

Your Inner Islands: The Keys to Intuitive Living



By Will Tuttle, Ph.D.

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(Original watercolor paintings for Chapter 4 by Madeleine Tuttle)

Islands of Light

Compact Disc of Original Piano Music by Will Tuttle

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Song List

1.	Song of Understanding	3:22	Em, G
2.	Dance of Light	3:30	B ^b m, Gm
3.	Song of B-flat	3:16	E ^b
4.	Song of Inner Spaces	3:20	Dm

Fantasia in F Major

5.	Vivace	3:15	F
6.	Tempestoso	3:32	Dm
7.	Pastorale	2:52	F
8.	Trionfale	4:14	F, D, F

Songs from an Art Garden

9.	Lost Island	2:38	Em, G
10.	Emerging Jewel	3:02	Em
11.	Inner Doorway	3:22	Em
12.	Time Beyond Time	4:08	Fm, Dm
13.	Interbeing	3:09	G
14.	The Arrival	2:57	F
15.	Song of the Truth-Field	4:38	G
16.	Dance of the Jeweled Web	3:40	Em, G
17.	Song of Returning Home	4:21	C
18.	Song of the Caring Earth	3:55	D
	Total Time	63:53	

Acknowledgments

This book, and the music and art that accompany it, constitute a multimedia course of study for developing the spiritual faculty of intuition, and I'd like to thank those who have helped bring it to fruition. This course has grown out of the classes, workshops, seminars, and retreats I've been facilitating over the past 20 years.

For six years, during and after my Ph.D. work at the University of California, Berkeley, I taught a variety of college courses in which I was able to present many of the ideas and exercises in this book, and I'd like to thank all of the students of those classes for their valuable input. I am especially indebted to James Jarrett of the U.C. Berkeley Graduate School of Education, and to Joseph Axelrod of the San Francisco State University Department of Humanities.

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Prologue: Intuition and the Islands of Light

Islands of Light lie within us, sanctuaries of understanding, peace, and power, and when we discover these inner islands and spend time exploring them, we find that our intuition grows stronger within us, giving us keys to living more fully, freely, wisely, and joyfully on this earth. This book is about the journey we can make to discover these islands, and about the process and rewards of developing our intuitive resources.

There is perhaps no greater gift we can give ourselves than cultivating our intuition. Intuitive knowing is the doorway to wisdom because it opens our connectedness with an inner power that transcends conditioning, self-preoccupation, and outside authority. What could be more valuable than a reliable source of guidance in our daily lives that supports us in fulfilling the deepest desires of our heart and unfolding the highest potential within us for understanding and blessing our world?

Intuition is tuition from within. Unlike conventional rational forms of knowing that are based on dividing and comparing, and a basic separation between the knower and what is known, intuition is inner and non-dual, and is associated with enhanced creativity, spirituality, and healing. When we intuit, we go “into it,” and the “we” and the “it” merge in direct knowing. While rational knowing is outer and trackable, intuition flowers in inner silence and receptivity, and is neither objective nor linear. Yet it is precious, beguiling, and stands beckoning at doorways that insistently call to us, a mysterious and yet completely natural way of knowing that can provide valuable guidance on our spiritual path and in our daily lives.

How do we cultivate intuition? What are the keys to intuitive living? Intuitive understandings are often best expressed through allegory. In this book we’ll explore these questions by embarking on an allegorical adventure of discovery, using an ancient Buddhist metaphor for spiritual awakening, that of crossing. Enlightenment in this tradition is seen as a crossing from This Shore to the Other Shore. This Shore represents our current state of intuitive and spiritual development, and the Other Shore is our fully awakened potential, in which we become living expressions of the freedom, peace,

compassion, intuitive wisdom, and creative exuberance that are our potential, and that we can vaguely glimpse from This Shore.

Even though a seemingly vast ocean separates us from the Other Shore, there are inner islands of inspiration and understanding that will help us as we make our crossing. These islands beyond the horizon of our knowing are the fabled Islands of Light, also known as the Lost Islands, enigmatic sanctuaries of revelation and spiritual power, and they will be vital connecting points on our journey toward the Other Shore. Each island, it is said, bears unique gifts that can encourage another petal of our intuitive potential to unfold.

In addition to the language of words, which expresses ideas through allegory and verbal concepts, we will be using the languages of music and art as well, weaving words and music together throughout the journey of this book. The music is contained on the accompanying compact disc, *Islands of Light*, which has eighteen pieces of original piano music composed and performed for this book by the author. Reproductions of watercolor paintings created for the chapter on imagination are included as well. Music and art have long been recognized as languages of intuition, and as our intuition opens, we become better able to receive messages through their nonverbal rhythms, harmonies, melodies, and images. As we practice being receptive to the messages encoded in music and art, we become more sensitive to the hidden connections between our inner and outer worlds. Opening to inspired music and art can feed our intuitive muse.

As we journey toward the Other Shore and discover the Islands of Light, we travel within to places of more expanded and connected awareness where intuitive knowing can untangle, clarify, and illuminate our struggles, questions, and concerns, and bring the peace of higher understanding to our hearts. Besides guiding us in our spiritual evolution, intuition points the way to choosing wisely in our personal affairs, relationships, and careers, and inspires us with fresh insights for our creative projects and inspiration for our daily lives. With time we realize that we have no greater friend and ally than intuition, and that this inner knowing is essential in guiding us to higher levels of understanding and freedom. We recognize that our cultural upbringing has mostly ignored this valuable inner resource, and has failed to teach us how to cultivate intuition

as a vital human potential. It is a source not merely of outer success but, more importantly, of inner discernment and richness.

