



DR. WAYNE W. DYER

The #1 *New York Times* best-selling author of *Excuses Begone!*

The
Shift

TAKING YOUR LIFE FROM
AMBITION TO MEANING

THE SHIFT

TAKING YOUR LIFE FROM
AMBITION TO MEANING

Dr. Wayne W. Dyer



HAY HOUSE, INC.

Carlsbad, California • New York City
London • Sydney • Johannesburg
Vancouver • Hong Kong • New Delhi

INTRODUCTION

I recently had the pleasure of viewing an inspiring documentary titled *Hasten Slowly: The Journey of Sir Laurens van der Post*. Sir Laurens spent a great deal of time with the Kalahari Bushmen, collecting their stories. For me, his extraordinary insights sum up in a few short paragraphs the essential wish that virtually all human beings harbor:

*The Bushman in the Kalahari Desert talk about two "hungers."
There is the Great Hunger and there is the Little Hunger.
The Little Hunger wants food for the belly;
but the Great Hunger,
the greatest hunger of all, is the hunger for meaning. . . .*

*There's ultimately only one thing that makes
human beings deeply and profoundly bitter,
and that is to have thrust upon them
a life without meaning. . . .*

THE SHIFT

*There is nothing wrong in searching for happiness. . . .
But of far more comfort to the soul . . .
is something greater than happiness
or unhappiness, and that is meaning.
Because meaning transfigures all. . . .
Once what you are doing has for you meaning,
it is irrelevant whether you're happy
or unhappy. You are content—you are not alone
in your Spirit—you belong.¹*

(Sir Laurens van der Post from *Hasten Slowly*,
a film by Mickey Lemle)

As is related so eloquently, “the Great Hunger, the greatest hunger of all, is the hunger for meaning.” *The Shift* is an invitation—both in this book and in the film of the same name—to explore the process of moving away from an aimless life to one filled with meaning and purpose.

I’ve been engaged for many years in helping people (including myself) reach their highest potential. I have now made almost 70 trips around our sun, and the one thing that stands out very clearly is that all of us want our lives to have purpose and meaning. In this book, I elucidate what seems to be required to reach a state of conscious, enlightened awareness that nurtures a life of purpose and meaning.

• • •

When the movie that this book is derived from was first released, it was titled *Ambition to Meaning*, yet many people were unclear about what those words meant or what the film was about. It seems that the title was a bit misleading, perhaps indicating that I'd made a documentary or just captured one of my lectures on film.

During the inaugural national tour when the movie was introduced to select audiences, I expressed my view about the title's confusion to the director and the executive producer. I said, "I love this movie; however, if I were doing it over, I'd give it a different title. I'd call it *The Shift*, because this term is referred to throughout the picture and is what has to take place for a person to move From Ambition To Meaning." To my delight—and to the credit of the director and producer—within a week the film had a new title. Even so, this notion of *From Ambition To Meaning* wouldn't go away.

As I contemplated how to present this essential message in a companion book to the movie, a deep meditation led me to use these four words as the book's organizational format. This is precisely what you now hold in your hands (or have on your book reader).

All of us on this glorious human voyage into adulthood have to make some shifts, or transitions, during the trip. Hopefully, we will go beyond the first two mandatory ones and move on to those shifts in consciousness that lead to a life filled with purpose. Now what do I mean by this?

THE SHIFT

The first shift that we all make takes us from non-being to being; from Spirit to form; from the invisible to our corporeal world of things, boundaries, and stuff. So, the first chapter of this book is titled “From. . . .” In my own humble (and, I’m certain, imperfect) fashion, I attempt to define the undefinable using words and phrases that are mere symbols of that which defies description. Nevertheless, it’s what I’ve come to view as what that world of invisible Spirit, from which all things originate and to which they all return, looks like.

The next shift I portray is the shift from *From* to *Ambition*—thus, “Ambition” is the title of Chapter 2. Ambition is the phase where we take on an ego self that is the opposite of the *place* of Spirit from which we came. Ego in this context is our false self.

These are two major and mandatory shifts that we undertake in this voyage of our humanness. Many of us reach the end of our life journey having only made those two transitions. Ambition, sadly, is often the end of the life story. In my film and in this book, I propose that there are two additional shifts available to all of us. When we proceed with them, the “life without meaning” that Sir Laurens referred to isn’t the end of the story. We can all choose to make the leap past the second shift of the ego-driven ambition.

