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Revised is a series in which writers look back at a work of art they first encountered long ago. Alan Watts. In my school creative writing class, one day a week was set aside for reading, our choice of material. The hippie teacher was guided by this choice, but almost everything worked. It was here, because of her, that I first encountered Alan Watts, particularly his essay collection *This Is It*. All I remember about the book itself is my teacher dreamily commenting on the title. I took the copy because it was short, and because the subtitles and other essays about zen and spiritual experience- spoke to me. The idea seemed steep - Watts was a precursor to the countercultural movement, but I must have been too busy with high school eternity to focus. I was in college when I was in a car accident that tore a nerve in my shoulder. A botched operation to repair it tore an artery and released a blood clot that, a week later, caused a massive stroke that left me trapped inside my body. I couldn't move or talk, and the doctors said I'd be paralyzed from the eyes down for the rest of my life. Something happened to me in the hospital in the first days after the stroke - the sudden unexpected clarity and lightness that occurred in what I later described in my book *Will and I* as a liberating flash. At the geological moment, my boundaries fell away to where nothing else was - my skin, other surfaces, the distance between them, separating me from everything else. Despite my physical condition, I felt like I was blossoming. Eventually, I got some movement, and after a year of rehab I went back to college and graduated a few years later. I took a fiction writing class when I went back to school and decided to turn my experience into a story. I'd like to write a novel about it. I wanted to invent everything that happened to me because it seemed that the only way to understand the sense of unity I continued to feel after leaving the hospital was a sense of the wholeness that good fiction also possessed, and that I couldn't explain otherwise. Because of my altered body and weak voice, my last years in college were mostly miserable, but the feeling of being in the middle of a living world made me care a little less. But all I found myself recording was a fact report. A few years later, I went to lunch with a childhood friend visiting Alabama from Washington. He started talking about Alan Watts's book, said it was the best thing he read at the time, and I remembered the author's name. At the time, I was living in a lake cabin our family rented a couple of hours south of Birmingham, and when I returned, I decided to give *This Is It* another try. The title essay is about the spiritual but specific experience that Watts calls cosmic consciousness, something that has happened to more or less to people since the beginning of time. It's basically lively and overwhelming confidence that the universe is exactly the way it is at the moment, like and in each of its parts, so utterly right that it needs no explanation or excuse for what it's just ... Experience tends to occur in situations of complete limb or despair, when a person finds himself without any alternative but to give up completely. I felt an actual tingling sensation in my spine when I read that and immediately admitted that this is what happened to me in the hospital. Watt's first experience with cosmic consciousness came just after he began to study Indian and Chinese philosophy, in which meditation is a key practice. He tried to get into what he thought was the right mood to meditate, but he couldn't do it. In disgust he decided to abandon all the framework of the mind. By virtue of throwing them away, he writes, it seemed I rushed away as well... and the problem of life simply ceased to exist. Watts also cites a report on another experience he has to offer, describing the hectic dream he had when he was eight years old. In his sleep, Watts was pinned face down to a steel ball orbiting the ground. He knew with full confidence that he was doomed to spin in this whirlpool forever, and realizing that he had no control, he gave up. But the moment I gave up, the ball seemed to hit the mountain and disintegrate, and the next thing I knew I was sitting on a stretch of warm sand. Liberation, he explains, lies to the end, not the problem. Looking back, I also gave up completely (although I couldn't have said it at the time). The sense of intense relief, freedom and ease that Watts continues to describe is what I think has allowed me to start moving again. Then it was like someone patting a loose bunch of playing cards in a neat deck. I finally had words for an experience I thought was ineffective and I found a hinge around which everything else in my book revolves. Clay Biars studied at the Sevani School of Letters and is an assistant editor of *Narrative* magazine. He is the author of *Will and I: A Memoir*, this summer from FSG Originals. Before you go... Check out the Bestsellers of All Time See the List of Buy Book: KoboBarnes and NobleAppleBooks A MillionAmazonGoogle Play Store Six revolutionary essays from the perfect guide to correcting the course in life, away from materialism and its empty promises (Deepak Chopra), exploring the relationship between spiritual experience and ordinary life, and the need for their coexistence in each of us. With an essay on the cosmic consciousness (including Alan Watts's account of his own ventures in this domestic realm); the paradoxes of self-awareness; LSD and consciousness; and the false confrontation between spirit and matter, *This Is It* and other essays about zen and spiritual experiences really mind-blowing collections. Six revolutionary essays from the perfect guide to course correction in life, away from materialism and its empty promise (Deepak exploring the relationship between spiritual experience and ordinary life and the need for their coexistence within each of us. With an essay on the cosmic consciousness (including Alan Watts's account of his own ventures in this domestic realm); the paradoxes of self-awareness; LSD and consciousness; and the false confrontation between spirit and matter, *This Is It* and other essays about zen and spiritual experiences really mind-blowing collections. Back to Top Visit other sites in Penguin Random House Network See that this is an immediate, everyday and real experience-it's IT, the whole and the end point for the existence of the universe. Of all the historical times and cultures, we have reports of the same unmistakable sensation, appearing, as a rule, quite unexpectedly and without a clear reason. The central core of experience seems to be the belief, or understanding, that immediate now, regardless of its nature, is the purpose and fulfillment of all living things. Surrounding