The deepest desire of all human beings, though we may too often be distracted from remembering it, is to reach the Other Shore. This Other Shore has gone by a variety of names. In the Christian tradition, for example, it is essential that we “seek first the Kingdom of God,” for then “all these things shall be added unto us.” This Kingdom is not outside of us, but is within. The Other Shore is likewise within, and the journey we make to reach it is an inner one. The Islands of Light, the sanctuaries of intuitive wisdom that we must discover and learn from in order to reach the Other Shore, are also within. Our journey to reach the Other Shore is in fact a journey from head to heart that can heal the division within ourselves, freeing us from self-preoccupation, and allowing the power of intuition to shine light on the path that leads to discovering the inherent joy and blessedness of living. This is the adventure of every lifetime. The Other Shore, an undiscovered world, is calling.



We stand now on the deck of our ship, looking out over the harbor to the dark ocean stretching restlessly to the far horizon. The first island on the journey toward intuitive awakening is the Lost Island of Understanding, and it can reveal to intrepid pilgrims the right understanding that supports the rest of the voyage to the Other Shore. There are other legendary islands beyond the Lost Island of Understanding that lie farther away, and we hope to reach those as well. Each island is said to be enchanted and filled with power, and to offer specific techniques and opportunities for discovering the keys to intuitive living.

Around us are the familiar sights and sounds of the harbor: the people fishing off the jetty, the gulls calling and flapping around us; the clanging of bells and buoys, the ruffling of sails, and the bubbling and roaring of motors as boats of many sizes and shapes maneuver over the choppy waters.

Behind us is our known world, the busy patterns that have held us for so long. Before us lies the immense and perilous ocean, and our journey to the Islands of Light and to the Other Shore beyond. The ocean reaches in here to this shallow bay and to our docked ship, and waits restlessly, holding us, persistently beckoning. Something stirs within us and, no longer satisfied with the bustle of the harbor, we long for the freedom and challenge of adventure, to live more deeply and discover what treasures lie beyond the horizon of our small, known world. The Other Shore is calling.

1 – The Island of Understanding

As we sail out toward the deepening indigo waters, leaving the harbor, we feel a mixture of joy and sadness, excitement and trepidation. Looking back toward the clamor of the land receding behind us, we sense wistfully the possibility that we may not return here, and a hollow ache arises within us, for we are leaving our world and the security it has given us.

Gliding over the waves toward the open ocean, the wind picks up, and our ship surges forward. Once we are well beyond the harbor, we begin to feel an unexpected sense of relief, as if old weights attached to our shoulders are falling away, lightening and freeing us. This feeling of relief builds, becoming an inexplicable gladness bursting in our heart as we look ahead over the trackless waters. Our sadness and trepidation lighten. We realize that whatever we have left behind, and whatever lies before us, right now we are following our heart's yearning, and there is enormous satisfaction in this. This moment is bright and real, delicious and timeless. We are alive! We savor the lift of every wave, every fragrant breath and sparkle of the sun. We can see for miles, and we spontaneously give thanks for this ship, this ocean, this life, and to everyone and every event that has brought us to this moment, bounding forward over the waves, traveling toward the Other Shore.

As the heaviness that we had gotten used to melts away, we feel our mind becoming clearer and our vision brighter. Old hurts and grudges arise, loosen, and peel away, blown far by the fresh wind that carries us forward. We send blessings to everyone we have ever known, thanking them all for contributing to this opportunity, and for the exhilaration and the potential of the voyage we are undertaking. We realize that even those of whom we have unsavory memories often played vital roles in bringing us to this adventure. We thank them all. There is no looking back. This open sea, splashing in the sun, is our destiny, and we recognize that it has always been our destiny. Everything in our life has brought us to this moment. There have been no mistakes, for everything was

required for us to be here now. We can sense something within us dying, and something urging to be born.

Soon we are out of sight of land, and we sail on for many days and nights. Searching the horizon, our eyes become tired and sometimes the winds oppose us or simply disappear. We do our best to continue on, even when the winds die down or whip the ocean waters into large and dangerous swells. At times the rain and wind lash us mercilessly, and we must work many sleepless hours just to keep afloat and on course.

The Islands of Light are uncharted. For guidance, we rely on our compass and our inner sense, heading generally south and east. The first island, the Lost Island of Understanding, is said to be the hardest to reach, and we have heard it is only visible, to those allowed to see it, at dawn and at dusk.

After about three weeks of sailing, we are getting concerned, for our water supply is starting to run low. Then one morning we notice that the light is somehow different, and that the air seems brighter. There is a sense of presence here, and so we sail very slowly and are especially watchful at dawn and at dusk. We find that by sitting quietly and listening within, letting go of thoughts and just being open, we can tune in to this sense of presence and we can notice when we are moving away from it, and when we are getting closer. We practice this meditative inner listening both day and night because we do not want to miss the mysterious island that we sense is somewhere nearby.

As the days go by, our water supplies diminish further and though we realize that now we must return to land or risk facing dehydration, we continue patiently meditating and sailing slowly in the direction of our inner feelings. We feel how close we must be to the island. Sometimes we can hear a humming vibration, and occasionally see a shimmering brightness over the water. When we sail toward the brightness, the humming seems at times to increase.