The third chapter is titled “To,” signifying arriving at a place in our minds where we realize that we have an option to make a U-turn away from the false self and begin heading back in the direction

of our origination—or what I’m calling our “Fromness.” This new phase of our life journey is a return to Spirit and an invitation to the invisible Divine realm to replace ego’s dominance. We learn how to tame ego as we head *To* a life of meaning and purpose, nurtured by our Source of being.

The shift described in Chapter 4 is “Meaning.” As we abandon that false self and begin our return trip back to Source while we’re still alive, we live by a new set of guidelines. We discover that the laws of the material world do not necessarily apply in the presence of the *Meaning* that is encouraged by our shift to Source. Manifestation of miracles and newly discovered synchronicity begin to populate the landscape of life. Indeed, Meaning is what now defines all of the moments of our existence.

In my experience, unfortunately, ego’s Ambition is the final purpose of so many lives—yet there are signs we can notice that signal those two additional shifts that release us from our illusion of ego comforts. We can do an about-face and head back to the place of Spirit in a third shift. And then, in the fourth shift, we achieve a life of Meaning and purpose by rededicating our Ambition to the fulfillment of our authentic self. We can fulfill our greatest calling when we consciously undertake the journey From Ambition To Meaning. We can transform our individual lives and, as an additional bonus, influence the destiny of our sacred planet as well.

Sending love your way,
Dr. Wayne W. Dyer
Maui, Hawaii

CHAPTER ONE

FROM . . .

*“And your body is the harp of your soul,
and it is yours to bring forth sweet
music from it, or confused sounds.”*

— Kahlil Gibran¹

For as long as I can remember, I’ve had a contemplative nature. When I was a little boy, I ruminated about life with questions that seldom had concrete answers. My first attempt to understand death was when Mr. Scarf, one half of the couple who ran the foster home where my brother David and I were living, passed away. After Mrs. Scarf told David and me that her husband had died, she handed both of us a banana as a kind of distraction from her grief. I immediately asked, “When will he be back?” Her one-word answer mystified me. “Never,” she replied, wiping tears from what I perceived to be her ancient face.

THE SHIFT

I immediately went to my place on the top of our bunk beds, peeled my banana, and attempted to grasp what *never* meant. I imagined beginnings and endings, things like day and night ending and then beginning, and I thought of Mr. Scarf going to work and then coming home. In a rudimentary way, I recognized cause and effect, thinking about blossoms on fruit trees becoming apples or cherries. But I felt stymied by how Mr. Scarf could never come back. That totally disrupted what I knew at that age to be the natural flow of things. I lay on my top bunk staring at the ceiling, struggling to comprehend how Mr. Scarf could be gone forever.

Every time I thought of his never, ever coming back, I'd get a sick feeling in my stomach. My thoughts would then shift to something more palatable, something I could grasp, such as, *When will we have supper?* or *Where is my wagon?* But my naturally inquisitive mind continued pondering the mysterious and inexplicable idea of *forever*, and back would come a scary fluttering sensation in my stomach, which I feel even now as I write these words. Since Mr. Scarf died, I've written 34 books and given thousands of lectures on the essence of living a spiritual life, and I still get queasy when I recall those vivid childhood moments of trying to capture the meaning of life without a body to encapsulate it.

As I've pursued my writing and speaking activities over these many years, I've continued to be intrigued by what I call "the big questions." I've studied spiritual and philosophical masters from the East and West, in

ancient and modern times, who have explored—and in many cases, lived—the truths that we view as our spiritual heritage. I love to contemplate these questions that have perplexed humankind for as long as there has been recorded history (and, in all likelihood, even before that). The mystery of life remains fascinating and exciting to me. I enjoy entertaining the unanswerable, but I also feel peaceful with this conundrum.

One of those big questions is: *Who am I?* Part of the answer is that I'm a body with measurable characteristics. Yes, I have a name, talents, and accomplishments—but who I am also includes an intangible presence that I know is part of me. That aspect of myself doesn't have perceptible boundaries or a visible form. One name for this nonphysical aspect is *mind*, with its endless array of invisible thoughts percolating within the physical body.

My personal answer to the *Who am I?* question is that I'm a piece of the all-creating Source known by many names, including God, Spirit, Source, the Tao, Divine mind, and so on. Even though I can't see it or touch it, I know I'm a part of it, because I must be like what I came from—and what I came from is formless nothingness that merged into form. Therefore, I am both that invisible Spirit that is the Source of all, and simultaneously the form that's destined to return to the invisible.