and stemming from this understanding is emotional ecstasy, a sense of intense relief, freedom and lightness, and often an almost unbearable love for the world it is. Insight, when clear enough, is saved; once having understood a certain skill, the object tends to remain. The meaning of music is open at every moment of the game and listening to it. It's the same thing I feel with most of our lives, and if we're unnecessarily absorbed in improving them we can forget to live them altogether. What we call things, facts or events, after all, nothing more than convenient units of perception, recognizable pegs for names chosen from an infinite array of lines and surfaces, colors and textures, spaces and density that surround us. Therefore, if consciousness ceases to ignore itself and becomes completely shy, it discovers two things: (1) that it controls itself only very slightly, and is completely dependent on other things - father and mother, external nature, biological processes, God, or what you will be, and (2) that there is no little person inside, there is no me who owns this consciousness. Man overcomes his sense of disunity or duality - not only from himself as the highest controlling self against the lower controlled self, but also from the common universe of other people and things. Adept in zen is someone who manages to be a man with the same artless grace and lack of internal conflict with which the tree is a tree. Such a person is compared to a ball in a mountain stream, that is, it can not be blocked, stopped or confused in any situation. He never swings or is confused in his mind, because although he may stop in direct action to think about the problem, the flow of his consciousness always moves straight forward without being caught in a vicious circle of anxiety or hesitant doubt, in which the thought whirls wildly around without problems. It is not besieged and is not in a hurry in action, but simply continuous. This is what zen means, being separated rather than being emotions or feelings, but to be the one who has a feeling that is not sticky or blocked, and through which the experiences of the world pass, as reflections of birds flying over water. Therefore he has a vivid sense of himself identical to what he sees and hears, so his subjective impression comes in line with the physical fact that a person is not so much an organism in an environment as an environment relationship. Relationships, one way or four, are more real than their two terms. But can we be confused by our natural environment of heaven, earth and water, as a miracle of our own bodies, in accepting the answer, acting in a way commensurate with their splendor? Or should we continue to bulldoze them blindly, imagining ourselves as independent controllers and conquerors of what is, after all, the big and perhaps the best half of ourselves? He knows himself as one with everyone, because he no longer separates himself from the universe, looking for something from her. As Chuang Tzu said, Those who would have good government without its correlated wrong and correct without its correlative wrong, do not understand the principles of the universe. Our attempt to take over the world from the outside is a vicious circle in which we will be doomed to the eternal insomnia of control control and supervision to infinity. This level of human life can also be seen as miraculous and supernatural as the great universe itself. This feeling can become especially acute when the individual ego tries to understand its own nature, plumb of inner sources of its own actions and consciousness. For here he discovers a part of himself - the most intimate and the largest part, which is strange to himself and beyond its comprehension and control. Strange as it may seem, the ego believes that its own center and nature is beside itself. The deeper I come into myself, the more I am not myself, and yet it is the heart of me. Here I find my inner work functioning myself, spontaneously, like the rotation of celestial bodies and drifting clouds. Strange and foreign as this aspect of myself at first glance, I soon realize that it is me, and much more me than my superficial ego. The zen is above all liberating the mind from traditional thought, and this is something quite different from rebelling against convention on the one hand, or adapting foreign conventions on the other. Things are terms, not entities. They exist in the abstract world of thought, but not in the specific world of nature. Thus, someone who actually perceives or feels that it so no longer feels that he is an ego, except by definition. What is ruined in terms, in words, is not undiscovered in reality - in a strong relationship between terms. Anyone who sees that there is no ultimate choice between these opposites does not matter because he can not really participate in the politics and illusion of advertising man that can be better and better, no worse and worse, and this question can yield endlessly to the desire of the mind without becoming utterly undesirable. We ignore and highlight the physical fact of our complete interdependence with the natural world. We are as embodied in it as our own cells and molecules are embodied in us. Our disregard and suppression of this relationship gives special relevance to all new ecology sciences, studying the interaction of organisms with the environment and preventing us from ignorant interference in the balances of nature. The world is an independent model that, when its successive states are remembered, can be shown that certain order. His movement, his energy, questions from himself now, not from the past, which just lags behind him in memory, like a wake from a ship. If there is a reason for the existence of the world in any sense, it must be found in the present. The complex organization of both plants and my own nervous system, so the symphony branching complexity, were not only manifestations of intelligence, as if things like intelligence and love were themselves substances or shapeless forces. Rather, the model itself is intelligence and love, and it is somehow, despite all its outwardly stupid and cruel distortions. A person can perform actions that are truly moral only when he is no longer motivated by the fear of hell, that is, when he grows into an alliance with the Good, which goes beyond good and evil, which, in other words, does not work from love to rewards or fear of punishment. This is just the nature of the world when it is seen as an independent action, giving out the past rather than being motivated by the past. Our brains and the patterns in them are in themselves members of a particular, physical universe, and thus our abstractions are the same forms of nature as the structure of crystals or the organization of ferns. Ferns.

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