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“Read this book carefully and you will get more than a glimpse of eternity.” —DEEPAK CHOPRA



the
untethered soul

the journey beyond yourself

MICHAEL A. SINGER

“In the book, *The Untethered Soul*, Michael Singer takes you step-by-step through the process of Gyana, the Yoga of the Intellect, to the Source. Moreover, he does it with elegant simplicity. Read this book carefully and you will get more than a glimpse of eternity.”

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“This publication has released boundless joy for the hungry souls of the world.”

—**Ma Yoga Shakti Saraswati**, founder of Yogashakti International Mission, recipient of *Hinduism Today* ‘Hindu of the Year 2000’ award

“East is East and West is West, but Michael Singer bridges these two great traditions in a radiant treatise on how to succeed in life from our spiritual quest to our everyday tribulations. Freud said that life was composed of love and work. With great eloquence, wit, and compelling logic, Singer’s brilliant book completes this thought by showing them to be two poles of the same selfless devotion.”

—**Ray Kurzweil**, inventor, National Medal of Technology recipient and author of *The Age of Spiritual Machines*, *The Singularity is Near*, and other books

“This is a seminal book that quite frankly is in a class by itself. In a simple, yet paradoxically profound way, Michael Singer takes the reader on a journey that begins with consciousness tethered to the ego, and ends having taken us beyond our myopic, contained self-image to a state of inner freedom and liberation. Michael Singer’s book is a priceless gift to all who have futilely searched and yearned for a richer, more meaningful, creative life.”

—**Yogi Amrit Desai**, internationally recognized pioneer of modern yoga

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New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

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A copublication of New Harbinger Publications and Noetic Books.

Distributed in Canada by Raincoast Books

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New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

5674 Shattuck Avenue Oakland, CA 94609

www.newharbinger.com

Acquired by Catharine Sutker

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Epub ISBN: 978-1-60882-049-8

The Library of Congress has cataloged the print edition as:

Singer, Michael A.

The untethered soul : the journey beyond yourself / Michael A. Singer.

p. cm.

ISBN-13: 978-1-57224-537-2

ISBN-10: 1-57224-537-9

1. Consciousness. 2. Self. I. Title.

BF311.S5683 2007

153--dc22

2007028150

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acknowledgments

The seeds for this work were planted many years ago when Linda Bean was transcribing some of my lectures and encouraged me to write a book. She patiently labored through years of archived material until it was time for me to begin writing. Her commitment and dedication to this project are deeply appreciated.

Once I began writing, Karen Entner assisted me by organizing materials, making content suggestions, and maintaining the manuscript. We worked together to edit version after version until the flow of words brought a sense of peace to the heart, mind, and soul. Her dedication and heartfelt work are much appreciated and one of her lifelong dreams comes to fruition with the publication of this book.

introduction

“This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.” —William Shakespeare

Shakespeare’s age-honored words, spoken by Polonius to his son Laertes in Act I of *Hamlet*, sound so clear and unambiguous. They tell us that to maintain honest relations with others we must first be true to ourselves. Yet if Laertes were to be totally honest with himself, he would realize that his father may as well have told him to catch the wind. After all, to which “self” are we to be true? Is it the one that shows up when we’re in a bad mood, or the one that is present when we feel humbled by our mistakes? Is it the one who speaks from the dark recesses of the heart when we’re depressed or upset, or the one that appears during those fleeting moments when life seems so fanciful and light?

From these questions we see that the concept of “self” may turn out to be a bit more elusive than initially presumed. Perhaps if Laertes could have turned to traditional psychology, it would have shed some light on the subject. Freud (1927), the father of psychology, divided the psyche into three parts: the id, the ego, and the superego. He saw the id as our primal, animal nature; the superego as the judgment system that society has instilled within us; and the ego as our representative to the outside world that struggles to maintain a balance between the other two powerful forces. But this certainly would not have helped young Laertes. After all, to which of these conflicting forces are we to be true?

Again we see that things are not always as simple as they seem. If we dare to look past the surface of the term “self,” questions arise that many people would rather not ask: “Are the many aspects of my being all equally part of my ‘self,’ or is there only one of me—and if so, which, where, how, and why?”

In the following chapters, we will undertake a journey of exploration of “self.” But we will not do so in a traditional manner. We will neither call upon the experts in psychology, nor upon the great philosophers. We will not argue and choose between time-honored religious views, or resort to statistically supported surveys of people’s opinions. We will, instead, turn to a single source that has phenomenal direct knowledge on the subject. We will turn to one expert who, for every moment of every day of

their life, has been collecting the data necessary to finally put this great inquiry to rest. And that expert is you.