Some other big questions I've also wrestled with are: *What happens after the death of my form? What is my*

life purpose? What does forever look like? Who or what is God? I don't pretend to have definitive answers to these concerns. If great minds such as Lao-tzu, Socrates, Buddha, Rousseau, Descartes, Einstein, Spinoza, St. Francis, Rumi, Patanjali, Goethe, Shaw, Whitman, or Tennyson (among countless others) couldn't come up with the definitive answer, then certainly I'm not going to be able to clear up all of these mysteries in one book or even one lifetime. I can only offer my own interpretation of what I've come to know through study, living, and my concentrated efforts to make conscious contact with my Source of being, and with what I think of as the Source of everything in this material universe.

By far, the one question that has intrigued and puzzled me for as long as I can remember—the one that transcends the *Who am I? What is my purpose? What happens after death? Who or What is God?* questions—is the title of this first chapter, *From*. Where did I come *from*? For me, this has always been the *truly* big question.

Where Did I Come From?

When I think of the events that occurred and the people that existed prior to my arrival on planet Earth in 1940, I'm intrigued by what determined my showing up at the precise time I did. Where was I before my conception in 1939? What was I doing during the 12th and 13th centuries while the Crusades were taking place?

Where was I in 2500 B.C. when the pyramids were being constructed? What or where was I millions of years ago before human beings began appearing on this planet, while the dinosaurs were roaming the earth? Contemplating questions of this nature led me to study a fair amount of the science that explained how things come into form. While I'm by no means an expert in this area, this is what I've learned.

It is my understanding that quantum physics regards this fact as scientifically unassailable: that at the tiniest subatomic level, particles themselves don't originate from a particle. This means that matter originates from something that is formless. Scientists call the formlessness that produces matter "energy." This nonmaterial energy produced the particle that became who I am today. I think of this as a *shift from energy to form*, and as you read this book, I invite you to consider the shifts you've made to be who and where you are right now.

I think of the tiny little speck of human protoplasm that was my very first particle of humanity as being part of some kind of a "future-pull" that shifted into a fetus, and then into a baby, a toddler, a little boy, an adolescent, a young man, a mature adult, a middle-ager, and a person who has been alive for almost 70 years. All of those shifts were inherent in that originating energy that materialized as a microscopic particle and became me.

It's beyond my ability to fathom how such a miraculous unfolding could take place in the formation of who I am as a physical being. But I do believe that it

transpired independently of my ability to do much about it other than simply observe my development. I am really and truly doing absolutely nothing. It seems truer to simply observe myself being lived by this all-creating energy that seems to do nothing, and at the same time leaves nothing undone. So where did that tiny little microscopic dot that was my first experience as a particle come from?

Remember that quantum physics tells us emphatically that particles do not come from particles. If we reduce that original particle to its subatomic status, it is smaller than chromosomes, atoms, electrons within the atom—and even the sub-sub-subatomic particles called quarks. Scientists have placed a quark the size of my origination point into a particle accelerator revved up to 250,000 mph and collided it with another quark. The result? Nothing was there. It appears that nothing exists at the moment of the transition to something. Or, as I enjoy saying, “From *nowhere* to *now here*.” All that exists in the world of *from* is pure formless energy—no particles.

Modern physics confirms the metaphysics of Genesis, which tells us that everything came from God and it was all good. Similarly, the Tao Te Ching tells us that all being originates in nonbeing. Thus, the question of where we came from is answered similarly by physics and metaphysics. They both conclude that we originated from something that has no form, no boundaries, no beginning, and no substance. We are all essentially

spiritual beings having a temporary human experience. This is our essence. This is where we come from.

We Are What We Came From

In the movie version of *The Shift*, I have a brief discussion with several of the characters about this key concept: *Everything in the material world must be like what it came from, including each and every one of us.* In the film I refer to a slice of apple pie on a plate, asking, “What is that one piece of pie like?” The obvious answer is that it’s like apple pie because it must be like what it came from. This is a familiar concept if we think of blood being drawn for a diagnostic test. A small syringe of blood provides medical practitioners with information about the entire supply of the person it was drawn from. Why? Because the sample must be like what it came from.

I extend this logic to myself and you as well. Since I didn’t come from my parents, it isn’t a logical conclusion to state that I must be like they are. Since I didn’t come from my culture, my religion, or anything in this world, it isn’t necessarily so that I must be the same as my surroundings or my society. But since I did come from an invisible energy Source that some call God, or Tao, or Divine mind, then I must be like what I came from. My conclusion about my origination is that I came from Spirit, and my true essence is that I am what I came

THE SHIFT

from. I am a Divine piece of God. I am first and always a spiritual being inextricably connected to my Source of being.