We are becoming increasingly thirsty, however, and anxious. It seems we are being pushed to our utmost limits. The sun and moon revolve around us and we sail on, struggling to maintain our mental equilibrium as everything becomes increasingly dreamlike. Waking and dreaming drift into each other as we drift across waves of time and space that expand and contract bewilderingly. Our world becomes distressingly surreal.

A few more days pass and our water supply is almost exhausted. Then one night we dream of a great tree rooted in heaven and branching into the earth, and awakening, we sit quietly on deck, searching the horizon all around us. The water is totally calm. Then, as the sun rises in the east, we see it! Shrouded in mist, off the starboard bow, we see the unmistakable shape of an island being caressed by the first rays of morning light. A deep thanksgiving fills us, and we utter a parched croak of joy. We allow ourselves to collapse onto the deck, our cracked lips smiling, and enjoy the release of tension, anxiety, and doubt. We realize that we are actually drifting toward the island, as if being pulled, and in a few hours, we find ourselves splashing through the water and walking onto dry land at last. Kneeling in the sand, thirsty and grateful, we rest a moment before exploring this beautiful place.

There are high hills here, and walking inland for several minutes, we come to a clear flowing stream with a deep pool. We drink and bathe and refresh ourselves. There are papaya trees as well, and we eat several of their delicious fruits, feeling invigorated and delighted at the abundance and beauty of the island.

Returning to the shore, we walk along the beach and eventually come upon a weathered wooden sign. On it are written these words:

“The ox, trying to go through the gate, is stuck.
Only his tail won’t go through.”

We stop and sit down. There is a deep question in these two lines. What is it? What is this old wooden sign alluding to? A knowing begins to come to us, carried by the spirit of this Lost Island of Understanding. We realize that these two lines are an old *Zen koan*.

We remember that in the Zen meditation tradition, a koan is a meditation question that is unanswerable by the rational mind. We see that as we contemplate the koan, our intuition is naturally stimulated and we feel the question is pushing us toward an understanding we must have in order to continue our journey. What is this koan pointing at? What is this ox? And what is the gate, and where does it lead? How could his little tail keep the ox from going through the gate? How absurd the image is! Why wouldn’t his tail go through? What does it mean?

After a while, we consciously relax our mind as it probes this koan, chewing on it like it does every perceived problem, trying to solve it. Eventually we calm our mind

enough to enter an inner quietness and then, mysteriously, we suddenly hear the presence of the island, as if speaking to us!

“Welcome. I am glad that you are here! I am called the Lost Island of Understanding. It is not an easy journey to find me, and your perseverance has served you well. I am the first stop in your pilgrimage toward the Other Shore and I wish to help you deepen your understanding. But to acquire understanding, you need understanding! Don’t let this worry you. Everything that your intuition discovers and understands is a paradox to your rational mind!

“Intuition is not an exotic way of knowing, available only to rare and special people. Everyone is potentially intuitive, and deeply so. You would not have found me here without your intuition. Like the ox, you have passed the gate and entered the realm of intuition, which is your own true nature, but somehow, like the ox, you have a tail that won’t allow you to go completely through. What is this tail? Why is it always with you, like the tail is always with the ox? Is it perhaps an old wound that accompanies you like a tail, not visible to your own eyes as it dangles behind you, an old nemesis that has you fooled into thinking it’s your friend?”

The voice stops speaking and, instead, we begin to receive impressions as we keep our mind quiet and open. Tuning in to the wise presence of this lost island, we begin to realize that the ox’s tail is an unrecognized assumption, always clinging on to the true being that we are. We gain a distinct impression of this assumption as an appendage, deep-rooted and strong. It is becoming clearer that this usually invisible assumption is an erroneous conviction that we are a thing and others are also things, and that as things we are fundamentally separate. We realize that the tail is a habit, and it is a virtually universal way of seeing: seeing others and oneself as distinct and competing objects. We see that this tail has been at the root of the inescapable sense of struggle we have always experienced.

We suddenly understand that the tail is also a tale as well. It relies on and feeds the old story our self always tells itself, continually reinforcing our existence as an object. The mind, ever thinking and preoccupied with its personal story and with all the regrets, dramas, worries, and struggles that this story involves, becomes utterly convinced that it is its tale. It steadfastly resists the inner silence in which the tale stops because this seems

like a death—the end of its existence. For the mind appendage that believes the story of its essential separateness, even a story of pain and sorrow is better than no story at all!

We see that the ox's tail is the old wound of dualism, the deep sense that we are separate from the world. The tail's story revolves around the mistaken assumption that it is a part separate from and at odds with the whole. The tail's tale keeps it firmly attached as an appendage, which interferes with our seeing and with our understanding. We see that in the culture in which we were raised, the assumption and the wound are so pervasive that the tail runs things and wags the ox—this tail will certainly get stuck in any gate.

“How is this wound finally healed?” we wonder. The island is back again, directly communicating with us.

“The old, painful wound of separation is but an illusion. It is healed when you fully realize, directly and intuitively, that you are, always have been, and always will be, whole, perfect, and complete. You have never been separate from the infinite, benevolent source of your life. The rational mind can never arrive at this understanding, for this requires a true leap, an untrackable shift of perspective. Tears of joy and laughter may spill forth when you see it all directly. The ox is actually completely free at every moment to enter the field of unlimited freedom and boundless wisdom and joy. His little tail shrinks back to its natural size when his perception is cleansed of its deluded assumption of separateness. It has never actually been an obstruction! Your own true nature is likewise free to roam the fields of the infinite once you understand the nature of the ox, your true nature, and of your tail, and your tale.

