



The Place That is Free of Suffering, by Eckhart Tolle

The world promises fulfillment somewhere in time, and there is a continuous striving toward that fulfillment in time. Many times people feel, "Yes, now I have arrived," and then they realize that, no, they haven't arrived, and then the striving continues. It is expressed beautifully in *_A Course in Miracles_*, where it says that the dictum of the ego is "Seek but do not find." People look to the future for salvation, but the future never arrives. So ultimately, suffering arises through not finding.

And that is the beginning of an awakening-when the realization dawns that "Perhaps this is not the way. Perhaps I will never get to where I am striving to reach; perhaps it's not in the future at all." After having been lost in the world, suddenly, through the pressure of suffering, the realization comes that the answers may not be found out there in worldly attainment and in the future. That's an important point for many people to reach. That sense of deep crisis -- when the world as they have known it, and the sense of self that they have known that is identified with the world, become meaningless.

That happened to me. I was just that close to suicide and then something else happened-a death of the sense of self that lived through identifications, identifications with my story, things around me, the world. Something arose at that moment that was a sense of deep and intense stillness and aliveness, beingness. I later called it "presence." I realized that beyond words, that is who I am. But this realization wasn't a mental process. I realized that that vibrantly alive, deep stillness is who I am. Years later, I called that stillness "pure consciousness," whereas everything else is the conditioned consciousness. The human mind is the conditioned consciousness that has taken form as thought. The conditioned consciousness is the whole world that is created by the conditioned mind. Everything is our conditioned consciousness; even objects are. Conditioned consciousness has taken birth as form and then that becomes the world.

To be lost in the conditioned seems to be necessary for humans. It seems to be part of their path to be lost in the world, to be lost in the mind, which is the conditioned consciousness. Then, due to the suffering that arises out of being lost, one finds the unconditioned as oneself. And that is why we need the world to transcend the world. So I'm infinitely grateful for having been lost. The purpose of the world is for you to be lost in it, ultimately. The purpose of the world is for you to suffer, to create the suffering that seems to be what is needed for the awakening to happen. And then once the

awakening happens, with it comes the realization that suffering is unnecessary now. You have reached the end of suffering because you have transcended the world. It is the place that is free of suffering.

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