Robert Burns summed this up poetically in his poem “New Year’s Day,” written in 1791:

*The voice of Nature loudly cries,
And many a message from the skies,
That something in us never dies.²*

That which is formless cannot be destroyed. The formless aspect of all beings exists in eternity, impervious to beginnings or endings. The truth seems to be that our essence is eternal, and it is only the physical body that appears to come and go in a cycle of birth and death. What we call birth and death are actually as inseparable as two sides of a coin, or daytime and nighttime. The question *Where did I come from?* is really only addressed to the *I* that is the physical body. But that physical aspect originated in nonbeingness.

We are exactly like the great Tao or God, and we have the freedom to make choices. Some of our choices cause our link to Source to become contaminated and rusty. One of those lackluster choices is believing that the expression of God through our physical self is an endpoint, or the ultimate, rather than an opportunity to choose how to express this gift. In this manner, we edge God out, and create an ego-driven life. The great lesson in this philosophical journey is to recognize our

primary identity as a spiritual being who is eternal and therefore impervious to both birth and death.

Our physical self is an expression in the form of the energy of our spiritual essence; our real self is the loving observer of our sensory experiences. In order to fully harmonize with that essential nature, we must be dedicated to expressing its energy and be fully aware of the sacred choice we're making. For some, that will mean becoming more like God while temporarily housed in their body; for others, it will be creating godlike expressions of beauty, purpose, and wisdom in form.

The human voyage in bodily form is barely a parenthesis in the eternity of our real self. When the parenthesis closes, we're fully reimmersed in Spirit sans the materialized self. We're on that round-trip that Lao-tzu refers to in his famous line from the 40th verse of the Tao Te Ching: "Returning is the motion of the Tao." In the film version of *The Shift*, I quote from the T. S. Eliot poem "Little Gidding":

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*³

But before we shed our physical body and complete this return trip, we can begin to understand our original nature by making an effort to be more like what we imagine our Source of being to be.

One way to conceptualize this is to imagine looking through a viewfinder that provides a clear picture of creative Source. Through these lenses, we see how it thinks, feels, and behaves. This view of our Source gives us a clearer view of our own true self.

Understanding the answer to *Where did I come from?* involves, more than anything else, attempting to live from a perspective that's in rapport with our original nature. We must become more like the spiritual nature of our origin. By recognizing the expression of Divine consciousness that is our physical being, we in turn make the choice of how to express that Divine spirit.

How Spirit Appears to Be

So often our physical world doesn't seem to be very spiritual, in spite of our having originated from spiritual essence. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow expressed this dilemma in his poem "A Psalm of Life":

*Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.⁴*

The poet speaks of your life and mine as something beyond the physical, which he describes as dust. We are all something other than what we identify with our

senses. There's no such thing as a grave for our essential essence—our spirit—but we may disregard and thus lose touch with it. In fact, that's a pretty common situation for all of us during different periods of our lives when we choose to put our physical self in charge.

I love how another of my favorite poets, Rabindranath Tagore, was able to describe in two short lines what he thought was our most important spiritual lesson:

*God loves to see in me, not his servant,
but himself who serves all.⁵*

The important questions we should be asking ourselves are: *Am I like God now? Am I getting closer? Am I there yet?*

If our true essence is Spirit, and we believe that is where we come from, it seems to me a simple task to reconnect to this authentic part of ourselves. One way to do this is to shift our thoughts and actions to the ways in which we imagine creative energy thinks and acts when its energy materializes in form. We need to be more like Spirit appears to be. Since this is what we came from, our Divinity is our destiny, regardless of how we've neglected it over the years. God or the great Tao, which we are all a part of, simply waits patiently for us to be like it is. I imagine that the all-creating Spirit, if indeed it had any wants for us, would want us to realize that.

THE SHIFT

An inspiring example of this is found in *The Quiet Mind: Sayings of White Eagle*:

Your personal contribution towards the great plan for the evolution of man is to dwell continually upon the love of God; to look always into the light and so train yourself to recognize God's goodness working through everyone else.

I don't believe that God is concerned with whether or not we show our love by building magnificent edifices for worship, by attending services, or through practicing rules laid down by religious organizations. It seems to me that if God were to speak to us, the message would simply be to love each other and offer reverence rather than enmity toward all of life.

■ ■ ■

The journey we've undertaken that has led us to this moment in this body encompasses something I'm calling "From." We come from something, somewhere, somehow; and it's a mystery to our little human minds, which tend to think in cause-and-effect ways. My conclusion is that if we're here now, there must have been a before, and certainly there will be an after.

I do, however, acknowledge the possibility that there's no before, no after, and no timeline. Everything may indeed be complete and all happening at once with

no time, no space, no before, and no after. But I can't write from that perspective because *my* little human mind wants to make it all somewhat logical and comprehensible. Therefore, I'll describe "how Spirit appears to be" two distinct journeys. The first is the journey *from formless pure Spirit into form*, and the second is the journey *from a subatomic particle to birth*.