“Cultural programming makes this understanding difficult to achieve. The deep belief in separateness is embedded in language, culture, and institutions, and it militates against intuitive knowing. Rational knowing reinforces the belief in separateness, for it is devoted to focusing on the parts of everything, continually dividing in order to know. It is the coin of the realm on the shore you just left. Intuition, the other side of this coin, was generally ignored in your schooling: connecting parts into unities, and seeing and comprehending directly the greater wholes that the parts, by themselves, can never reveal.

“Whereas rationality is knowing by *dividing* (Latin: *ana-lysis*: to “cut up”) and *comparing* (from Latin *ratio*), nonrational intuition is direct knowing by relaxing, expanding, opening, and leaping to grander, more inclusive perspectives. At its fullest flowering, intuition dissolves the old dichotomy between knower and known into a transcendent wholeness that leads to far greater insight, transformation, and freedom than rationality on its own could ever begin to achieve or imagine.

“On this Lost Island of Understanding, you are deepening your understanding, realizing that your human evolution requires you to respect and explore intuitive knowing, and that intuition is truly healing, for it brings wholeness to your life by making connections and allowing you to awaken to the larger wholes that were invisible. This wisdom of greater wholeness heals the old wound of separateness that causes you such suffering individually as well as collectively. Through this wisdom your tail can shrink to its proper size. As your inner wisdom flourishes, you understand it is your ego that is your tail, and that you give it far too much power to wag you around. What we call ego is the false belief that you are a self-existent object, and this scrawny but tough appendage—this tail and its tale—has enormous consequences because it gives rise to fear, craving, anger, greed, anxiety, and all the rest. You can see how this little tail unfortunately keeps the great and magnificent ox from joyfully romping in the field of freedom!”

The island both reassures and challenges us: “Your old wound, the tenacious clinging to the illusion of a separate self, can be healed. This is opening the intuitive gate. The practice of meditation is an important key to opening this mysterious gate within you, and there is nothing exotic about it. The old saying is that meditation is not what you think. It is the art of stopping the continuous dialogue of thinking and internal storytelling that feeds the tale of separateness and keeps you divided, distracted, and self-absorbed. When your mind is quiet and clear, whether you are active or not, that is meditation.

“Meditation is inner silence and is nourished by understanding that thinking and concepts can ultimately never bring you to the realm of wholeness or to the wisdom of pure intuition. Thinking and concepts can be valuable if they bring you to the edge of themselves, to the cliff, as it were, beyond which they cannot take you. Then you must jump, and this leap into the vast luminous presence that is utterly silent and mysterious is

meditation. It is a leap pregnant with meaning, deeper than the thinking mind can grasp. This leap must be made over and over again, for the mind loves to chew and think and spin stories, distracting itself endlessly from the radiant essence that is its source. When you practice meditation, and practice letting go of all clinging to the known, you are taking responsibility for your awakening, and as your sincerity deepens, your efforts will bear fruit.

“Meditation is inner listening: aware, alert, open, and present to this moment that is every moment. It is a vivid aliveness that heals and reveals more than mere concepts could ever imagine. When you meditate, you travel outside the boundaries of your experience, outside the realm of ‘me’ and ‘mine,’ and you enter the universal. Concepts are baggage you cannot bring on this journey, and later, if you try to express your meditation experience, words and concepts cannot begin to contain it accurately. Through the practice of meditation, you are metaphorically passing through the gate and entering the field of liberation, for to meditate, you must leave your ego-tail behind you.”

We continue to explore this breathtaking island, contemplating the ideas we have encountered here, and the koan of the ox’s tail. We stop and rest, sitting under a tree. We notice a squirrel sitting on a branch of the tree, eating a nut. Contemplating the scene, we note that the rational mind sees separation, the squirrel and tree definitely separate and distinct entities with different goals and agendas. This way of seeing, as it looks more acutely, contracts, and sees conflict and competition. The squirrel is competing with other squirrels for the tree’s nuts, and the tree’s goal is in conflict with the squirrel, for it can never reproduce itself if squirrels eat all of its nuts. This is all very true and provable to the rational mind, and we allow ourselves to consciously experience this way of seeing for a few minutes.

Now we relax and open, and let go of thinking. We practice looking as the island has suggested, with the mind of intuition. We sense interconnectedness, and see the fundamental cooperation between these two beings, the tree and the squirrel. One provides oxygen, housing, food, shade, and support, and the other provides carbon dioxide, fertilizer, and a means to spread seeds about. More deeply, we see how each provides a context for the other, one offering stability and one mobility, and how they share giving and receiving, and energy and humor, among other things. Even on a purely

physical level, the cells of the tree become cells of the squirrel, and the cells of the squirrel become cells of the tree. We realize further that they are parts of a greater whole, a community which they serve and which serves them, and that they are each perfectly fulfilling their roles in this community, and expressing the wisdom of this community which, as we continue opening, becomes larger and larger, including the whole island, the ocean, the earth, the sun and sky and, expanding beyond one boundary after another, revealing to us a glimpse of the infinite interconnectedness of all life and being.

