Eastern traditions (and some Western mystical lineages) have pressed into the higher states of awakened consciousness, expressed in different forms of satori, awakening, communion, metanoia, and *unio mystica*. While the West acknowledges states and state stages, they are not part of what might be termed the “official” Western orientation. Unique Self is both a state of consciousness, which like classical mystical enlightenment is available—in a flow state for example—at any level or structure stage of consciousness. Unique Self is also a structure stage of consciousness revealed in and as the expression of the second-tier structure stages of consciousness when perspective is revealed as an essential structure of higher consciousness.

^{xxiv} Bruce H. Lipton, *The Biology of Belief* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2011), 70.

^{xxv} James L. Oschman, *Energy Medicine in Therapeutics and Human Performance* (Oxford, England: 2003), 20.

^{xxvi} Lipton, *The Biology of Belief*, 86

^{xxvii} *Ibid.*, 22

^{xxviii} *Ibid.*, 27

^{xxix} *Ibid.*, 53

^{xxx} *Ibid.*, 57

^{xxxi} *Ibid.*, 159. On the surface of our cells is a family of identity receptors that distinguish one individual from another. All of this is part of the unique biological identity that makes each person's cellular community unique: “One well-studied subset of these receptors consists of what are called human leukocyte antigens (HLA), which are related to functions of the immune system. The closer your self-receptors match, the more chance an organ transplant might take. However there are no 100 percent matches.” No two individuals are biologically the same.

It is critical to understand that it is not these protein receptors themselves but what activates them that gives individuals their identity. It is not the identity receptors that are the uniqueness of the cell. It would be more accurate to say that the identity receptors are a key part of the *perspective* of the cell.

^{xxxii} Ibid., 160. The analogy is not precise for two reasons. First, unlike a television set, which is a “passive play-back instrument,” the self is dynamic and affects the environment; and second, the unique structure of DNA as well as the identity receptors of the proteins contain more complex givens of a Unique Self cellular signature than a television set. However, the core analogy suggested by Lipton holds.

^{xxxiii} In fact, in Hebrew the words for “love” and “obligation”—*chovah* and *chib- bah*—are derived from the same root.

^{xxxiv} William Butler Yeats, “The Second Coming,” *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (New York: Scribner, 1996).

^{xxxv} This teaching which I call the “Three Stations Of Love” is the basis of the Integral Spiritual Experience and will form the core of the forthcoming book, *The Three Stations of Love*. I have used the term “stage” here instead of “stations” in order not to confuse the Three Stations of Love with the Eight Stations of Unique Self. In general, however, I prefer the term “station” so as not to confuse the term “stage” which in Integral Theory refers to Levels of Consciousness.

^{xxxvi} The full recognition of the centrality of shadow comes online only in the modern period. The great traditions had what might be termed a proto- shadow awareness that was profound but not developed.

^{xxxvii} William Blake, *Proverbs from Hell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975)

^{xxxviii} In Hebrew mysticism, this vow is taken by the hidden realized masters who are said to participate in the soul/root of the prophet Elijah.

^{xxxix} In a long discussion with my friend and colleague, Richard Schwartz, founder of Internal Family Systems Theory, I shared with him my perspective on the relation of Ego and Unique Self and the larger set of core distinctions that comprise Unique Self teaching. In that conversation, catalyzed by Richard I first used the term, Awakening of the Ego. Richard excitedly concurred and added important empirical validation from his clinical perspective. He sent me this written communication after our conversation. “Many spiritual traditions make the mistake of viewing ‘the ego’ as the problem. At worst it vilified as greedy, anxious, clinging, needy, focused on wounds from the past or fear in the future, full of limiting or false beliefs about you, the source of all suffering, and something one must evolve beyond in order to taste enlightenment. At best it is seen as a confused and childish, to be treated with patience and acceptance but not to be taken seriously or listened to.” My 30 years of experience exploring internal worlds has led to very different conclusions regarding the ego. What is called the ego or false self in these spiritualities is a collection of sub personalities I call parts. When you first become aware of them, these parts manifest all the negative qualities described above so I understand why this mistake is so widespread.

As you get to know them from a place of curiosity and compassion, however, you learn that they are not what they seem. Instead, they are spiritual beings themselves who, because of being hurt by events in your life, are forced into roles that are far from their natures, and carry extreme beliefs and emotions that drive their limiting or suffering perspectives. Once they are able to release those beliefs and emotions (what I call burdens) they immediately transform into their natural, enlightened states and can join your evolution toward increasing embodiment of your true nature, what Marc Gafni importantly refers to as correctly, your unique Self. Thus, if instead of trying to ignore or transcend an annoying ego, you relate to even the apparent worst of your parts with love and open curiosity you will find that, just like you, they long for the liberating realization of their connection with the divine and provide delightful and sage company on your journey toward enlightenment. In this way you will be relating to these inner entities in the same way that Jesus and Buddha taught us to relate to suffering, exiled people. For a fuller explication of the conversation between us in this regard see our dialogue in Answering the Call series located at UniqueSelf.com.

