

WAKE UP!

SPIRITUALITY

"This is your wake-up call! You may not have even realized you were sleep-walking. Most of us are most of the time. *Awareness* is an eye-opener. It's Anthony de Mello telling you gently but firmly, 'It's time to get up now.'"

—CHARLES OSGOOD OF "CBS SUNDAY MORNING" AND "THE OSGOOD FILE"

"*Awareness* will be the critical test of American business in the next decade. I call it the 'business of awareness.'"

—F. X. MAGUIRE, HEARTH COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

The heart of Anthony de Mello's bestselling spiritual message is awareness. Mixing Christian spirituality, Buddhist parables, Hindu breathing exercises, and psychological insight, de Mello's words of hope come together in *Awareness* in a grand synthesis.

In short chapters for reading in quiet moments at home or at the office, he cajoles and challenges: We must leave this go-go-go world of illusion and become aware. And this only happens, he insists, by becoming alive to the needs and potential of others, whether at home or in the workplace.

Here, then, is a masterful book of the spirit, challenging us to wake up in every aspect of our lives.

ANTHONY DE MELLO was a Jesuit priest known throughout the world for his writings and spiritual conferences. He died suddenly in 1987. Among his many books are *Sadbana* and *The Song of the Bird*. **J. FRANCIS STROUD**, the editor of *Awareness*, is a Jesuit priest who worked closely with Anthony de Mello.

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AWARENESS

*The Perils and Opportunities
of Reality*

ANTHONY DE MELLO

"This is your wake-up call!"—Charles Osgood

people, to poor people. He was telling them good news: It's yours for the taking, But who listens? No one's interested, they'd rather be asleep.

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FEAR—THE ROOT OF VIOLENCE

Some say that there are only two things in the world: God and fear; love and fear are the only two things. There's only one evil in the world, fear. There's only one good in the world, love. It's sometimes called by other names. It's sometimes called happiness or freedom or peace or joy or God or whatever. But the label doesn't really matter. And there's not a single evil in the world that you cannot trace to fear. Not one.

Ignorance and fear, ignorance caused by fear, that's where all the evil comes from, that's where your violence comes from. The person who is truly nonviolent, who is incapable of violence, is the person who is fearless. It's only when you're afraid that you become angry. Think of the last time you were angry. Go ahead. Think of the last time you were angry and search for the fear behind it. What were you afraid of losing? What were you afraid would be taken from you? That's where the anger comes from. Think of an angry person, maybe someone you're afraid of. Can you see how frightened he or she is? He's really frightened, he really

is. She's really frightened or she wouldn't be angry. Ultimately, there are only two things, love and fear.

In this retreat I'd rather leave it like this, unstructured and moving from one thing to another and returning to themes again and again, because that's the way to really grasp what I'm saying. If it doesn't hit you the first time, it might the second time, and what doesn't hit one person might hit another. I've got different themes, but they are all about the same thing. Call it awareness, call it love, call it spirituality or freedom or awakening or whatever. It really is the same thing.

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AWARENESS AND CONTACT WITH REALITY

To watch everything inside of you and outside, and when there is something happening to you, to see it as if it were happening to someone else, with no comment, no judgment, no attitude, no interference, no attempt to change, only to understand. As you do this, you'll begin to realize that increasingly you are disidentifying from "me." St. Teresa of Avila says that toward the end of her life God gave her an extraordinary grace. She doesn't use this modern expression, of course, but what it really boils down to is disidentifying from herself. If someone else has cancer and I don't know the person, I'm not all that affected. If I had love and sensitivity, maybe I'd help, but I'm not emotion-

ally affected. If *you* have an examination to take, I'm not all that affected. I can be quite philosophical about it and say, "Well, the more you worry about it, the worse it'll get. Why not just take a good break instead of studying?" But when it's my turn to have an examination, well, that's something else, isn't it? The reason is that I've identified with "me"—with my family, my country, my possessions, my body, me. How would it be if God gave me grace not to call these things mine? I'd be detached; I'd be disidentified. That's what it means to lose the self, to deny the self, to die to self.