1. From Formless Pure Spirit into Form (Nonbeing to Being)

To write about nonbeing as the place we originate *from* requires me to imaginatively speculate on what the spiritual world of nonbeing is. The way I do this is to imagine a Divine consciousness who's in the business of manifesting form out of nothingness. Imagining a creation without a creator is a lot like trying to imagine a watch without a watchmaker. Observing creation every day, I cannot help but contemplate that it is from seeds that blossoms come, from blossoms come fruit, and from small acorns come giant oak trees. Despite my awe and lack of pure understanding, my curiosity about the world of pure Spirit continually plays with surmising the before and after—or "where from" and "where to" questions.

Nonbeing is a deliriously paradoxical state to contemplate, because I know in my heart that it surely exists, yet I only have my beingness with which to

do the contemplating. I've already described my self-limitations concerning understanding the *From* of my existence. With that in mind, I offer you what I perceive "Fromness" to look like.

I conclude that everything is energy; it's all vibration at a variety of frequencies. The faster the vibration, the closer one is to Spirit and understanding where we came from. The pen I hold in my hand as I write these words appears to be solid, yet a glance at it through a powerful microscope shows that it's actually a field of moving particles, with mostly empty space between those particles. The vibrational makeup of my pen is energy that is slow enough to appear solid to my eyes, which can only perceive objects that fit within a certain frequency.

I hear the sounds of mynah birds as I write, and I know from my limited exposure to the laws of physics that sounds are a faster energy than my solid pen is. The light I see streaming in my window is an even faster energy, with tiny particles moving so fast as to appear to be green or blue or yellow, depending on how the rods and cones in my eyes are calibrated to pick up these energetic signals. Beyond the frequencies of light are the vibrational energies of thought.

Yes, thought is an energy system. The highest-calibrated frequencies of thought, which are measured through simple kinesiology methods, reveal that faster vibrations approach the ultimate in energy vibration—the dimension of Spirit itself. The highest vibrational thoughts are aligned with the Source energy of the Tao

or God. When experienced as thoughts, these faster vibrations create strength, but slower thoughts create a weaker response in kinesiology tests.

The way this works is when we focus mental energy on a thought aligned with Source and raise an arm to shoulder height as a test of our strength, it's difficult for anyone to lower it. When we focus our mental energy on slower-frequency thoughts, however, our upraised arm is easily pushed down by another person. When it comes to kinesiology, every negative emotion makes the physical body weaker. These studies are graphic examples of the world of nonbeing, and they're also opportunities to explore the frequencies that harmonize with the vibrations of Source energy.

That field from which all things originate and to which all things return has a *feel* to it. Based on the research and ruminations of some of the most revered beings who have walked this earth, creation itself isn't an act of violence—it's a pleasurable, joyful act. There doesn't appear to be any fear, shame, blame, anger, humiliation, anxiety, or hatred associated with the workings of the great Tao that seems to be doing nothing and yet leaving nothing undone.

Remember that the body we live in 24/7 wasn't created by a human being; it's a creation of God. So it makes perfect sense to me that if our body, God's creation, is filled with negative thoughts, it would be weak. Simply expressing a falsehood weakens a strong person's arm; expressing the truth always creates a strong

physical response because truth is of God. How could creation or the Creator create from an untruthful perspective? There's abundant literature based on rigorous research in kinesiology that nonbeing, the place that we came from, is aligned with energy that is strongest when expressing truth.

The highest/fastest vibrating thought that will always keep us strong is the energy of love. My conclusion is that nonbeing and love are synonymous. Mysticism and virtually all religions state that the Supreme Being is love and the only pure truth is love. Some religions trivialize the Supreme Being by inventing a god in the image and likeness of humans. Theirs is a deity of endless nit-picking rules Who is easily offended; always being sinned against; and prone to anger, revenge, and punishment. The love I'm speaking of personifies non-being, accessed and incorporated within us from where we originated. It has no rules, doesn't wish to control, never punishes, and doesn't know how to descend into anti-love expressions.

The entire universe, as I see it, is made of love; and each of us appears to be an individualized expression of the One Being of Love. Simplified: *God is love*. I like Ralph Waldo Emerson's description of love as a synonym for God. What an incredibly magnificent concept—this idea of nonbeing existing as a state of pure, indescribable bliss, and one that is necessary for the act of creation to take place.

