

# *Follow your heart*

THE MAP TO ILLUMINATION

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*Authors of Living from the Heart and Energize Your Heart*

# Follow Your Heart

The Map To Illumination

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## Follow Your Heart: The Map To Illumination

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# Dedication

*To Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan*

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Preface

## The Map-Makers

### THERE IS A TERRITORY TO BE MAPPED.

Your heart begins beating at the quickening of your life, as soon as 18 days after conception; two billion or so beats later, the beating of your heart stops and ends your life, and in between, your heart beats out the steps of your life's journey. For some it's like a journey on horseback; for others, it's like a plane ride. Still others journey on foot. No matter how you travel or at what speed, you have to pass certain landmarks: valleys, mountains, bridges, dry deserts and lush regions. It is the same for all of us. We are all travelers on this path. Plumbers and priests, laborers and lawyers, nurses and newscasters—we all follow our hearts along the same path to the same goal, the fulfillment of the purpose of life: illumination. We each reach as far as we can in this one life, some with closed eyes and some with open; some are dragged along and some run ahead; some stop and set up hotels for other travelers; and some who go ahead leave trail markers for those who follow. This book gives The Map of the pathway, knowledge of which will make for a smoother journey and allow us to travel farther.

The notion of a map for human development flies against the popular philosophy of simply being present in the moment. When you're in your heart you have a tremendous appreciation for the beauty and wonder of this moment, and you also feel a pull toward a distant goal. Your heart has a desire, a passion that will lead you to become what you were meant to be, so that you can fulfill the purpose for your creation. As you listen to your heart you will discover the path that has been prepared for you, the same path that has been traveled by everyone who has followed their heart.

If you are desire-less, you can be still and motionless on life's path, enjoying the moment, content with it. But as soon as you touch your heart, you will be reminded of your mission in life to make that unique contribution that only you can make. If you meditate with your heart, you'll see that you're not just at this place at this time, but you're everywhere along the path all the time. You are still the one who set out on this journey and you are already the one who will arrive. Celebrate how far you have come, attend to the opportunities of this time, prepare the way to the goal ahead, and be the captain of your life. *The present moment can be as large as a lifetime* if you extend the scope of your awareness to the whole of your path.

Some say there is nothing to learn and nowhere to go, and that anyway you are different at every moment. But there is a continuity in the changing, dynamic person that you are. So to know yourself you must be conscious of all that you have ever been, of that which you still are, and of all that you can become, which is already emerging, throughout time. In expanded consciousness, your present moment expands to include your past and your future. Remembering what has gone before and anticipating what lies before you on the path of your self-unfoldment, it's absolutely truthful to include your potential future in your present self-conception, just as a tulip seed anticipates and identifies with its coming floral form. Self-knowledge, then, requires an understanding of not only what has happened to you, but also what is happening to you, and where this experience will take you. This is the function of The Map.

It is important to understand that The Map is pragmatic and experiential. It has been developed for practical use in guiding ourselves and others through the process that leads to spiritual maturity. It is not only descriptive, it is operative: it not only describes the steps of the path, it also contains instructions that enable a traveler to reach the next step.

The Map is different from psychological descriptions of adult life that show a person moving from youthful, enthusiastic initiative, through mid-life crisis, to aged contentment. Such descriptions of human development do not show how the process can be sped up or extended farther, or even if that is possible. We're not content to observe the process of aging; we want to consciously operate the process of transformation.

Most people don't need to know there is a path or where they are on The Map because, spiritually, most people are like villagers who have never been to a city. Unless you're a traveler, or you're concerned for some reason about people in other lands, you don't need to know much geography. But if you want to explore the inner world, The Map we offer here is as valuable as any map of the outer world. A map is a guide left by those who have explored the territory; it points out the popular spots, the dangerous areas, the main roads, the shortcuts and the milestones. When you have clarity about where you are and where you want to be, you can navigate through obstacles that otherwise might seem insurmountable and make your way with greater confidence.

