



*****BIND THE SHORT EDGE



The TAO of ELVIS



David H. Rosen, MD

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FOREWORD BY Thomas Moore

AFTERWORD BY Clarissa Pinkola Estés

WIPF & STOCK • Eugene, Oregon

Artist's Note: This first Artist's Note concerns the decorative flyleaf pages at the front and back of *The Tao of Elvis*. The twelve-sided wheel, which is in various ways repeated throughout the book, was taken from the Chinese representation of the zodiac. However, instead of the traditional Chinese zodiacal animals, I've selected animals (which future Artist's Notes will discuss) that are associated with Elvis. This, then, is my "Zodiac of Elvis."

N.B. The Artist's Notes that accompany each chapter are meant to include the reader in the artist's process. The notes, which were not academically researched, provide anecdotal connections between the artwork, Elvis and Dr Rosen's theme for each chapter and insights into the mythical Elvis.

In *Leaves of Elvis' Garden: The Song of His Soul* and in correspondence with us, Larry Geller tells stories about Elvis and his spiritual motivation for the designs on his jumpsuits. Geller, Elvis's confidant, hair stylist and spiritual guide, writes that Elvis favored jewelry with mystical symbols from various traditions.

Details were collected through general reading, as well as correspondence with Larry Geller and Butch Polston. Polston was bequeathed the original patterns for Elvis's jumpsuits by late designer Bill Belew and is authorized to recreate them. As a result of our discoveries, this book contains a visual experience of and brief stories (Artist's Notes) about Elvis's mystical world of spiritual symbols. Welcome to the journey.

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CONTENTS

Foreword
Preface to the New Edition
Preface
Introduction

- 1 Tao
- 2 Opposites
- 3 Child
- 4 Mother
- 5 Father
- 6 Family & Friends
- 7 Spirit, Soul & Religion
- 8 Love
- 9 Music & Song
- 10 Grace & Gentleness
- 11 Darkness, Sorrow & Sadness
- 12 Light, Fire & Passion
- 13 Dreams
- 14 Giving & Generosity
- 15 Alone & Loneliness
- 16 Twinning & Pairing
- 17 Man of Tao
- 18 Innocence & Play
- 19 Knowledge & Wisdom
- 20 Image (Persona & Shadow)
- 21 Truth & Truth of Character
- 22 Happiness & Joy
- 23 Virtue
- 24 Beauty
- 25 Nature & Water
- 26 Work (Business)
- 27 Transcendence & Transformation
- 28 Success & Failure
- 29 Home (Graceland)
- 30 King
- 31 Pain & Suffering
- 32 Harmony & Balance
- 33 Prisoner & Freedom



- 34 Destiny
- 35 Meditation & Health
- 36 Madness & Illness
- 37 Compassion & Forgiveness
- 38 Mirror
- 39 Purpose & Meaning
- 40 Prayer & Sacrifice
- 41 Death & Rebirth
- 42 Spiritual Wholeness
- Notes
- Bibliography
- Acknowledgments
- Permissions
- Afterword

FOREWORD

"I don't know anything about music. In my line you don't have to." That is my favorite Taoist-like Elvis quote. In this book you will find many others that reveal his wit, humility and sense of irony. Interestingly, true to the Tao, you will also find the opposites of these qualities in him. He was yin and yang, boy and king, the innocent and the corrupted. I came away from reading this penetrating book with the image of a funny and friendly man hiding in a megastar, like a writhing worm in a bright red apple. People who knew him usually loved him for his capacity to love. Those who condemned him were hiding, too, in a balloon of virtuousness too easily offended by a young man's antics. If there was a tragedy about Elvis's life, it was the impossible challenge of being a real human being and feeling called to be a king, an image not easily borne by a small-town boy.

I'm also intrigued by the image of a mirror. Look at Elvis and you see something familiar and personal. I ask myself, what do I see? First, I see the eternally young man, the one who doesn't grow up. I know what it feels like to have such a character in your psyche. He is both good and bad. He loves life. He thinks he can do anything. He doesn't want to be held down. And he's quite religious, so much so that on a bad day he might think he's Jesus Christ. He's also petulant and demanding and difficult. He is close to his mother with a nearness that feels both comforting and smothering, and he has no trouble living out that story with other women who love him. People are envious of him and will find reasons to treat him like a devil rather than as

the angel he assumes himself to be.

Many said that Elvis was the mirror image of America, meaning that when Americans gazed at Elvis we were seeing ourselves and maybe a caricature of ourselves. America itself is an eternal adolescent, playing at love and full of virtuous ideals while hiding a menacing, ferocious capacity for aggression and self-destruction. This is not yin and yang. This is a split personality. Dr Rosen describes it in Elvis as Jekyll and Hyde.