As we continue to practice looking more deeply, our mind opens more and senses directly, intuitively, that there is one Life manifesting as both tree and squirrel, and in this life, the apparently separate parts we call “tree” and “squirrel” are not at all separate. They are *one* life. They may appear separate, but they are manifestations of a transcendent wholeness that is never divided. In this knowing, we as the perceiver are also drawn into ever deepening spirals of understanding, no longer a separate observer but *also* a function of this infinite life. The transcendent is immanent, wholeness extending within as well as without. There is a sense of clearly seeing that there is *only* life, celebrating, transforming, and evolving in an infinite and endless dance, and that nothing is ever excluded from or separate from anything else. We sense there are truly no “things” at all! As the wall of “me” dissolves in these waves of intuitive understanding, “squirrel,” “tree,” and “me” can be seen more clearly for what they are: manifestations of and within an unimaginably vast and loving Presence that is beyond naming. We can see the truth of the island’s teachings, how words and concepts, the pervasive tools of rationality, must be set aside, and how pronouns and nouns can become distortions and distractions from seeing a dancing process that unfolds fully only when the mind is free from discursive thinking. We can see that it is this freedom from compulsive rationality that opens the intuitive gate.

Now the squirrel runs through the grass and up another tree. Is that what is *really* happening? Where is “squirrel”? Where is “tree”? Where is “grass”? Where is “me”? Are these really out there, separate, or in here, verbal constructions? Intuition smiles with the delight of simply being present and opening to vistas of expanding interconnectedness. We feel and taste the joy and understanding intuitive knowing brings.

This is the gift of this island: the untamed, sacred vistas that appear when we cultivate intuitive knowing.

The island speaks to us again: “Intuition is the higher knowing that rationality desperately needs to fulfill itself. Like rationality, intuition can be educated, trained, and developed. The way is through practice, as with any art or craft. Unfortunately, in school, you were trained generally only in rationality, taking things apart in order to understand them. Now you are aware in ways you couldn’t be as a child, and want to reclaim the other side of yourself—intuition—to help put your world back together again. You realize that unalloyed rationality becomes insanity; it cannot see the larger wholes or understand directly the deep interconnectedness and sacredness of all life. It cannot experience joy, beauty, or compassion. What it takes apart, it cannot put back together again. This is the tragedy of your people, and the source of your mission. You have been called to bring healing to your wounded culture. First, though, you must heal it within yourself.

“Remember when you were a child in school and the teacher would ask the class questions. You learned in an enormously powerful way that there were ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ answers to the questions. Learning the paradigm, the underlying story of your culture, was so powerful because you saw directly that getting ‘wrong’ answers led to disapproval, bad grades, trouble at home, and rejection, and being ‘right’ led to success, approval, power, and safety. Right and wrong: the old nemesis, the wound of dualism, got its claws in early and deep. Remember that as a little child, you were like a sponge, soaking up the subtle and not-so-subtle cues from your culture so that, small and vulnerable, you could survive and make sense of things here.

“Continually drilled in seeking right and avoiding wrong, you learned to wear and use the appropriate cultural lenses for taking things apart, for separating and excluding. Rights and wrongs are terrific for this. Further, as you sought dutifully for the right answers in school, and raised your hand and managed occasionally to give the right answer, sometimes you would hear, ‘Very good! How do you *know* that’s the right answer?’ Scary question! You learned there were basically two types of responses to this. One was, ‘I see it right here on page 79 of the book.’ ‘Yes, class, very good! See, it’s on page 79 here,’ the teacher would say. So you were powerfully trained to accept

outside authority for what is right. The Book contains The Truth, you were told in school, and you had to accept these cultural assumptions of rightness or your very *survival* was, in your young mind, threatened.

“The other valid response to the teacher’s question, ‘How do you know your answer is right?’ was to give a logical, trackable, linear sequence of rational thinking to support your answer. This demand for linear rationality pervaded history and geography as much as mathematics. From early in your schooling, the basic wholeness and interconnectedness of knowledge was ignored as it was divided into categories and subjects. You thus learned that The Book—outside authority—and logical positivist thinking were the *only* safe guarantors of validity. You learned it at school, at church, and at home; it was the invisible cultural air everyone breathed. If you had responded when asked at age eight the great epistemological question, ‘How do you know if what you say is true is actually true?’ with: ‘I know it’s true, teacher, but I don’t know *how* I know exactly. I just have a feeling;’ or, ‘The answer came from the silence within myself, from an inner voice.’ Horrors! ‘Wrong! That is *not* good! You must go to the principal’s office right away!’

“And you wondered why your tail wouldn’t let you go through the gate! As a participant in your culture, you have diligently learned and practiced the very skills that block intuition. The narrowness that results from the belief and practice of separateness impedes intuitive knowing! Now, maturing in understanding, you realize that what was right for one generation is often wrong for another. Perhaps most of what you learned to be true or right in school and from the media was often completely wrong or severely distorted, especially from a perspective based on spiritual values rather than material values. So as you continue your life adventure of learning, and your quest to reach the Other Shore, it is helpful to recognize and acknowledge the enormous amount of practice you have devoted since childhood to becoming proficient in dualistic thinking, in separating things, and in looking *outside* yourself for the truth.”

The breeze plays quietly with the palm fronds above us. It is unsettling to be told that our training in the system we were born into is an impediment to the higher knowing that we long for.