This book will help you understand where you have been on The Map and where you are likely to go next. You will see where you got stuck or lost your way, and where you have made great progress. By doing so, you will have a more smooth, joyous journey. In the next chapters, you will be guided through The Map with a series of instructions and meditations to integrate your past experiences, current states and heart's desires into a life lived with stronger intention and purpose.

### **The Origin of The Map**

Child development has been well understood and mapped from stage-to-stage—it is clear, for example, that an infant will walk before he or she can talk—and likewise the stages of adult development through physical and emotional maturity have recently

been mapped by psychologists. But long ago the stages of life from individuation to spiritual maturity were mapped by the mystics, those masters of the inner world who sense and operate the oneness of reality. All the maps they have left us cover the same territory: the stepwise progression of experience-based wisdom and the corresponding creation of exemplary character.

The Map as presented here is sourced in the teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan, based on his book, *Volume 10, The Path of Initiation*.<sup>1</sup> The path he describes was described and further developed by his son and our teacher, Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan (d. 2004), who taught us how to recognize the steps in our students.<sup>2</sup> We calibrated ourselves to his assessments of hundreds of students over three decades. The Map has been a topic of our contemplation since 1971 and we use The Map with our students and ourselves to anticipate and track progress on the Path of the Heart.

In any process of human transformation, there must be a map that makes sense of the series of changes that people go through. Every tradition has had its concept of the journey.

- The Native Americans described self development as a literal journey through the seen and unseen worlds.
- The ancient Egyptians described an alchemical transformation through six stages.
- Labyrinths express the journey as a series of turns.
- In the 13th century the 11-ring labyrinth was built into the floor of the Christian Chartres Cathedral in Paris.<sup>3</sup>
- Christian contemplatives such as Clement of Alexandria described the three large stages of the journey as Katharsis (purification), Theoria (Illumination), and Theosis (Union).<sup>4</sup>
- The Eastern Orthodox described three categories of prayer: mental prayer, prayer with mind and heart, and unceasing prayer.<sup>5</sup>
- Abu Nasr al-Sarraj (d. 988) described “Seven Stations,” which span steps one through nine.<sup>6</sup>
- The mystic-poets of the East and West have added texture and color to the map, especially Jelal-ud-Din Rumi and William Shakespeare.<sup>7</sup>
- The 12th century Chinese master Kakuan described the path as a relationship with an ox that must be found, tamed and ridden home.<sup>8</sup>
- Farid ud-Din Attar, who wrote *The Conference of the Birds* in the year 1177, described the first nine steps of the path in allegorical terms.<sup>9</sup>
- Twentieth-century researchers like Erik Erikson, Daniel Levinson and Clifford Anderson have described their research into adult psychological maturity, which is the first five steps of the path.<sup>10</sup>
- In the 1900’s, Sufi teacher Hazrat Inayat Khan spoke extensively about The Map in 18 steps. It is this version, which incorporates all the previous

maps and adds considerable detail, upon which we have based this book.

## **The Universality of The Map**

The great mapmakers of the past all operated within some spiritual tradition, but their wisdom transcends their traditions. The experience of the heart is for everyone. All religions meet in the heart, which affords a direct encounter with the oneness of all beings and all things. Where the ordinary view sees people as separate from one another and from nature, students of the heart are grounded in the wholeness of all life, and comprehend deeply that this life is the embodiment of love. All share a common concern: how human beings can live better lives on this planet at this time, and how to give help to those who need it. Jelal-ud-Din Rumi, the 13th century founder of the Mevlana Order of Whirling Dervishes and the best-selling poet in the U. S. today, said, “I am neither Christian nor Jew, nor Hindu, nor Moslem. I am not of the East, nor of the West, nor of the Land, nor of the Sea... I have put duality away, as I have seen that the two worlds are one.”<sup>11</sup>

In this work, we seek to integrate all realities—physical, emotional, and spiritual—to become co-creators of reality and accept the responsibility of incarnating the universe. It’s serious business; only through love can we handle it.

We hope that The Map brings you new and profound insights into your spiritual journey and the nature of the spiritual path in general.