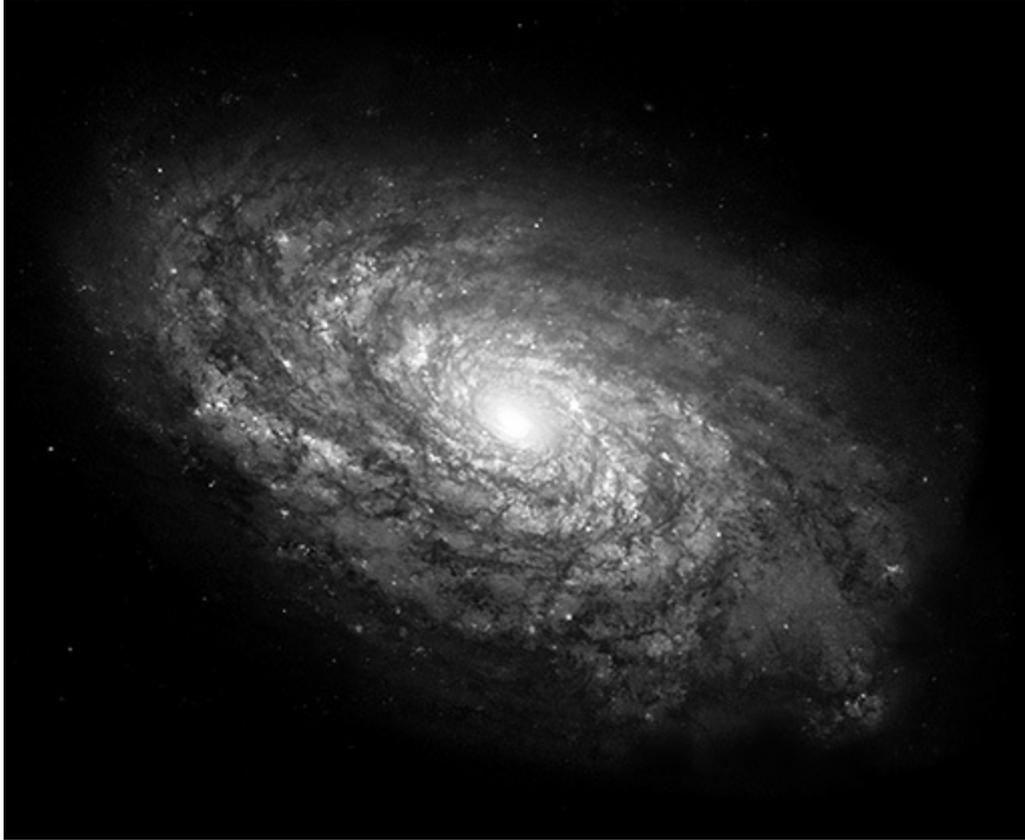
But before you get too excited, or decide that you're not up to the task, first be clear that we're not after your views or opinions on the subject. Neither are we interested in what books you have read, classes you have taken, nor seminars you have attended. We are only interested in your intuitive experience of what it is like to be you. We are not looking for your knowledge; we are seeking your direct experience. You see, you can't fail at this because your "self" is what you are, at all times and in all places. We simply need to sort it out. After all, it can get quite confusing in there.

The chapters of this book are nothing but mirrors for seeing your "self" from different angles. And though the journey we are about to embark on is an inner one, it will draw upon every aspect of your life. The only requirement asked of you is the willingness to honestly look at yourself in the most natural, intuitive manner. Remember, if we are seeking the root of "self," what we are actually seeking is you.

As you read through these pages, you will find that you know much more than you thought you did about some very deep subjects. The fact is, you already know how to find yourself; you have just gotten distracted and disoriented. Once refocused, you will realize that you not only have the ability to find yourself, you have the ability to free yourself. Whether you choose to do so or not is entirely up to you. But upon completion of your journey through these chapters, there will be no more confusion, no more lack of empowerment, and no more blaming others. You will know exactly what must be done. And should you choose to devote yourself to the ongoing journey of self-realization, you will develop a tremendous sense of respect for who you really are. It is only then that you will come to appreciate the full depth of meaning in the advice: "This above all: to thine own self be true."