“Here on the Lost Island of Understanding, you realize that intuitive knowing, like rationality, requires training and practice, and this practice must be, in many ways, in a direction completely opposite from all your earlier practice. You must learn to look *inside* for the truth, and learn to *suspend* habitual judgment of right and wrong to see more clearly what is happening, the interconnections. You must learn to *relax* and *expand* rather than contract. You must learn to let go of thinking as the *source* of knowing, to let go of seeing objects as separate and yourself as separate, to let go of the compulsive orientation to past and future. None of these is easy, given your prior training, and yet unlike the case for mere rationality, the rewards for developing direct intuitive knowing are spiritually significant, and will surely bring peace, wisdom, healing, and joy into your life and into your world.

“Intuition develops as an inner art through practice. Instead of engaging in the practice of trusting outside authority and taking things apart through analysis, you can practice trusting inside authority and putting pieces and ideas together, increasingly being able to sense interconnectedness and wholeness. Without intuition, rationality always reaches its own limits, for it is a tool that can only divide and exclude and thus bring the mind more deeply into violence and separatism, if not used within the context of authentic intuitive knowing.

“As you know in your bones, your culture is based on domination and exploitation, on asserting power *over* others and nature. You learned as a child that this is right and acceptable in countless subtle ways. It was right there on your dinner plate every day, a slaughtered, commodified animal, and you were even forced to eat it! Rationality is the tool that serves this orientation of domination and separation well. It is clear why you are trained in analysis, competition and linear thinking, and that intuition, which connects, is ignored and suppressed. Since intelligence includes the ability to make meaningful connections, the higher intelligence of your culture is actually shrinking, even amid a glut of information. Information that is disconnected from the meaning and wisdom that intuitive knowing provides is not helpful, and creates even more confusion and opportunity for domination and exploitation. The shrinking of your culture’s higher intelligence is thus profitable for the few, but the irony is that *no one* is happier for it, for you are all connected.

“You can begin to understand how rationality, when it is bereft of the healing context that intuition provides, causes a withering of intelligence and compassion. Ironically, though, rationality sees itself as superior to what it presumes is the only alternative: irrationality! As usual, rationality here fails to see process and connectedness. Humans can be seen to develop through stages, from pre-rational stages of knowing to rational and then on to post-rational or transrational stages of knowing. These latter modes of knowing, termed intuitive, contain and make use of rationality, but are not limited or bound by it. Intuition is a higher evolutionary stage. Thus you will see clearly that rationality was never meant to be any kind of ultimate level of consciousness. It is certainly a potentially useful tool, but only if used within its proper context, which is in serving the higher understanding intuition provides through its direct seeing of interconnectedness.

“By now, most of you in the postmodern West are aware that domination thinking creates more stress, more waste, more misery, and less meaning and fewer resources for effectively solving the problems you’re facing. Developing intuition is a cultural imperative for your society, and you are, perhaps, a delegate sent by the deep yearning of your people for healing. You may be their emissary and the urge within you that has propelled you here may be more than just yours alone.

“Your people are awakening to these truths. It is becoming increasingly obvious that rationality can no longer properly serve even that bastion of rationalism, science. Physics, being the most physical and mathematically-based of the sciences, was, as you know, the first to hit the wall, when the either/or dichotomy of the scientific method could no longer explain the basic nature of reality: light is not *either* a particle *or* a wave, it is *both, and* what it appears to be depends entirely on the observer! That realization ushered in the slow and painful fall of the hallowed “objective observer” myth that was one of the erroneous assumptions of scientism, the view that science is the only authentic means to truth. This illusory objective observer notion is, of course, the ox’s tail dressed up in a scientist’s white jacket, measuring and attempting to know a reality it conceives to be separate from itself. On this Lost Island of Understanding, such postures can only strike the intuitive mind as comical, and the image of the serious and aloof scientist cutting and dividing in order to *know* brings wistful smiles and head shaking. Here you

can see more clearly that the observer and what is observed are both aspects of a larger reality and that both always participate with and influence each other. Scientists are indeed part of their own experiments.

“Experiments in quantum physics continue to reveal reality as *profoundly* non-dual, with findings that are utterly absurd and irrational from the perspective of rationally-based science. Nonlocality, for example, is basically unthinkable to conventional objectivity, and yet physicists observe that two particles, hundreds of miles or even light years apart, affect each other *instantaneously*—much faster than the speed of light. What is incomprehensible to the ox’s tail, the mind that sees only separate objects, is directly understood by the intuitive mind: that the particles are truly parts of a greater whole — they *are* a greater whole! — and are not fundamentally separate at all, despite appearances to the contrary. That may be how they ‘influence each other’ instantaneously: they are not actually separate!

“You see, scientists have koans, too. In fact, *everything* in life is actually a koan to the rational mind! Especially when it takes time to look a little more deeply. Reality *is* mysterious! When the rational mind tries to penetrate this mystery, it senses its limitations and this may provide the impetus to explore the realm of intuitive knowing. But when rationality avoids looking deeply, and confidently proclaims it knows the truth, it invariably stretches, twists, and ignores what does not conform to its assumptions.”

On this Lost Island of Understanding, we can literally feel our mind expanding, and it is not always comfortable. Our capacity is stretched, and many of the familiar and comfortable handholds on reality are being taken away. We can vaguely sense that much of our thinking has been narrow, rigid, and self-preoccupied. We are building a larger picture in which everything is a whole that is made up of smaller whole parts, and that all these wholes are wholes within larger wholes, comprising even greater wholes. Everything from atoms, molecules, cells, and organs to creatures, communities, cultures, planets, and solar systems are simultaneously wholes comprised of whole parts, and whole parts of larger wholes. We recognize that by understanding the interconnectedness of these wholes and living this understanding, we may be delivered from shallow-mindedness and the violence this fosters. How can we do this?