With love,  
Puran and Susanna Bair

Founders, The Institute for Applied Meditation

P.S. This book is a work in progress, and revisions are expected. For updates, please see the website for this book: [www.followyourheart.org](http://www.followyourheart.org)

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1. Khan, I. (1960-1964)
  2. See Khan, V. (1974), (1978), (1982), (1983), (1988), (1992), (1994), (1996), (2000), (2003)
  3. The labyrinth’s description of the nine steps of the path is the subject of Chapter 5.
  4. Osborn (2008)
  5. Kotsonis (2007), Logothetis (1982).
  6. See Al-Sarraj (2010).
  7. Barks (1995)
  8. The steps of the Chinese fable are compared to The Map in Appendix 1. See Reps (1998).
  9. Attar’s allegory is compared to The Map in Appendix 2. See Attar (2003).
  10. Anderson (1995), Erikson (1994), Levinson (1986).
  11. Nicholson (1898, II)

## Chapter 1

# The Process of Becoming

THE GOAL OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT is to manifest in one's body, mind, personality and behavior the pure qualities of Love, Harmony and Beauty, to explore the potentials of all being within one's own being, and to accomplish the purpose for which one was created. The path to this goal has been mapped by those who have traveled it before us. Your goal is not to become Christ or Quan Yin, or anyone who has inspired humanity in the past; their contribution has been made; your contribution is to be a fully realized version of yourself.

With the maturity of your soul, you desire to probe the depths of life. You desire to discover the power latent within yourself, you long to know the source and goal of your life, you yearn to understand the aim and meaning of life, you wish to understand the inner significance of things, and you want to uncover all that is covered by form and name. You seek for insight into cause and effect, you want to touch the mystery of Time and Space, and you wish to find the missing link between God and yourself—where you end, where God begins.<sup>12</sup>

How would you describe your spiritual goal, or to put it another way, the fulfillment of your life?

The time given for one human life is short, yet the list of our potentials is long. What would you like to become in your lifetime? How would you like to be remembered? The great personalities are known not only for what they accomplished but for the qualities of their hearts. It is the mystics who have left the strongest impressions upon the heart of humanity, with the result that they are adored and praised hundreds and thousands of years after their death.

### **The Great Turn**

The goal of spiritual development has changed over the last five-thousand years, since the earliest spiritual texts, and this is appropriate as humanity has tried to answer the “Three Big Questions” of life, which we will discuss in the next chapter. The ancient Egyptians were fascinated with the *spiritual experience of death*: what happens to the soul after the body dies, what ethereal lands does it visit, what judgment does it endure, and what is its final destination? This experiential research passed into India and was continued by Yogis who invented meditation techniques that

would take one as close to death as possible, while still being able to return and report on the experience. Buddhism developed a process to turn “the wheel of becoming” which rolls forward in life, backwards, to experience existence before life. This took the transcendent Yogi practice of *samadhi* to a further level, beyond even the concept of space, time and self.<sup>13</sup> Further development in this direction is not possible, so later mystics, starting with Christ, took mysticism in the opposite direction: *what is the spiritual experience of life?*

Thus the spiritual work made the great turn, a fundamental re-orientation in the goal of a spiritual life.

- A turn from the objective of becoming selfless and bodiless to becoming inclusive of spirit, ego, mind, and body.
- From becoming an angelic light to becoming a human lamp.
- Before the turn, a mystic might have said, “Become pure, luminous consciousness.” After the turn, mystics said, “Embody your angelic inheritance, incorporate the heavenly energy into the fabric of your body, and demonstrate divine love in your personality.”
- The early objective of Vedanta was to attain liberation (*moksha*), free from the illusion of the material world. The objective now is to become worthy of responsibility as a co-creator of the worlds: as above, so below.
- Instead of “Be here now,”<sup>14</sup> the new mantra is “Be everywhere always.”<sup>15</sup>
- We are updating the “Doctrine of Impermanence,”<sup>16</sup> in which all creation is constantly changing and therefore has no fixed essence, to incorporate the principle of resurrection, in which profound events in human time can alter a soul and through it, the soul of humanity, forever.
- Instead of aspiring to be nothing, we are now aspiring to be everything, as in the mystics declaration, “I am a part of all things and all things are a part of me.”
- To pursue nothingness, the path of a monk is required. The pursuit of everything is a path in life, with a family, a job, responsibilities, a healthy body, social life, etc.
- Those who aspire to be pure spirit have no need for a personality; those who aspire to be complete honor the personality as proof of their spiritual realization. If spirituality can’t make you a more understanding friend, a more loving partner, a more powerful contributor, a more successful innovator, a more peaceful refuge, and a more inspiring resource, then you don’t need it.