Think about it: we came from love; therefore, we must be love in some way, since we must be like what we came from. Jesus put it this way: “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:8). Pretty basic, and very straightforward. Nonbeing is love. Since we came from nonbeing, we must be love.

But we somehow manage to move away from our original nature. Every thought of nonlove is a movement away from where we came from. Every act of judgment, anger, shame, fear, anxiety, and violence is a movement toward not loving and not knowing, God. Even an anti-love thought is a movement away from our original nature.

What was it like to be in that state of pure love awaiting our transition into beingness? What were we doing? Once we acquire form, these questions are almost impossible to contemplate. However, here is my conceptualization of what nonbeingness feels like before we journey into this world of form and boundaries:

— **Nothingness.** The one thing we can certainly agree on is that we had nothing. There was nothing to own, nothing to do, nothing to fight, nothing to worry about; we were nothing in physical terms. This idea of nothing is really difficult for us. We’ve entered a world where something has replaced nothing; where form replaced nonform. In our material world, owning nothing and doing nothing are generally interpreted as signs

of failure. Yet our true essence is most comfortable with nothing.

It seems to me that the most efficient way to know and experience where we came from is to make every effort to reconnect to nothing by creating the experience of no attachments, no things, and no thoughts. We do this by simply being, rather than doing and accumulating. As Herman Melville is believed to have said, “God’s one and only voice is silence,” and this is an invitation to experience our original world of nothing. All of creation emerges from the silent void, as does every sound. Every bit of light comes from nothingness; every thought emerges from nonthought. There’s a Zen proverb that reminds us that it’s the silence between the notes that makes the music. Without silence to interrupt the sounds, there can be no music—it would be only one long, continuous tone. But of course even the long tone originated in the void.

Nothingness is equivalent to the expression of zero, mathematically: It can’t be divided; it has no empirical value; and if we multiply anything by it, we get a sum of nothing. Yet without the indivisible zero, mathematics itself would be impossible. Before we came into this material world, our essence was nothing. We had no things encumbering us—no rules, no duties, no money, no parents, no hunger, no fear . . . nothing at all.

When I wrote essays on the 81 verses of the Tao Te Ching for my book *Change Your Thoughts—Change Your Life*, I was struck by how much emphasis Lao-tzu placed

on knowing the great Tao (God) by giving up everything, letting go of all attachments, doing less, owning nothing, and practicing getting to know God by emptying rather than filling the mind. Almost every great spiritual master tells us to find God in emptiness, and to hear God speak to us in silence. So one of the answers to the question of where we come from is: nowhere, with nothing.

We must make the effort to find our way to that peaceful nothingness while we're still in our body. We can empty our pockets or purse, but we especially need to empty our *mind* and relish the joy of living in our physical world while simultaneously experiencing the bliss of nothingness. This is our origin, just as it is assuredly our ultimate destination as well. Albert Einstein once noted that everything is emptiness, and form is condensed emptiness. And according to my teacher Nisargadatta Maharaj:

This is real liberation: to know that you are nothing. All your knowledge, including yourself, is liquidated—then you are liberated.⁶

— **Oneness.** Closely aligned with nothingness is the idea of oneness. How can it be that at our spiritual core, we're both nothing, as well as connected to something called oneness? Everything in this physical universe of ours is in some way connected to everything else, because it all originated from the void of nothingness.

THE SHIFT

There aren't several of these voids to choose from—we came from the same void that everyone and everything else came from. When we attempt to isolate anything, we find that it is in some way part of everything else in the universe. Just as it is absurd for a single wave to see itself as separate from the ocean, so it is for any of us not to recognize our oneness with what we know as infinity.

Oneness is difficult to adequately comprehend because we're so immersed in a world of things that seem *other* to us. The opening line of the Tao Te Ching suggests that the Tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao. In other words, as soon as it's named, it's lost, because we've created a dichotomy. Oneness means just that: only one. As I said earlier, just like zero in mathematics, it can't be divided or subdivided. The instant we label or name it, it's something else, separate; consequently, it's not the unity of oneness. Lao-tzu repeatedly mentions that when we name it, we've lost it. In oneness, there are no names; there's only the one. That's why it's so impossible to write about oneness—every word I use to describe it illustrates that I'm not comprehending it!