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**GOOD RELIGION—
THE ANTITHESIS
OF UNWARENESS**

Somebody came up to me once during a conference and asked, "What about 'Our Lady of Fatima'?" What do you think of her? When I am asked questions like that, I am reminded of the story of the time they were taking the statue of Our Lady of Fatima on an airplane to a pilgrimage for worship, and as they were flying over the South of France the plane began to wobble and to shake and it looked like it was going to come apart. And the miraculous statue cried out, "Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us!" And all was well. Wasn't it wonderful, one "Our Lady" helping another "Our Lady"?

There was also a group of a thousand people who went on a pilgrimage to Mexico City to venerate the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe and sat down before the statue in protest because the Bishop of the Diocese had declared "Our Lady of Lourdes" patroness of the diocese! They were sure that Our Lady of Guadalupe felt this very much, so they were doing the protest in *reparation* for the offense. That's the trouble with religion, if you don't watch out.

When I speak to Hindus, I tell them, "Your priests are not going to be happy to hear this" (notice how prudent I am this morning), "but God would be much happier, according to Jesus Christ, if you were transformed than if you worshipped. He would be much more pleased by your loving than by your adoration." And when I talk to Moslems, I say, "Your Ayatollah and your mullahs are not going to be happy to hear this, but God is going to be much more pleased by your being transformed into a loving person than by saying, "Lord, Lord." It's infinitely more important that you be waking up. That's spirituality, that's everything. If you have that, you have God. Then you worship "in spirit and in truth." When you become love, when you are transformed into love. The danger of what religion can do is very nicely brought out in a story told by Cardinal Martini, the Archbishop of Milan. The story has to do with an Italian couple that's getting married. They have an arrangement with the parish priest to have a little reception in the parish courtyard outside the church. But it rained, and they couldn't have the reception, so they said to the priest,

“Would it be all right if we had the celebration in the church?”

Now Father wasn't one bit happy about having a reception in the church, but they said, “We will eat a little cake, sing a little song, drink a little wine, and then go home.” So Father was persuaded. But being good life-loving Italians they drank a little wine, sang a little song, then drank a little more wine, and sang some more songs, and within a half hour there was a great celebration going on in the church. And everybody was having a great time, lots of fun and frolic. But Father was all tense, pacing up and down in the sacristy, all upset about the noise they were making. The assistant pastor comes in and says, “I see you are quite tense”.

“Of course, I'm tense. Listen to all the noise they are making, and in the House of God!, for heaven's sake!”

“Well, Father, they really had no place to go.”

“I know that! But do they have to make all that racket?”

“Well, we mustn't forget, must we, Father, that Jesus himself was once present at a wedding!”

Father says, “I know Jesus Christ was present at a wedding banquet, *YOU* don't have to tell me Jesus Christ was present at a wedding banquet! But they didn't have the Blessed Sacrament there!!!”

You know there are times like that when the Blessed Sacrament becomes more important than Jesus Christ. When worship becomes more important than love, when the Church becomes more important than life. When God becomes more important than the neighbor. And so it goes

on. That's the danger. To my mind this is what Jesus was evidently calling us to—first things first! The human being is much more important than the Sabbath. Doing what I tell you, namely, becoming what I am indicating to you, is much more important than Lord, Lord. But your mullah is not going to be happy to hear that, I assure you. Your priests are not going to be happy to hear that. Not generally. So that's what we have been talking about. Spirituality. Waking up. And as I told you, it is extremely important if you want to wake up to go in for what I call “self-observation.” Be aware of what you're saying, be aware of what you're doing, be aware of what you're thinking, be aware of how you're acting. Be aware of where you're coming from, what your motives are. The unaware life is not worth living.