PART I

AWAKENING CONSCIOUSNESS



Dusty Spiral Galaxy NGC 4414

Image credit: The Hubble Heritage Team (AURA/STScI/NASA)

1

the voice inside your head

“Shoot, I can’t remember her name. What is her name? Darn, here she comes. What is it... Sally... Sue? She just told me yesterday. What’s the matter with me? This is going to be embarrassing.”

In case you haven’t noticed, you have a mental dialogue going on inside your head that never stops. It just keeps going and going. Have you ever wondered why it talks in there? How does it decide what to say and when to say it? How much of what it says turns out to be true? How much of what it says is even important? And if right now you are hearing, “I don’t

know what you're talking about. I don't have any voice inside my head!"—that's the voice we're talking about.

If you're smart, you'll take the time to step back, examine this voice, and get to know it better. The problem is, you're too close to be objective. You have to step way back and watch it converse. While you're driving, you hear internal conversations like,

“Wasn't I supposed to call Fred? I should have. Oh my God, I can't believe I forgot! He's going to be so mad. He may never talk to me again. Maybe I should stop and call him right now. No. I don't want to stop the car right now...”

Notice that the voice takes both sides of the conversation. It doesn't care which side it takes, just as long as it gets to keep on talking. When you're tired and trying to sleep, it's the voice inside your head that says,

“What am I doing? I can't go to sleep yet. I forgot to call Fred. I remembered in the car but I didn't call. If I don't call now...oh wait, it's too late. I shouldn't call him now. I don't even know why I thought about it. I need to fall asleep. Oh shoot, now I can't fall asleep. I'm not tired anymore. But I have a big day tomorrow, and I have to get up early.”

No wonder you can't sleep! Why do you even tolerate that voice talking to you all the time? Even if what it's saying is soothing and nice, it's still disturbing everything you're doing.

If you spend some time observing this mental voice, the first thing you will notice is that it never shuts up. When left to its own, it just talks. Imagine if you were to see someone walking around constantly talking to himself. You'd think he was strange. You'd wonder, “If he's the one who's talking and he's the one who's listening, he obviously knows what's going to be said before he says it. So what's the point?” The same is true for the voice inside your head. Why is it talking? It's you who's talking, and it's you who's listening. And when the voice argues with itself, who is it arguing with? Who could possibly win? It gets very confusing. Just listen:

“I think I should get married. No! You know you're not

ready. You'll be sorry. But I love him. Oh come on, you felt that way about Tom. What if you had married him?"

If you watch carefully, you'll see that it's just trying to find a comfortable place to rest. It will change sides in a moment if that seems to help. And it doesn't even quiet down when it finds out that it's wrong. It simply adjusts its viewpoint and keeps on going. If you pay attention, these mental patterns will become obvious to you. It's actually a shocking realization when you first notice that your mind is constantly talking. You might even try to yell at it in a feeble attempt to shut it up. But then you realize that's the voice yelling at the voice:

"Shut up! I want to go to sleep. Why do you have to talk all the time?"

Obviously, you can't shut it up that way. The best way to free yourself from this incessant chatter is to step back and view it objectively. Just view the voice as a vocalizing mechanism that is capable of making it appear like someone is in there talking to you. Don't think about it; just notice it. No matter what the voice is saying, it's all the same. It doesn't matter if it's saying nice things or mean things, worldly things or spiritual things. It doesn't matter because it's still just a voice talking inside your head. In fact, the only way to get your distance from this voice is to stop differentiating what it's saying. Stop feeling that one thing it says is you and the other thing it says is not you. If you're hearing it talk, it's obviously not you. You are the one who hears the voice. You are the one who notices that it's talking.

You do hear it when it talks, don't you? Make it say "hello" right now. Say it over and over a few times. Now shout it inside! Can you hear yourself saying "hello" inside? Of course you can. There is a voice talking, and there is you who notices the voice talking. The problem is that it's easy to notice the voice saying "hello," but it's difficult to see that no matter what the voice says, it is still just a voice talking and you listening. There is absolutely nothing that voice can say that is more you than anything else it says. Suppose you were looking at three objects—a flowerpot, a photograph, and a book—and were then asked, "Which of these objects is you?" You'd say, "None of them! I'm the one who's looking at what you're putting in front of me. It doesn't matter what you put in front of me, it's always going to be me looking at it." You see, it's an act of a subject perceiving various objects. This is also true of hearing