^{xl} Aurobindo and Abraham Kook talk of an “evolutionary imperative”. Contemporary evolutionary mystic, Barbara Marx Hubbard calls this the evolutionary impulse. (Conscious Evolution, 1998)

^{xli} The fourth awakening, together with strong elements of the fifth awakening, is described in the core teachings of Renaissance Hebrew mystic Isaac Luria. Kabbalah scholar M. Kallus characterizes the Lurianic realization as being absolutely nondual, one in which the human being awakens to his or her place as an incarnation of the divine process. This creates an activist posture in which human consciousness is realized to be an expression of evolving divine consciousness. This activist posture, based on the

evolutionary impulse living personally in the human being, caused Kallus to characterize Luria's mysticism with the poignant pathos of Nikos Kazantzakis' phrase,

"We are the saviors of God." This teaching, partially sourced in Kabbalah had direct influence on German idealists Fichte and Schelling. (Kabbalah scholar Eliot Wolfson [2005] has already pointed to a vast literature showing the Kabbalistic influence on Fichte and Schelling.) In the twentieth century, this impulse was powerfully expressed in the writings of Abraham Kook, Sri Aurobindo, and Teilhard de Chardin, three modern evolutionary mystics.

What it means to be "saviors of God" shifts and evolves as the human being ascends to higher structure-stages of consciousness. For Luria, this teaching has little of the humanist cast that it takes on in Kook and even more dramatically in the teachings of some contemporary evolutionary mystics. Some of these contemporary teachers understand the awakening to be the emergence of the inherent creativity, which is the enlightened creativity of what has been called the Authentic Self. In their teaching one awakens to the impersonal face of the process, which expresses itself in you, as you, and through you. In my reading Lurianic Kabbalah can best be characterized as

a form of evolutionary mysticism and a precursor of modern evolutionary spirituality. Clearly, Luria, and the Zoharic authors before him, were writing before science had recognized the existence of evolution within the physical world. It is for that reason that I have chosen to characterize these seminal Kabbalists—in a private dialogue in 2011 with Andrew Cohen and Ken Wilber—as proto-evolutionary thinkers. The topic of this dialogue was the relationship among world spirituality, evolutionary spirituality, and integral spirituality as well as the relationship between Kabbalah and evolutionary thought.

Every evolved culture, and every evolved individual, may realize Unique Self when True Self awakens to its Unique Perspective. Unique Perspective is the prism of postmodern revelation. An early expression of this insight, expressed as True Self + Perspective = Unique Self, is sourced in premodernity in the great teachings of the Kabbalists. For these masters, the sacred text of the Torah is the word of God. Yet, paradoxically, in Hebrew mystical teaching it is said that a human being who is deeply grounded in True Self while fully incarnating his or her own uniqueness, also speaks the word of God! Human insight, however, is considered the word of God and given the status of Torah only when it derives directly from the clarified unique perspective of a human being who is connected to the ground of True Self. In this radical teaching, the ultimate identity between a human being and the godhead is only realized through the paradoxical portal of radical human uniqueness. Irreducible uniqueness, the full inhabiting of unique perspective or voice, is revealed to be an absolute quality of essence.

In modernity and especially in postmodernity, this early realization of the Kabbalists in regard to the primacy of perspective takes center stage. There is an emergent cultural realization, placed front and center in Integral Theory, that perspectives are foundational. But in postmodernity, perspectives have too often been used as the key tool for postmodernity's deconstructive project. The sentence used to deny all truth is "that's just your perspective".

Our conclusion in World Spirituality teaching, however is different from that of the post-modern deconstructive thinkers who were among the champions of this insight. Deconstructive thinkers assume that when perspective is revealed to be part of the process of meaning making, there is no longer any real meaning. However, in the World Spirituality teachings, we understand perspective in this way: every culture and every great tradition of spirit has its own Unique Self and therefore its own unique perspective. Perspective reveals a plenitude of meaning and not a dearth or death of meaning.

All cultures perceive Essence, but each unique perspective gives a particular resonance and cast to Essence. Loyalty to one's religion and culture is not, therefore (as modern and post-modern fashions sometimes suggest), primitive or fundamentalist. Instead, it is partially true, in that it is how my culture intuits essence. The pre-modern mistake was the failure to realize that every religion has a particular perspective, and therefore not to realize that no religion can claim that its intuition of ultimate truth is the only truth. Now that we understand that every great tradition and culture perceived essence through a particular perspective, we can avoid the tragic mistake of deconstructing the traditions as meaningless. Instead, we understand that every tradition has a particular perspective, a particular instrument in the symphony of spirit that is indeed making sacred music. All of the perspectives come together to create a symphony. And at that point, there is the possibility that the followers of each tradition can begin to realize that their particular religion is not the music, but an instrument of the music.

The Kabbalists foreshadow our post-postmodern World Spirituality reconstructive project. Nothing is true, says postmodernity, because everything is contextual. For the Kabbalists, foreshadowing World Spirituality teaching, the opposite is correct. When you fully inhabit your unique perspective, you enter into Source. You not only speak the word of God. You incarnate the word of God. World Spirituality based on Integral principles, including the first principle of Unique Self, understands that uniqueness reveals essence through a particular prism. Perspective creates, not a dearth of truth, but a magnificent kaleidoscope of truth. Every authentic insight deriving from Unique Perspective is true but partial. No part is reducible to the whole, but no part stands alone. It is this insight of Unique Self that is the foundation of the great reconstructive project, which is Spirit's Next Move.