The new spiritual objectives that came after The Great Turn are mapped here in nine steps of adult development that trace the path from the earliest stage of individual formation to the goal of universal, spiritual realization, called “Illumination.” The detailed descriptions of the steps show that The Great Turn did indeed develop the path further; liberation comes at Step Seven, and is then followed by a re-emergence of Self in Step Nine.

Along this path, one's individuality is (1) valued, tested, and affirmed, then (2) softened in relation to others while strengthened by extraordinary courage, and finally (3) superseded by an impersonal identity that is simultaneously within one's self and larger than self.

The first two stages are concerned with the development of the self, building the power to accomplish what one desires. The very end of the second stage dismantles the boundaries of self that one has constructed, which have become confining barriers to further growth and connectedness. Then the third stage develops a new sense of a boundary-less self where one's self-interest is no different than the interest of others or the need of Life itself.

There is a further Stage Four which is a dedication to the service of the hearts of others and the Heart of All. This step is beyond the goal of personal fulfillment; although human development is never-ending, the intention in Stage Four is only to be of service. If any personal growth occurs as well, it will be used for greater service.

By helping us to understand the path that every soul is treading in life, The Map can help us focus on the lessons of this moment instead of repeating the lessons of the past or attempting a work for which we are not yet ready. Every step of this path is exalted, and each step gives the preparation we need for the next step.

Some of the steps are difficult while others are easy; some steps seem undesirable, others are glorious; to some steps we aspire and to other steps we surrender, yet both positive and negative experiences are important to push us forward. The Map shows that the odd-numbered steps are steps in glory, alternating with even-numbered steps in surrender.

Without the Map, we might think that the path should be all uphill, and that downhill sections are due to our errors. The Map tells us that growth and learning are the objectives of life, not happiness or constancy. There may be periods when we feel happy and stable, but the nature of the universe is dynamic, so change is inevitable. We learn to take all that is given as our path in life, and to give to our path of growth all the life we have.

Therefore, there is as much value in the down cycles as in the up cycles. It is folly to try to sustain positivity; this deprives us of the opportunity to appreciate the insights, emotions, energy and full experience of all that life offers us. Inevitably, with a movement like that of ocean waves, positive will follow negative, which will turn into positive. But our assessment of positive and negative simply reflects our expectations. What seemed positive might later seem negative, and vice-versa, so eventually one stops evaluating life by such personal judgments and sees the positive in the negative and the negative in the positive. This is the beginning of a life in harmony. The way to arrive at that harmony is to appreciate all, including disappointment, loss, failure and illness, all as part of the preparation needed to fulfill the purpose of your life.

Whatever your purpose is, it will certainly involve some form of service. In the beginning steps, perhaps the aim of service to others is not so clear, or if there is a desire to help others, the type of service is unclear. First you have to master your mind

through concentration, to develop the power to accomplish what you want to accomplish. Then, the opening of your heart sensitizes you to your deep longings and to the needs of others. You discover that you are willing to sacrifice to pursue a passionate desire: your art changes from self-expression to helping others see; your politics changes from self-interest to the common good; your relationships change from receiving to giving; your work becomes inspired by your passion. Further advancement on the path will take you to greater levels of service.

The Map also tells us that progress is about taking responsibility. The trinity of Creator, creation and created becomes one in a state of unity; the created become creative creators, co-responsible for creation. This responsibility is not borne alone; it is shared with all those who also feel responsible for an area of interest, a group of people, or a geographic area. Our work individually is to learn and practice the ability to move energy, which lifts or sinks consciousness like a tide carries a boat, so that we can become effective and responsible for all within our sphere of influence.