The place that we came from is devoid of dichotomies, unlike our material world, which is dependent on pairs of opposites. In this world, without a concept of up, there can be no down. Without an idea of death, there's no life. The north pole of a magnet can't exist without the south pole. No male, no female. No right, no wrong. We think in dichotomies, and we identify ourselves

on the basis of opposites. We know what we like, what tastes good, what feels good, and so on, because of our experience with what we dislike. Because of this material world, many of us find it difficult to access oneness, the world that the ancient teacher Hermes described in this way:

God is one. And he that is one is nameless; for he does not need a name, since he is alone. . . . All things have been derived from One . . .⁷

The idea of oneness is next to impossible to grasp because we live in a world of contrasts, and contrast requires more than one element. So here we are, persistently in our world of twoness. How can we grasp the idea of oneness in the world of nonbeing that we occupied before we came into beingness? One way might be to think of our fingers, legs, arms, toes, and eyes: We don't think of them as separate entities from our total being. We don't refer to our fingers as being separate from ourselves. Even though they have their unique qualities and character, they're part of the oneness we refer to as ourselves. So it is with our relationship to Source or God before we came into this world—in that world, which I'm calling our "Fromness," we and God were one.

Oneness as the concept of where we're from means discarding all ideas of separation from anything and anyone. We can simulate oneness through the part of

ourselves that knows the silence where there are no names and no things. Here, we can begin to feel our connection to everyone, to the earth, to the universe, and ultimately to the great Tao. Oneness becomes accessible in that great power, which acts without doing, keeps the entire universe in order, and generates form from nothingness.

If we imagine that we're free of all labels, all separation, and all judgments about this world and the life inhabiting it, we can begin to understand oneness. The place we want to enter is of simply *being*. We can picture the Source of being as an energy that's as available to us as is the sky. There's no anger toward anyone or anything because everyone and everything is Spirit. This Spirit is God, our Source of being. We are it, and it is who we are. We relax into the silence of where we came from. We discover the meaning of life by being able to return to the oneness and nothingness while still in material form, without having to leave our body in the ritual of death. The closer we get to experiencing our original nature, the more peace and purpose flows through us.

2. From a Subatomic Particle to Birth (Earliest Beingness to Birth)

We've examined the logic and spiritual speculation of what our nonbeingness might look like. Please remember that this is largely my interpretation of the

invisible world of Spirit, which is both our originating source and our place of return when our physical self is no longer animated by Divine consciousness.

In one magically mysterious nanosecond, we made the transition from nonbeing to being. A subatomic particle of human protoplasm emerged from Spirit, and everything that was needed for the journey we call life was taken care of. An invisible force that I call a future-pull was set in motion, filling in our physical characteristics. Our ultimate height; body shape; eye, skin, and hair color; wrinkles that would someday appear; and, of course, the business of our body ceasing to be alive, were all arranged, without our having to do a thing about it.

In the film *The Shift*, I speculate that if everything needed for the physical journey is handled by the nameless nothingness, then it isn't beyond my capacity to hypothesize that everything needed to fulfill our entire destiny also arose in that moment of transition from nonbeing to beingness. Our dharma—our essential purpose for being here—our personality, and all of the help we'd need along the way were also in that microscopic dot. If our body was on a journey that's all handled by the great Tao or God, then I say, why not everything else about us as well?

The primary characteristic of this nine-month journey is what I call *surrender*. There was nothing for us to do. Somehow, our Source of being in its infinite wisdom was going to do it all. We and our birth mother allowed

THE SHIFT

the great Tao to do what it does. The truth is that we were doing nothing; we were simply being done. In that entire nine-month voyage, we were *lived* by the Tao. Understanding where we came from and where we'll return to is really experiencing the feeling of total surrender. This means allowing the force that's doing everything to simply do it without interference.

In that first nine months of our life as a microscopic dot, and then as a growing embryo, we and our mother practiced noninterference. Our natural wisdom knew that all we needed in order to thrive and flourish was being taken care of by the unseen force that appeared to do nothing and yet left nothing undone. We didn't have to be concerned about when our fingernails would show up, and if they'd grow at the ends of our fingers rather than behind our ears. Our heartbeat began right on time, without our needing to make arrangements to turn it on. By surrendering and allowing, we were being formed into the perfection that we signed up for while we were ensconced in nonbeing. The energy responsible for our beingness knew precisely what to do and when to do it. This is our authentic self.

From the moment of conception, we were swaddled in the arms of invisible infinite wisdom. We allowed our true self to unfold in the perfect design that was inherent in both our nonbeing and our beingness. Had we stayed completely immersed in that state of consciousness, we would have remained aligned with our Source. In that scenario, there's no occasion to wonder about our life

purpose. That little speck that we didn't know anything about accumulating, achieving, or having ambition. It simply was *being*, allowing itself to surrender to the invisible force that administers everything.