The unaware life is a mechanical life. It's not human, it's programmed, conditioned. We might as well be a stone, a block of wood. In the country where I come from, you have hundreds of thousands of people living in little hovels, in extreme poverty, who just manage to survive, working all day long, hard manual work, sleep and then wake up in the morning, eat something, and start all over again. And you sit back and think, “What a life.” “Is that all that life holds in store for them?” And then you're suddenly jolted into the realization that 99.999% of people here are not much better. You can go to the movies, drive around in a car, you can go for a cruise. Do you think you are much better off than they are? You are just as dead as they are. Just as much a machine as they are—a slightly bigger one, but a

machine nevertheless. That's sad. It's sad to think that people go through life like this.

People go through life with fixed ideas; they never change. They're just not aware of what's going on. They might as well be a block of wood, or a rock, a talking, walking, thinking machine. That's not human. They are puppets, jerked around by all kinds of things. Press a button and you get a reaction. You can almost predict how this person is going to react. If I study a person, I can tell you just how he or she is going to react. With my therapy group, sometimes I write on a piece of paper that so-and-so is going to start the session and so-and-so will reply. Do you think that's bad? Well, don't listen to people who say to you, "Forget yourself! Go out in love to others." Don't listen to them! They're all wrong. The worst thing you can do is forget yourself when you go out to others in the so-called helping attitude.

This was brought home to me very forcibly many years ago when I did my studies in psychology in Chicago. We had a course in counseling for priests. It was open only to priests who were actually engaged in counseling and who agreed to bring a taped session to class. There must have been about twenty of us. When it was my turn, I brought a cassette with an interview I had had with a young woman. The instructor put it in a recorder and we all began to listen to it. After five minutes, as was his custom, the instructor stopped the tape and asked, "Any comments?" Someone said to me, "Why did you ask her that question?" I said, "I'm not aware that I asked her a question. As a matter of fact,

I'm quite sure I did not ask any questions." He said, "You did." I was quite sure because at that time I was consciously following the method of Carl Rogers, which is person-oriented and nondirective. You don't ask questions and you don't interrupt or give advice. So I was very aware that I mustn't ask questions. Anyway, there was a dispute between us, so the instructor said, "Why don't we play the tape again?" So we played it again and there, to my horror, was a whopping big question, as tall as the Empire State Building, a huge question. The interesting thing to me was that I had heard that question three times, the first time, presumably, when I asked it, the second time when I listened to the tape in my room (because I wanted to take a good tape to class), and the third time when I heard it in the classroom. But it hadn't registered! I wasn't aware.

That happens frequently in my therapy sessions or in my spiritual direction. We tape-record the interview, and when the client listens to it, he or she says, "You know, I didn't really hear what you said during the interview. I only heard what you said when I listened to the tape." More interestingly, *I* didn't hear what *I* said during the interview. It's shocking to discover that I'm saying things in a therapy session that I'm not aware of. The full import of them only dawns on me later. Do you call that *human*? "Forget yourself and go out to others," you say! Anyhow, after we listened to the whole tape there in Chicago, the instructor said, "Are there any comments?" One of the priests, a fifty-year-old man to whom I had taken a liking, said to me, "Tony, I'd like to ask you a personal question. Would that

be all right?" I said, "Yes, go ahead. If I don't want to answer it, I won't." He said, "Is this woman in the interview pretty?"

You know, honest to goodness, I was at a stage of my development (or undevelopment) where I didn't notice if someone was good-looking or not. It didn't matter to me. She was a sheep of Christ's flock; I was a pastor. I dispensed help. Isn't that great! It was the way we were trained. So I said to him, "What's that got to do with it?" He said, "Because you don't like her, do you?" I said, "What?!"

It hadn't ever struck me that I liked or disliked individuals. Like most people, I had an occasional dislike that would register in consciousness, but my attitude was mostly neutral. I asked, "What makes you say that?" He said, "The tape." We went through the tape again, and he said, "Listen to your voice. Notice how sweet it has become. You're irritated, aren't you?" I was, and I was only becoming aware of it right there. And what was I saying to her nondirectively? I was saying, "Don't come back." But I wasn't aware of that. My priest friend said, "She's a woman. She will have picked this up. When are you supposed to meet her next?" I said, "Next Wednesday." He said, "My guess is she won't come back." She didn't. I waited one week but she didn't come. I waited another week and she didn't come. Then I called her. I broke one of my rules: Don't be the rescuer.