The spirit of the island continues: “Again, the way to do this is through practice. To become a knitter, you knit; a photographer, you photograph; a dancer, you dance; a painter, you paint; a pianist, you play the piano; and to become intuitive, you practice meditation. This is the road to intuitive knowing. The encouraging truth is that authentic practice does bring authentic results, and your heart-mind *can* open like a flower, it *can* open to whole new vistas of intuition, understanding, and compassion.

“This island is quiet. Meditation and inner listening are easier here. You will discover during your stay here that the practice of meditation contains its own reward and is, in and of itself, a deeply fulfilling ‘activity.’ Non-activity is probably a better word. You will see that the effects of regularly practicing meditative inner listening ripple out into every aspect of your life, bringing more insight, creativity, peacefulness, and love into your relationships and activities, and enriching your inner life. This practice of inner silence frees you from the inner domination of culturally conditioned thinking, and it is the foundation of intuition and prayer. Every hour of the day is an opportunity, filled with enormous potential, to reveal and discover more of the vast inner terrain that lies unexplored within you. You will see that unless you actually engage in the practice of meditation, you will not be able to experience or even imagine the possibilities that dwell within your own mind and being. To access them requires patience and practice, the training of your attention within silence.

“For example, a person fluid and comfortable with a musical instrument, enjoying the unfolding of rhythms and melodies while improvising, and carried away on the wings of the Muses, perhaps filling an audience with soaring joy, has spent countless hours practicing with that instrument to free the spirit of music within for outer expression. Just so, as you practice meditation, returning your attention again and again to this present moment, you are slowly giving birth to inner silence, to mental clarity and brilliance, to emotional richness and equanimity, and to the creative freedom and spiritual radiance that uplift yourself and others, and reveal the true inner beauty of all life and of yourself as an expression of that life. You learn to be more truly understanding of others as your narrow perspective widens to include more than just yourself and your particular point of view and your own in-group. The practice of meditative inner listening trains attention,

returning it repeatedly to this present moment, and is an important key to intuitive living, building character and revealing interconnections.”

In the quiet beauty that permeates this Lost Island of Understanding, we begin to see broader vistas than we ever glimpsed before. Days pass, and we are able to increasingly sense that we are not merely an object arising and passing away in time, but that we participate in the unfolding life of the universe, and that we are that eternal life, manifesting as our particular experience. Looking out over the mysterious ocean one afternoon, we feel ourselves energized and deeply related to an *all-embracing unfolding*, as if poised on the brink of a momentous discovery. The scene is deeply vivid, and suddenly we hear the waves as if within us, and feel the breeze inside us, and hear the far away laugh of a gull inside us as well. The sun shines within us, and everything seems to be happening inside!

Slowly the experience fades, and we feel the island’s now familiar benevolent knowing lapping at the edge of our consciousness, capturing our attention: “Ah! Very good. This direct seeing will help fuel your journey home to the Other Shore. As your intuition develops and you understand more deeply and directly that you are not separate from the larger wholes that sustain you, or from others who are also so sustained, you will discover greater harmony in your life. Your relationships, your work, your eating habits, your patterns of consumption, all become more aligned with compassion as intuition flowers in your mind and heart, for you understand that harming and confining others always harms and confines you, and the more you free others, the freer you will be. As you practice living a life of conscious compassion, your intuitive potential will naturally develop.

“Here, in the beauty of this island, your motivation is deepening and becoming less self-preoccupied. The more universal your motivation for spiritual practice becomes, the more powerful it will be. Like any art, the art of intuitive living matures with practice, and matures more deeply as motivation deepens. Motivation deepens as you experience more directly your interconnectedness with all life, and your oneness with the source of life, and this experience in turn arises from and nourishes your practice of meditation. Meditation and intuition give rise to each other, like the paradoxical growth of a tree’s roots and branches. Which causes which? We cannot say, for without the roots

deepening, the branches could not grow, and without the branches growing, the roots could not go deeper! If each would wait for the other to grow first, they would both wait forever and there would be no growth. They are not separate, like intuition and meditation are not separate! To understand them we must see the greater whole that they serve and that serves them: the *tree* is growing! You, a manifestation of the infinite and eternal, are evolving and awakening! It is a process without separate parts; if you divide it up it is only because you are apparently divided!

“Inner silence can heal these divisions. You will eventually see that the old wound of dualism never touched *you*, your essence. Your true nature is, always has been, and will eternally be free of contamination or any possibility of damage or error. What you are shines serenely, *always*. As this understanding deepens, your motivation deepens and you no longer practice inner silence for yourself and your own peace of mind, but for all beings of the past, present, and future. You see that what you are is part of, and one with, something much, much greater. Your effort and unfoldment are not for yourself alone, but for all beings, and embrace the whole, which is what you actually are.”

These words reverberate within us and we look out over the waves below us, pondering them. Each wave is unique, each wave is born, lives awhile, and eventually dies on the inevitable shore, and yet each wave *is* the ocean. The ocean itself gives rise to countless waves, and is in, and is, each wave, and yet no individual wave can grasp the totality of its true nature, the ocean, without leaving the confines of its narrow wave perspective and realizing that it and all waves have the same source, the ocean, and do not actually die, for what they are is the eternal ocean; they are not merely fleeting waves. As we watch the lines of waves endlessly rising, surging forward, curling, and crashing on the beach, we practice seeing the two levels of truth simultaneously: that every wave is a unique individual, and that it is all just the ocean happening. After a while, our eyes take in the palm trees lining the beach below, reaching toward the sun and holding onto the earth, and we find we can see them also as waves, also arising and passing, manifestations of a greater ocean that is less obviously seen.