But rather than staying in that state of allowing and surrender, we were hooked by a set of beliefs that put ambition ahead of allowing. The part of us that is from allowing, surrendering, and being . . . arrived in form in a place where ambition was given primary importance. Had we been capable of continuing our life with what we came from, we'd be living at the highest levels of awareness or God-realization. Enlightenment would be ours, and it seems to have been intended that way. As Jesus put it, "Even the least among you can do all that I have done and even greater things," and, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'?" (John 10:34). Indeed, where we came from is God and, therefore, we're God as well.

The reality seems to be that we all tend to shift to ambition in a form that we insist on directing. The possibility is that we all have the choice to then shift to meaning and thereby complete our return to the place I call "From." In the next chapter, I'll discuss the Ambition phase.

■ ■ ■

Here's a recap of, and suggestions for, recapturing our "Fromness":

— **Nothingness.** Allow yourself to enjoy silence and meditation. Even if you don't have a structured meditation practice, give yourself time to simply savor the silence. Turn off the noisemakers at home and in your auto. Create time to be in nature away from human-made sounds. Learn to treat your voyages inward as sacred space, spending moments repeatedly letting go by physically and mentally relaxing. Let go of worrying, planning, thinking, recalling, wondering, hoping, desiring, or remembering. Consciously let go of each physical sensation you notice. Do this one moment at a time. Enter a state where you can let your possessions, your family, your home, your work, and your body cease to exist. Experience the inner bliss of nothingness.

When you emerge from your silence, begin the process of detachment by literally giving away something that you don't use at least once every day. In nothingness, you will find greater intimacy with your Source of being.

— **Oneness.** Begin to view yourself as connected to every person you encounter by valuing and loving the part of you that flows through all life. Feel your connection to all of nature and practice nonjudgment and love, beginning with yourself. This means that when you feel offended or upset, instead of directing your attention toward the person or incident outside of you, notice what it is that *you* are feeling, and where you feel it in your body. Redirect your attention from

external circumstances to an examination of just how that particular upset feels in your body. This is how you begin practicing oneness. Set your inner barometer on love and acceptance for the feelings you're experiencing. Remind yourself that you are one with God and, therefore, *you* are love. That is all you have to offer; so begin with loving the hurt, offended, or upset parts of yourself.

As you integrate all of yourself, assembling the parts into the oneness that is you, you'll discover the impossibility of your being separate from anyone else on our planet. Simply recognizing the times of anger or annoyance as opportunities to know yourself better, and to forgive and love yourself, will extend your awareness of the oneness you are. Practice this kind of oneness, and love will flow outward naturally to include others whom you've previously judged.

— **Surrender.** Practice the art of allowing. Watch your body as it goes through its motions. The hair changing to gray or falling out, the skin sagging . . . the little changes that happen on their own, independent of your opinion about them. Then practice the same kind of noninterference with your family, your friends, your co-workers—everyone. The Beatles had it right—there will be an answer if you just let it be. This is surrender. This is the art of giving up your need to control your world and everyone in it.

THE SHIFT

As we in the recovery movement have been saying for many years, “Let go and let God.” When you practice surrender on a daily basis, everything seems to fall into place. You came from a place of well-being—of love, kindness, gentleness, joy, and purity. This is your “From-ness.” Surrender to it. When I find myself wanting to control my destiny, I say to myself, “Let go, Wayne. Let go and let God!” Try this using your own name—it works!

My attempts to describe where we come from are stated in the 21st verse of the Tao Te Ching:

The greatest virtue is to follow the Tao and the Tao alone.

*The Tao is elusive and intangible.
Although formless and intangible,
it gives rise to form.
Although vague and elusive,
it gives rise to shapes.
Although dark and obscure,
it is the spirit, the essence,
the life breath of all things.*

*Throughout the ages, its name has been preserved
in order to recall the beginning of all things.
How do I know the ways of all things at the beginning?
I see what is within me.*

■ ■ ■

From . . .

I close this chapter on your “Fromness” by citing my very favorite passage from *A Course in Miracles* (pages 486 to 488). It reminds us all that knowing where we came from is a function of *remembering*, and that we cannot unlock the mysteries of our spiritual origins unless we move to a place where we can, in fact, *remember* our Source of being, right here, right now:

The *memory* of God comes to the quiet mind.
It cannot come where there is conflict; for a mind at war
against itself *remembers* not eternal gentleness. . . .
What you *remember* is a part of you. For you must be
as God created you. . . . Let all this madness be undone
for you, and turn in peace of the *remembrance* of God, still
shining in your quiet mind.

Study this passage carefully and you will unlock the mystery that is your true Source of being. Get quiet, let go of conflict, become peaceful, and remember the eternal gentleness that resides within you.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■