I called her and said to her, "Remember that tape you allowed me to make for the class? It was a great help because the class pointed out all kinds of things to me" (I

didn't tell her what!) "that would make the session somewhat more effective. So if you care to come back, that would make it more effective." She said, "All right, I'll come back." She did. The dislike was still there. It hadn't gone away, but it wasn't getting in the way. What you are aware of you are in control of; what you are not aware of is in control of you. You are always a slave to what you're not aware of. When you're aware of it, you're free from it. It's there, but you're not affected by it. You're not controlled by it; you're not enslaved by it. That's the difference.

Awareness, awareness, awareness, awareness. What they trained us to do in that course was to become participant observers. To put it somewhat graphically, I'd be talking to you and at the same time I'd be out there watching you and watching me. When I'm listening to you, it's infinitely more important for me to listen to me than to listen to you. Of course, it's important to listen to you, but it's more important that I listen to me. Otherwise I won't be hearing you. Or I'll be distorting everything you say. I'll be coming at you from my own conditioning. I'll be reacting to you in all kinds of ways from my insecurities, from my need to manipulate you, from my desire to succeed, from irritations and feelings that I might not be aware of. So it's frightfully important that I listen to me when I'm listening to you. That's what they were training us to do, obtaining awareness.

You don't always have to imagine yourself hovering somewhere in the air. Just to get a rough idea of what I'm talking about, imagine a good driver, driving a car, who's

concentrating on what you're saying. In fact, he may even be having an argument with you, but he's perfectly aware of the road signals. The moment anything untoward happens, the moment there's any sound, or noise, or bump, he'll hear it at once. He'll say, "Are you sure you closed that door back there?" How did he do that? He was aware, he was alert. The focus of his attention was on the conversation, or argument, but his awareness was more diffused. He was taking in all kinds of things.

What I'm advocating here is not concentration. That's not important. Many meditative techniques inculcate concentration, but I'm leery of that. They involve violence and frequently they involve further programming and conditioning. What I would advocate is awareness, which is not the same as concentration at all. Concentration is a spotlight, a floodlight. You're open to anything that comes within the scope of your consciousness. You can be distracted from that, but when you're practicing awareness, you're never distracted. When awareness is turned on, there's never any distraction, because you're always aware of whatever happens to be.

Say I'm looking at those trees and I'm worrying. Am I distracted? I am distracted only if I mean to concentrate on the trees. But if I'm aware that I'm worried, too, that isn't a distraction at all. Just be aware of where your attention goes. When anything goes awry or anything untoward happens, you'll be alerted at once. Something's going wrong! The moment any negative feeling comes into consciousness, you'll be alerted. You're like the driver of the car.

I told you that St. Teresa of Avila said God gave her the grace of disidentifying herself with herself. You hear children talk that way. A two-year-old says, "Tommy had his breakfast this morning." He doesn't say "I," although he is Tommy. He says "Tommy"—in the third person. Mystics feel that way. They have disidentified from themselves and they are at peace.

This was the grace St. Teresa was talking about. This is the "I" that the mystic masters of the East are constantly urging people to discover. And those of the West, too! And you can count Meister Eckhart among them. They are urging people to discover the "I."

LABELS

The important thing is not to know who "I" is or what "I" is. You'll never succeed. There are no words for it. The important thing is to drop the labels. As the Japanese Zen masters say, "Don't seek the truth; just drop your opinions." Drop your theories; don't seek the truth. Truth isn't something you search for. If you stop being opinionated, you would know. Something similar happens here. If you drop your labels, you would know. What do I mean by labels? Every label you can conceive of except perhaps that of human being. I am a human being. Fair enough; doesn't say very much. But when you say, "I am successful," that's crazy. Success is not part of the "I." Success is something