The island continues. “What you are seeing is significant, and is a key to intuitive living. Waves are created in the image of the ocean, of the ocean itself, and when you see this directly about yourself and all life, you are seeing deeply, and this is a form of

prayer. It can become a communion that transcends dualism, and its value for healing and illuminating your mind is inestimable. For the wave, prayer is intuitively understanding that its true nature is the ocean. For you, prayer is intuitively and directly seeing your own true nature as whole, complete, undefiled, and one with infinite Being, a manifestation of the universal love that is the source of all life.

“Intuitive knowing is both the treasure behind the locked door, and the key that opens that door. It is the treasure because it confers grace, wisdom, connectedness, healing, spiritual awakening, creative exuberance, freedom, and joy. It takes place outside the ego’s territory, beyond the programmed thinking of the mind. To people who are spiritually mature, intuition is the inner light that brings unshakable peace and understanding. Such people *know* directly the greater reality that is their source, and thus look with eyes that see equality. They see with love, and can sense the deeper connections between events that are invisible to most. There are *only* events, actually, for what are selves and objects but events arising and passing in time? There are no concrete things anywhere, except in the concepts of the thinking, concretizing mind. When this realization penetrates you deeply enough, freedom will be born—and your tail will deflate! The grass in the field is sweet and fresh!

“Intuition is the key that unlocks the door to itself, for it walks hand-in-hand with meditation and inner silence. The practice of meditation opens the door to all the inner treasure rooms, and it is, itself, the treasure there enthroned. The ancient truth is that ‘there is no way to peace, peace is the way,’ for the path and the goal are one. They unfold continually. To practice inner listening is to awaken intuition, and to awaken intuition is to live life as a practice of inner listening. This leads to more direct seeing, free from the interference of self-preoccupation and ingrained thinking. Intuition and meditation practice flow together.

“The barren knowing of rationality produces but a garden of knives, fences, cages, and dangerous weapons; watered by intuition, soft and radiant flowers begin to emerge and dance. Cultivate this garden, which is your true home, your own mind. It requires care and brings learning. Cultivate your garden with the practice of meditation, bringing your attention regularly to touch this present moment.

“Take a breath, and expel it slowly. Feel yourself present in your body, feel the weight and physicality of this experience. Notice the smells and sounds and visual arisings, the temperature, the air, and the sky. Without thinking, simply be, just for this brief moment. Aware. Just this. Here. Just now. Simply being. Nothing but this. Awake. Present. . . .

“Meditation, even if practiced for only a short time, is like a breeze that freshens, a cool wave that opens up your eyes and ears and feelings. Practicing deeply and regularly, your life becomes the practice of inner silence. This is the path to awakening and freedom, the path of intuition. The ox’s tail will shrink back to size as ego-clinging dissolves, and the ox, your true nature, will stroll through the gate to enjoy its boundless life. This gift of aliveness is infinite, precious, and beyond giving and receiving. The ox exults in the field beyond its tale of past and future.

“In the outer world there is much you can do to promote your practice of inner silence. All the sages have exhorted you to universal kindness and caring. All lives flow from the same Life. As you open the intuitive gate, you see directly that you are related to every being, and with that awareness, your heart of love is opened for all of creation. Since the practice and the goal are not separate, as you practice kindness and caring, your mind becomes less self-centered, relaxes, and becomes more still. This stillness fosters intuition and nourishes your direct seeing of interconnectedness, which is the ground of kindness. Deception and connivance bring inner agitation, which works against your opening to intuition. Fear and indifference bring inner insensitivity, which also work contrary to living intuitively. As you open to life, you open to *all* of it, and to seeing your total interconnectedness with all of it. As you deepen your roots of compassion, your branches of intuition automatically unfold higher toward heaven. You are the tree of life.”

The island’s words flow to us like an inner stream, dissolving old knots and tensions. Confusions and complications melt away and dilemmas evaporate as we sit quietly in the presence that saturates the atmosphere of this island.

We stay on the island for another week, walking, swimming, resting, practicing inner listening, and allowing the island’s wisdom to penetrate us more fully. Several more times we experience ourself stretching and expanding, and perceive the world as

arising inside of us. Grateful for the gifts of understanding the island has bestowed, we eventually feel the Other Shore calling us on. An inner window has opened, revealing the beginning outlines of a new understanding of our nature and of the false tale of separateness. We sense the bright field of freedom that lies beyond the gate of the little tail and outside the prison of self-preoccupation, and how it shines beyond the confines of discursive thinking.

The ox of our true self smells the field of joy and freedom that are its home and realizes there is nothing in its way but its little tail. Its nostrils flare; its eyes are bright! Its great heart leaps! How delicious this moment is! Palm trees flutter in the cool morning breeze, and far away we hear the call of a gull. As we walk the beach, saying good-bye to the island and thanking her, we realize that the old wooden sign has disappeared. The koan is within us now.

Before we leave the island, we sit quietly and hear her message to us as music swirling over the sea and through her trees. We listen deeply, and through the rhythm, melodies, and harmony of the music, receive understanding that goes beyond what words can capture.

(For a little taste of this music, please listen to “Song of Understanding,” piece number one on the accompanying compact disc, *Islands of Light*.)