Elvis fell apart, disintegrated before our eyes. We were forced to see our mirror image collapse into lostness, and, like American society, lose its beauty, fitness, capacity for marriage and wholeness. But Elvis lives on in impersonators who bear the burden of this kingship more easily than Elvis ever could, in a website that makes it seem that Elvis will be appearing on stage any day now, and in Graceland where his memory is very much alive and loved. America still has a chance to achieve the Taoist ideal of linking the opposites in an amalgam like the logo of the Tao, a circle with two rounded parts running smoothly into and around each other.

It's all about immortality and humanity, the incarnation of a supernova's glow in an ordinary human being. Elvis thought of himself as Jesus, and there are some parallels. I wouldn't take them too far, but Elvis's spiritual significance is considerable. He loved Gospel music and he died holding a book on Jesus's death shroud. He was other-worldly, an everlasting myth. I expect Elvis to be sighted for many generations. The bigger question: will America's Jesus fantasy, its self-image of being essentially good, a worthy leader of the world and

the source of all creativity and bounty, be incarnated in real life, or will it eat too much and drug itself and burst in the heaven of its glory.

The impersonators, the bigger-than-life characters, the legends, Graceland, and the enduring songs all suggest that Elvis was not a human being. He was a star, like one of those celestial bodies above our heads at night, out of reach but visible and captivating. In so far as he was from another world, he serves us a secular variant of a spiritual being. Like a night sky, he makes us wonder about the meaning of it all. Just linking him with the Tao sustains his spiritual nature, and we need spirit, not held at a distance in a church or temple, but closer to our everyday souls, the place where we listen to popular music. We need it on our movie screens and in our headphones.

Among my strongest memories of Elvis is his rendition of “Love Me Tender,” such a simple song made astonishingly sophisticated by the mere catch in his voice or the dip in his baritone. Whenever I hear it, I am taken back to my youth and filled with nostalgia, which I think is a wish that Elvis had not collapsed and were still around. The other is the film version of *Jailhouse Rock*, so full of energy, so ritualistic. There Elvis is not just a mesmerizing dancer but an otherworldly apparition. You couldn’t mistake his physical movements there for those of anyone else.

I’ve allowed myself here to rhapsodize rather than offer intelligent comments. I leave those for Dr Rosen, who has created a unique book. At the beginning I wondered if I would be able to appreciate an amalgam of Elvis and the Tao, but at the end I wanted the book to go on. I felt lost in another

time—not just the past, but the eternal. The book’s strong impact came from listening to four voices in counterpoint: the Tao, the analyst, the King, his friends. Again and again, chapter after chapter, the rhythm began to work on me. Now I prefer this artful, pod-like, ever-building collection of impressions to a linear analysis. This way of imagining him keeps Elvis alive, showing that in his own way Dr Rosen is an Elvis scholar.

Let’s not forget the Tao. Thankfully in this book it isn’t just a metaphor. Dr Rosen wants us to see how the Tao is truly lived out in the potent narrative of this man’s life and career. In the end, Elvis teaches us how to understand the Tao in a particular, improbable way and to take it seriously.

I plan on keeping this book handy for a number of reasons, and just to enjoy the good translation of a variety of Taoist quotes is one. I’ll also want to remember how fragile a tender soul can be when the people around you take you to be a myth and overlook the person in the center.

Elvis is not only America; he is the world. People all over the globe feel an attachment to him, a sign of his great soul. He also inhabits the person who listens to his songs. Elvis becomes a part of every man and woman, a grand and inflated figure so ordinary and local and yet so outsized and unearthly that to listen to him sing is to be taken beyond ourselves. Isn’t that the point of an encounter with a star?

Thomas Moore

author of

*Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating
Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life*



For Rachel and her Song of Songs

*Tao is forever, and he that possesses it,
though his body ceases,
is not destroyed.*

Deng Ming-Dao

PREFACE to the New Edition

Rosenberry Books, an extraordinary small press, has released a wonderfully-designed hand-bound edition for the thirty-fifth anniversary of Elvis's death. The sumptuous design of the deluxe volume has now been edited and simplified for this paperback trade edition.

Elvis was (and is) a symbol of America and everything beautiful and ugly about this great country. Of all persons, Elvis knew all about the lonely journey of one's soul. Now I realize deeply that the King was like all of us: struggling to find his way home. He embodied the archetype of the fool, but on the other side of it is the king and wisdom.

When this book was originally published, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Elvis in August 2002, I signed books at Graceland.

After I returned to Texas A&M University, where I held the McMillan Professorship in Analytical Psychology, a piece about the book appeared in The Chronicle of Higher Education. It precipitated this comment from a seasoned academic when I entered the mailroom (crowded with other professors), "Here comes the Elvis impersonator." I responded loudly, "No, the Elvis scholar!" This book concerns a serious, yet tragic story. Elvis's life and death parallel the American myth and many of our stories. Like any full life, it contains tragedy and comedy. Truth reveals and love heals. Elvis has helped a lot of people he never knew, including myself.