that comes and goes; it could be here today and gone tomorrow. That's not "I." When you said, "I was a success," you were in error; you were plunged into darkness. You identified yourself with success. The same thing when you said, "I am a failure, a lawyer, a businessman." You know what's going to happen to you if you identify yourself with these things. You're going to cling to them, you're going to be worried that they may fall apart, and that's where your suffering comes in. That is what I meant earlier when I said to you, "If you're suffering, you're asleep." Do you want a sign that you're asleep? Here it is: You're suffering. Suffering is a sign that you're out of touch with the truth. Suffering is given to you that you might open your eyes to the truth, that you might understand that there's falsehood somewhere, just as physical pain is given to you so you will understand that there is disease or illness somewhere. Suffering points out that there is falsehood somewhere. Suffering occurs when you clash with reality. When your illusions clash with reality, when your falsehoods clash with truth, then you have suffering. Otherwise there is no suffering.



OBSTACLES TO HAPPINESS

What I'm about to say will sound a bit pompous, but it's true. What is coming could be the most important minutes in your lives. If you could grasp this, you'd hit upon the secret of awakening. You would be happy forever. You

would never be unhappy again. Nothing would have the power to hurt you again. I mean that, nothing. It's like when you throw black paint in the air; the air remains uncontaminated. You never color the air black. No matter what happens to you, you remain uncontaminated. You remain at peace. There are human beings who have attained this, what I call being human. Not this nonsense of being a puppet, jerked about this way and that way, letting events or other people tell you how to feel. So you proceed to feel it and you call it being vulnerable. Ha! I call it being a puppet. So you want to be a puppet? Press a button and you're down; do you like that? But if you refuse to identify with any of those labels, most of your worries cease.

Later we'll talk about fear of disease and death, but ordinarily you're worried about what's going to happen to your career. A small-time businessman, fifty-five years old, is sipping beer at a bar somewhere and he's saying, "Well, look at my classmates, they've really made it." The idiot! What does he mean, "They made it"? They've got their names in the newspaper. Do you call that making it? One is president of the corporation; the other has become the Chief Justice; somebody else has become this or that. Monkeys, all of them.

Who determines what it means to be a success? This stupid society! The main preoccupation of society is to keep society sick! And the sooner you realize that, the better. Sick, every one of them. They are loony, they're crazy. You became president of the lunatic asylum and you're proud of it even though it means nothing. Being president of a cor-

poration has nothing to do with being a success in life. Having a lot of money has nothing to do with being a success in life. You're a success in life when you wake up! Then you don't have to apologize to anyone, you don't have to explain anything to anyone, you don't give a damn what anybody thinks about you or what anybody says about you. You have no worries; you're happy. That's what I call being a success. Having a good job or being famous or having a great reputation has absolutely nothing to do with happiness or success. Nothing! It is totally irrelevant. All he's really worried about is what his children will think about him, what the neighbors will think about him, what his wife will think about him. He should have become famous. Our society and culture drill that into our heads day and night. People who made it! Made what?! Made asses of themselves. Because they drained all their energy getting something that was worthless. They're frightened and confused, they are puppets like the rest. Look at them strutting across the stage. Look how upset they get if they have a stain on their shirt. Do you call that a success? Look at how frightened they are at the prospect they might not be reelected. Do you call that a success? They are controlled, so manipulated. They are unhappy people, they are miserable people. They don't enjoy life. They are constantly tense and anxious. Do you call that human? And do you know why that happens? Only one reason: They identified with some label. They identified the "I" with their money or their job or their profession. That was their error.

Did you hear about the lawyer who was presented with a

plumber's bill? He said to the plumber, "Hey, you're charging me two hundred dollars an hour. I don't make that kind of money as a lawyer." The plumber said, "I didn't make that kind of money when I was a lawyer either!" You could be a plumber or a lawyer or a businessman or a priest, but that does not affect the essential "I". It doesn't affect you. If I change my profession tomorrow, it's just like changing my clothes. I am untouched. *Are* you your clothes? *Are* you your name? *Are* you your profession? Stop identifying with them. They come and go.