Thus, the Map reveals a path of tremendous importance not only to ourselves, but to the development of the world towards its goal of reflecting on earth the qualities of heaven. That is the purpose we are assigned collectively, and for that purpose we are drawn to follow our hearts, which hold the memory of heavenly states we seek to embody. The more we know about it, the better. Each of us, within our sphere of influence and to the extent of our attunement, has a role to play in the awakening of humankind.

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12. Hazrat Inayat Khan, Vol. 9, *The Unity of Religious Ideals, Five Desires of Man*, #4; this quote, along with others in this book, has been adjusted to meet modern gender norms.

13. See the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, in Bryant (2009). For comments on Samadhi by a modern master, see Khan, V (1992), (2000).

14. Ram Dass (1971)

15. A frequent saying of Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan.

16. Impermanence is one of the three essential doctrines of Buddhism. See *The Dhammapada*, in Carter (2008).

## Chapter 2

# The Three Big Questions

THERE ARE THREE BIG QUESTIONS IN LIFE:

1. Who am I?
2. Who is God?
3. What is our relationship?

Your answers to these questions define your spiritual realization and determine your attitude toward your body, your personality, the quality of your relationships, your sense of purpose in life, and generally, your behavior in any situation. This realization changes as it evolves and passes through the stages of the spiritual path. Each stage of the path reduces fear, misery and doubt and brings new and greater challenges.

How do you answer the Three Big Questions?

Your answers to the three big questions will progress along four basic stages, as follows.

1. **Separate Beings.** “I am an individual, separate from other individuals, and God, if there is such a thing, is something separate from me. My wishes that I express to the universe are generally not fulfilled. Good and bad things happen to me regardless of my intention. My responsibility toward the universe is not at all clear.”
2. **Connected Beings.** “I am an individual in a network of interconnected people whose thoughts, words and actions affect each other through linkages between our hearts. All that I send out from my heart echoes in the Universal Being in which we all exist and returns to me.”
3. **One Being.** “My individual self and the Universal Being are the extremes of a spectrum that I call myself. Sometimes I function on the individual end of the spectrum as any one does, but I am aware of an infinite spirit within myself and I can dissolve my identity in the sea of that wholeness. I realize the spirit within myself is the same spirit within every person; consequently, I feel every person as myself, and the feelings of every person in myself.”
4. **An Instrument in Service to All.** “I realize myself as an instrument of

the Universal Being: my body is an outgrowth of the body of the planet; my mind picks up the thinking of the universe; my emotions reproduce the cosmic emotions of the spinning planets and atoms; my soul is a ray of the Source of Light. Consequently, I feel a responsibility as an instrument of the Universal Being to carry out the universe's intention."

The answer of each stage corresponds to the discovery of a deeper and more essential aspect of self.

- Separation is the experience of your mind.
- Connectedness is the experience of your heart.
- Oneness is the experience of your spirit.
- Service is the experience of yourself as an instrument of spirit.