David H. Rosen, MD

*Affiliate Professor in Psychiatry,
Oregon Health & Science University*

PREFACE

*Elvis Presley is the greatest cultural force
in the twentieth century. He changed
everything — music, language, clothes;
it's a whole new social revolution.*

Leonard Bernstein

*I love Elvis and hope to see him in heaven.
There'll never be another like that soul brother.*

James Brown

The Tao is the divine principle of Taoism, the oldest Chinese religion, dating from the sixth century BC. Lao Tzu was the original Taoist master and the author of the *Tao Te Ching*. This book of wisdom, about the art of living, is the main sacred text of Taoism. The Tao, a mysterious force thought to be everywhere, has been called the Way, God, Eternity, Ultimate Meaning, Primal Spirit, Unity, and Spiritual Wholeness.

The Tao is concerned with soul, acceptance, humility, healing, nonviolence, compassion, and balancing opposites, such as good and evil, and the qualities of yin (feminine, dark, and receptive) and yang (masculine, light, and active). The Tao also interprets the evolution of the psyche or what Carl Jung called “archetypes and the collective unconscious,” that is, our archetypal, mythical, and spiritual heritage. The Tao and archetypes are linked. Archetypes (or ancient imprints) are innate predispositions to opposites such as yin and yang, persona and shadow, the great and terrible mother, and the benevolent and malevolent king. Taoism

concerns confronting, containing, transcending, and transforming opposites — the task of all individuals, including Elvis.

Elvis Presley represents a modern archetypal king figure who links the individual to our ancient past, to our current society, and to the future through his music and life. He had a numinous or spiritual quality that was expressed through his dramatic image and movement but most importantly through his soulful songs, which are manifestations of the Tao working through him.

The Tao paradoxically means standing still and moving at the same time. *The Tao of Elvis* both grounds Elvis and recognizes that he will always be on the move. As Lao Tzu said, “This is the profound, simple truth: You are the master of your life and death. What you do is what you are.” Elvis had the wisdom to know that he was his own master and had the ability to realize his unique potential. His very name means “the force of God” in Hebrew, and his middle name, Aaron (or spelled *Aron*), was the name of Moses’s brother, a high priest of Israel.

Elvis was a man of Tao who struggled to balance the opposites: poverty and wealth, female and male, old and new, good and evil, king and non-king, joy and sorrow, water and fire, dark and light, and stillness and movement. He embodied the essential elements of Tao that the small child has:

*Free from care, unaware of self,
He acts without reflection,
Stays where he is put, does not know why,
Does not figure things out,
Just goes along with them,
Is part of the current.*

lated to his later being seen as a religious figure. His favorite songs were gospels, and central to his spiritual life were the books *The Prophet*, *The Impersonal Life*, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, and the Holy Bible. He also practiced meditation and belonged to a worldwide yoga organization, the Self-Realization Fellowship.

The Tao was and is operating through America's king. Like the Tao, Elvis is everywhere. Following his death, on August 16, 1977, Elvis became even more popular, evolving into a global mythic figure. Along with Jesus's and Muhammad Ali's, Elvis's image is one of the most widely recognized on Earth. What does this say about him and us? What does it mean that churches have sprung up in Elvis's name? Graceland has become a mecca that draws nearly a million pilgrims a year. Today thousands of impersonators (disciples) spread his word and image around the world. "Sightings" are almost a daily occurrence, while his actual image dominates our cultural landscape. In 1998, twenty-one years after his death, a twenty-four-foot image of Elvis projected on a screen and accompanied by his music sold out Radio City Music Hall. America's king has become such a force that it seems as if history might someday record time as before and after Elvis. Perhaps this is what John Lennon meant when he said, "Before Elvis there was nothing."

America lacks an actual king and queen mythologically linking the people with the divine. The United States also lacks unified spiritual leadership, so we project this deep archetypal need onto our heroes and heroines, particularly rock and movie stars and occasionally presidents such as John F. Kennedy. The undisputed king and queen of

Elvis was Taoist in the same way that Taoist Master Kwan Saihung considered Casanova to be "the perfect Taoist." Taoist sage and author Deng Ming-Dao, mystified by Kwan Saihung's viewpoint, replied, "Are you sure? He seemed to be a self-indulgent seducer." Kwan Saihung remained strongly affirmative, responding, "But he had insight. He perceived his own nature and did not hesitate to fulfill his destiny. That's why I call him a perfect Taoist."

By the time Elvis was twenty-one (the midpoint of his life) he had lived out the American dream. Yet, Elvis did much more. He foreshadowed the sexual revolution and women's liberation, and as a nonconformist and revolutionary of sorts, Elvis's style of civil disobedience broke down racial barriers in the music world, which prefigured the civil rights movement. Elvis Presley and Martin Luther King, Jr. who both died in Memphis, were folk royalty — agents of cultural change standing for integration and love.