When you really understand this, no criticism can affect you. No flattery or praise can affect you either. When someone says, "You're a great guy," what is he talking about? He's talking about "me," he's not talking about "I." "I" is neither great nor small. "I" is neither successful nor a failure. It is none of these labels. These things come and go. These things depend on the criteria society establishes. These things depend on your conditioning. These things depend on the mood of the person who happens to be talking to you right now. It has nothing to do with "I." "I" is none of these labels. "Me" is generally selfish, foolish, childish—a great big ass. So when you say, "You're an ass," I've known it for years! The conditioned self—what did you expect? I've known it for years. Why do you identify with him? Silly! That isn't "I," that's "me."

Do you want to be happy? Uninterrupted happiness is uncaused. True happiness is uncaused. You cannot make me happy. You are not my happiness. You say to the awakened

person, "Why are you happy?" and the awakened person replies, "Why not?"

Happiness is our natural state. Happiness is the natural state of little children, to whom the kingdom belongs until they have been polluted and contaminated by the stupidity of society and culture. To acquire happiness you don't have to do anything, because happiness cannot be acquired. Does anybody know why? Because we have it already. How can you acquire what you already have? Then why don't you experience it? Because you've got to drop something. You've got to drop illusions. You don't have to add anything in order to be happy; you've got to drop something. Life is easy, life is delightful. It's only hard on your illusions, your ambitions, your greed, your cravings. Do you know where these things come from? From having identified with all kinds of labels!

FOUR STEPS TO WISDOM

The first thing you need to do is get in touch with negative feelings that you're not even aware of. Lots of people have negative feelings they're not aware of. Lots of people are depressed and they're not aware they are depressed. It's only when they make contact with joy that they understand how depressed they were. You can't deal with a cancer that you haven't detected. You can't get rid of boll weevils on your farm if you're not aware of their existence. The first

thing you need is awareness of your negative feelings. What negative feelings? Gloominess, for instance. You're feeling gloomy and moody. You feel self-hatred or guilt. You feel that life is pointless, that it makes no sense; you've got hurt feelings, you're feeling nervous and tense. Get in touch with those feelings first.

The second step (this is a four-step program) is to understand that the feeling is in you, not in reality. That's such a self-evident thing, but do you think people know it? They don't, believe me. They've got Ph.D.s and are presidents of universities, but they haven't understood this. They didn't teach me how to live at school. They taught me everything else. As one man said, "I got a pretty good education. It took me years to get over it." That's what spirituality is all about, you know: unlearning. Unlearning all the rubbish they taught you.

Negative feelings are in you, not in reality. So stop trying to change reality. That's crazy! Stop trying to change the other person. We spend all our time and energy trying to change external circumstances, trying to change our spouses, our bosses, our friends, our enemies, and everybody else. We don't have to change anything. Negative feelings are in *you*. No person on earth has the power to make you unhappy. There is no event on earth that has the power to disturb you or hurt you. No event, condition, situation, or person. Nobody told you this; they told you the opposite. That's why you're in the mess that you're in right now. That is why you're asleep. They never told you this. But it's self-evident.

Let's suppose that rain washes out a picnic. Who is feeling negative? The rain? Or *you*? What's causing the negative feeling? The rain or your reaction? When you bump your knee against a table, the table's fine. It's busy being what it was made to be—a table. The pain is in your knee, not in the table. The mystics keep trying to tell us that reality is all right. Reality is not problematic. Problems exist only in the human mind. We might add: in the stupid, sleeping human mind. Reality is not problematic. Take away human beings from this planet and life would go on, nature would go on in all its loveliness and violence. Where would the problem be? No problem. You created the problem. You are the problem. You identified with "me" and that is the problem. The feeling is in you, not in reality.

The third step: Never identify with that feeling. It has nothing to do with the "I." Don't define your essential self in terms of that feeling. Don't say, "I am depressed." If you want to say, "It is depressed," that's all right. If you want to say depression is there, that's fine; if you want to say gloominess is there, that's fine. But not: I am gloomy. You're defining yourself in terms of the feeling. That's your illusion; that's your mistake. There is a depression there right now, there are hurt feelings there right now, but let it be, leave it alone. It will pass. Everything passes, everything. Your depressions and your thrills have nothing to do with happiness. Those are the swings of the pendulum. If you seek kicks or thrills, get ready for depression. Do you want your drug? Get ready for the hangover. One end of the pendulum swings to the other.