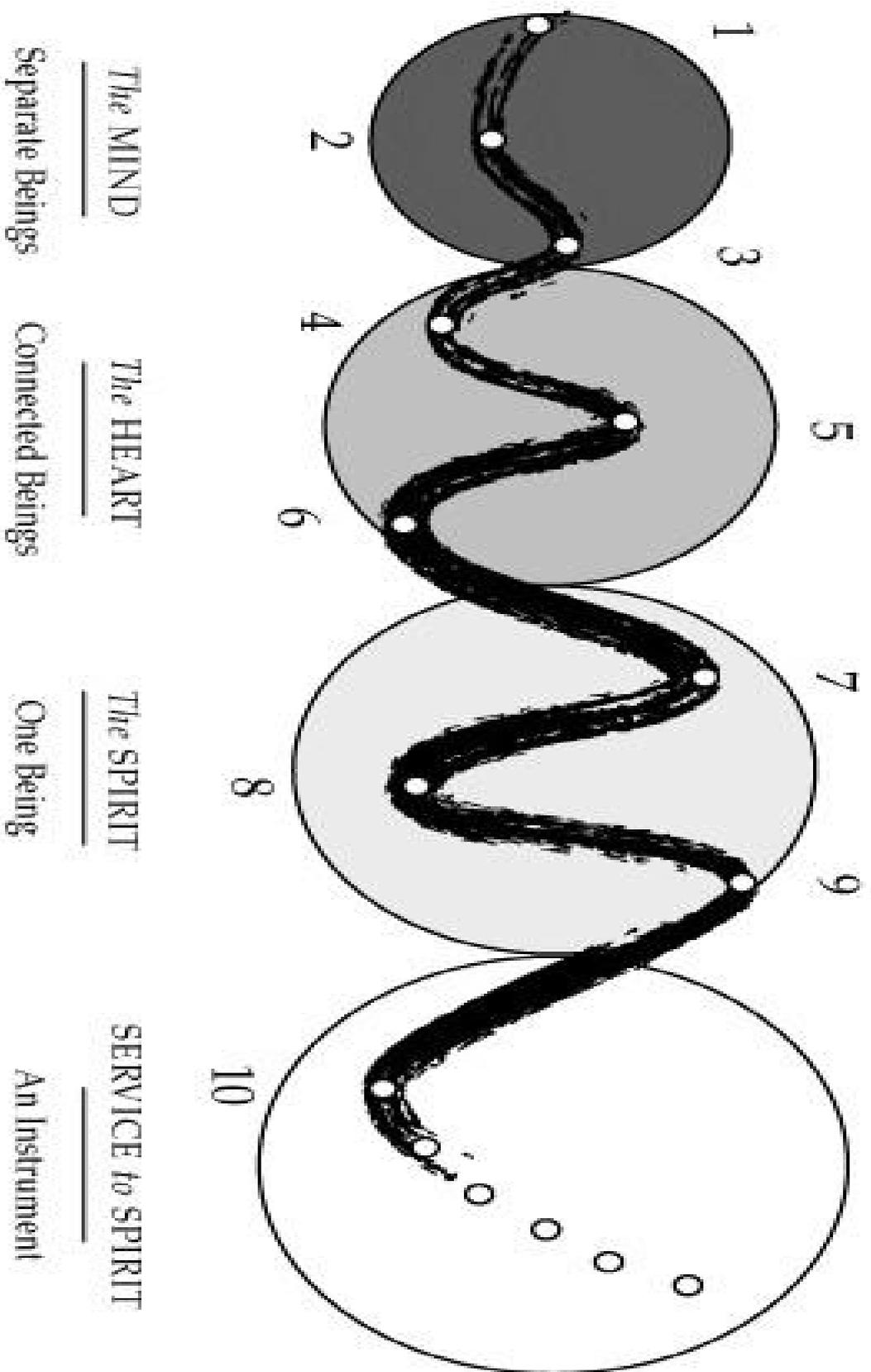
Let's explore each of these four discoveries, shown graphically in Figure 1.

### **Stage One: Mind**

The first stage, of separate individuality, is the understanding of the mind without heart. The mind is basically a faculty for recognizing patterns. It observes cause and effect, discriminating between faces and voices to identify one person out of many; the mind plans and reasons. The great skill of the mind in discerning difference gives the mind-centered person the experience: "you are different from me." Because of this difference and separation, one can reasonably expect that this statement is not too far behind: "I can take advantage of you without any disadvantage to me."

From what appears to the senses, your mind creates a concept of the world in which other people exist outside of yourself, and that invisible forces occur beyond your control or intention. Consequently, when you operate in this stage of realization, you will worry about what might happen, you

Figure 1: The Four Stages of Realization



will complain about what is happening, and you will doubt that the favorable things that did happen have any significance.

Most people spend most or all of their lives in Stage One, ignorant of what gives them true happiness, afraid of being overpowered, generally pessimistic, self-centered without knowing the self, intolerant of differences, critical of everyone, and isolated by an inability to understand and sympathize with others.