This has nothing to do with "I"; it has nothing to do with happiness. It is the "me." If you remember this, if you say it to yourself a thousand times, if you try these three steps a thousand times, you will get it. You might not need to do it even three times. I don't know; there's no rule for it. But do it a thousand times and you'll make the biggest discovery in your life. To hell with those gold mines in Alaska. What are you going to do with that gold? If you're not happy, you can't live. So you found gold. What does that matter? You're a king; you're a princess. You're free; you don't care anymore about being accepted or rejected, that makes no difference. Psychologists tell us how important it is to get a sense of belonging. Baloney! Why do you want to belong to anybody? It doesn't matter anymore.

A friend of mine told me that there's an African tribe where capital punishment consists of being ostracized. If you were kicked out of New York, or wherever you're residing, you wouldn't die. How is it that the African tribesman died? Because he partakes of the common stupidity of humanity. He thinks he will not be able to live if he does not belong. It's very different from most people, or is it? He's convinced he needs to belong. But you don't need to belong to anybody or anything or any group. You don't even need to be in love. Who told you you do? What you need is to be free. What you need is to love. That's it; that's your nature. But what you're really telling me is that you want to be desired. You want to be applauded, to be attractive, to have all the little monkeys running after you.

You're wasting your life. *Wake up!* You don't need this. You can be blissfully happy without it.

Your society is not going to be happy to hear this, because you become terrifying when you open your eyes and understand this. How do you control a person like this? He doesn't need you; he's not threatened by your criticism; he doesn't care what you think of him or what you say about him. He's cut all those strings; he's not a puppet any longer. It's terrifying. "So we've got to get rid of him. He tells the truth; he has become fearless; he has stopped being human." *Human!* Behold! A human being at last! He broke out of his slavery, broke out of their prison.

No event justifies a negative feeling. There is no situation in the world that justifies a negative feeling. That's what all our mystics have been crying themselves hoarse to tell us. But nobody listens. The negative feeling is in you. In the Bhagavad-Gita, the sacred book of the Hindus, Lord Krishna says to Arjuna, "Plunge into the heat of battle and keep your heart at the lotus feet of the Lord." A marvelous sentence.

You don't have to do anything to acquire happiness. The great Meister Eckhart said very beautifully, "God is not attained by a process of addition to anything in the soul, but by a process of subtraction." You don't do anything to be free, you drop something. Then you're free.

It reminds me of the Irish prisoner who dug a tunnel under the prison wall and managed to escape. He comes out right in the middle of a school playground where little children are playing. Of course, when he emerges from the

tunnel he can't restrain himself anymore and begins to jump up and down, crying, "I'm free, I'm free, I'm free! A little girl there looks at him scornfully and says, "That's nothing. I'm four."

The fourth step: How do you change things? How do you change yourselves? There are many things you must understand here, or rather, just one thing that can be expressed in many ways. Imagine a patient who goes to a doctor and tells him what he is suffering from. The doctor says, "Very well, I've understood your symptoms. Do you know what I will do? I will prescribe a medicine for your neighbor!" The patient replies, "Thank you very much, Doctor, that makes me feel much better." Isn't that absurd? But that's what we all do. The person who is asleep always thinks he'll feel better if somebody else changes. You're suffering because you are asleep, but you're thinking, "How wonderful life would be if somebody else would change; how wonderful life would be if my neighbor changed, my wife changed, my boss changed."

We always want someone else to change so that we will feel good. But has it ever struck you that even if your wife changes or your husband changes, what does that do to you? You're just as vulnerable as before; you're just as idiotic as before; you're just as asleep as before. You are the one who needs to change, who needs to take medicine. You keep insisting, "I feel good because the world is right." *Wrong!* The world is right because I feel good. That's what all the mystics are saying.