There is no fault in this and no blame; the world as perceived by the mind is a hostile and confusing place where people compete for diminishing resources to accomplish mutually-exclusive goals. The best that can be expected of people who see others as external and separate from themselves, is the principle of reciprocity: I will do such-and-such for you and I expect you will do the same for me. This behavior is similar to commercial transactions; while each transaction may be fair, by your own mental assessment of what you give and what you'll get, there is no generosity or graciousness in a kind of black-and-white world.<sup>17</sup>

There are three steps in the development of the mind, and when the third step is realized, the result is good boundaries between yourself and others, competency in work, and harmony and trust in relationships. These three steps can be a long process, as they build concentration, persistence, objectivity and knowledge. Persons with a well-developed mind are confident in their opinions, dependable in their duty, predictable, reliable, content, and reasonable.

### **Stage Two: Heart**

When you feel connected to others, it shows the opening of your heart, that deeper aspect of yourself that is shared, like the collective unconscious, and which reflects like a mirror the outer world upon your inner world and the inner upon the outer.<sup>18</sup> The faculty of heart is a deeper faculty than the mind; the world of feeling is infinitely richer than the world of appearance. The opening of your heart is an emotional and spiritual experience that allows you to see in the present moment the beauty and wonder in any person or situation, and to see into the future the potential that is not yet developed.

Your heart reveals a world of beauty, wisdom and fulfillment that makes everything one has accomplished and understood before seem insignificant. Everyone has had glimpses of this world, but most people revert back to reliance on their rational mind to decide what is real and what is not. But the mind is not qualified to judge the world of the heart, for the mind cannot perceive the invisible yet powerful reality which is the heart's domain.

The second stage, the stage of heart, gives you your ideals, optimism and creativity. Your heart powers an extraordinary level of success as it points to the real purpose of your life. You learn how to surrender to love willingly and resist falsehood heroically. Depression, poor self-image, addictions and resentments vanish in the heart's courage, creativity and forgiveness. Life in the heart cannot be compared to life

in the mind; it's an entirely different way of seeing, feeling, working and being.

The behavior of this stage is called 'beneficence': since you recognize that all that comes out of you rebounds and comes back to you, you give your respect and help to everyone, whether they deserve it, or appreciate it, or not.

Stage One thinking may poke through Stage Two, making you doubt that your altruism and optimism will work, and making you worry you will be taken advantage of or ridiculed, but that's just the limitations of the mind's understanding. As long as your heart is energized you can regain the courage, creativity and joy of your natural condition.

### **Stage Three: Spirit**

The third stage is seldom attained. The conviction that we are all united in a comprehensive oneness comes when you can experience yourself as spirit.

- There are many different streams of thought and everyone has their own memories, so from the mind's point-of-view, it makes sense to think of people as separate and independent of each other.
- We are touched emotionally by different things, but the emotions we reach are the same, so from the heart's point-of-view, it seems we are all separate but connected.
- Every soul is unique, but behind every soul there is one spirit that divides itself like rays of one light. When we perceive spirit, we perceive our unity with every being and form.

Therefor Stage Three comes from an awareness of your spirit, which you then realize is not your own; it is universal. This gives the direct, personal experience of the universe within yourself and yourself within the universe.

The third stage is the awakening that mystics have aspired to, experienced and taught to their disciples, called by various names like "unity," "enlightenment," "illumination," or "transfiguration," depending upon the tradition one follows. In this stage you discover and come to know that your individuality is but an appearance of the One and Only Being in a new and unique way.

In unity consciousness, both "I" and "you" are absorbed in the one Life that incorporates all, within and without, beneath and beyond. This one, all-encompassing Life is spoken of in the Bible verse, "In God we live, and move, and have our being."

It is love that leads you to this stage—not love for a person, but the longing your heart has to be immersed in Love itself, unlimited and unconditional. This divine Love will be expressed as love for others, and received from the hearts of others, and it will be felt always as the essential nature of your heart.

### **Stage Four: Service to Spirit**

In Stage Three, individuality is immersed in a union with All, like a drop of water in the ocean. In Stage Four, the All directs the individual according to Its purpose, like the ocean rising up in a wave. You may pursue a career, you may have a love relationship, you may teach or you might heal others, but through whatever you do,