For all of his heroic feats Elvis was crowned king, and the seeds of a mythic Elvis were sown. Alice Walker wrote in her novel *Temple of My Family*, "In Elvis white Americans found a reason to express their longing and appreciation for the repressed Native American and black parts of themselves." When Elvis's Scotch-Irish and Jewish heritage is considered, we see just what a multicultural icon he really is.

The discrepancy between Elvis's true self and false (king) self caused him immense pain and agony. He became extremely despondent and sought refuge through medical drug usage. Nevertheless, Elvis was on a spiritual quest, which is surely re-

this realm are Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe (both of whom self-destructed). It seems that Elvis, with his slogan TCB (Taking Care of Business), is a truer symbol of America than Marilyn Monroe. We need Elvis, as on the Elvis postage stamp, to be resurrected as his young true self — just as Elvis needed and searched for the healing spiritual path to transcend and unite his inner split. This may, in part, be the basis for all interest in Elvis — a symbolic expression of the fact that we need to heal our racially and economically divided country and world as well as reintegrate ourselves. Elvis, like a giant mirror, reflects our own struggles with forces of good and evil, and creation and destruction.

In a real way, when we see Elvis we see ourselves. Symbolizing the battle between the true and false selves in us all, Elvis's huge appeal lies in his power as an archetype — his epic rise and fall captures what is in all of us. Through understanding the Tao of Elvis, we can come to better understand ourselves.

The Tao of Elvis is a psychological and philosophical work in that it is about the phenomenon and the experience of Elvis as well as his (and our) pursuit of purpose, spirituality, and wisdom. Following the introduction are forty-two sections on Taoist concepts, one for each year of Elvis's life. It is both chronological and archetypal, as the Tao was and is expressed in Elvis and in each of us, from birth until death. Ideally it also creates a circle, as in the end, we and Elvis regain some of the innocence of childhood.

Elvis's journey is Taoist. It reflects a profound change in our psyches as well as our culture. We can celebrate and delight in Elvis's soulful music

and giving nature, and we can empathize with the pain surrounding his losses and his dependence on prescription drugs. However, the ultimate challenge is to look into the Elvis mirror and see his pain as our own pain. Even though Elvis ultimately failed, our goal ought to be to transcend the opposites, undergo a creative transformation, and heal our own souls in the process.

As a boy I listened to the first recordings of Elvis. Late at night I'd play his records in my bedroom and get lost in songs like "That's All Right [Mama]," "Blue Moon of Kentucky," "Good Rockin' Tonight," and "You're a Heartbreaker." I was drawn to the soul in his voice. At the age of eleven I was awestruck when I heard the eerie and astonishing "Heartbreak Hotel." In 1956 I saw Elvis perform in my hometown of Springfield, Missouri, at the Shrine Mosque Auditorium. I was overwhelmed by the way he sang and moved. He was primitive, pulsating with rhythm and blues, but at the same time pure and spiritual. It was as if a genie had been released from the conservative, segregated, conformist bottle of 1950s culture.

What was it about Elvis, his singing and his movements, that drew me and countless others to him? In the seventh-grade talent show, I even donned felt sideburns and did my own version of "Hound Dog." A generation of young people identified with Elvis and his free spirit, including Paul McCartney, who said, "When we were kids, growing up in Liverpool, all we ever wanted to be was Elvis Presley."

In 1975 while doing research in the remote British Shetland Islands, I dreamed of Elvis: I approached him on a Memphis street corner,

introduced myself, and asked if he was really Elvis Presley. He answered “Yes.” I then asked him if he would come home with me. Again he said “Yes.” The scene then shifted to my childhood home in Springfield. I introduced Elvis to my family members — the last person was my mother. She said, “I wish I could have been as talented as you are.” Elvis said, “Why, thank ya, ma’am.” So more than a quarter century ago, the seed was planted for me to take Elvis home.

Thirty-three years after my boyhood infatuation with Elvis, in 1989, I went to Memphis for a conference related to my training to become a Jungian psychoanalyst. At this meeting I failed a crucial exam, and I was feeling terribly dejected. Like innumerable pilgrims, I was drawn to Graceland. After going through the main house, I walked outside by the old swing set of Elvis’s only child, Lisa Marie, and gazed at the back pasture where Elvis’s horses still grazed. Then I went into the Meditation Garden, where something very unexpected happened. There I was—a grown man in a moment of deep silence—suddenly weeping unashamedly in front of the grave of Elvis Presley. I had no idea why I was crying, but at that moment, I decided to write this book. Twelve years later this volume was completed in Pecos, New Mexico, at the St. Frances Hermitage in the Abbey of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It seems fitting for Elvis to be reborn at a monastery since, as the reader will learn, he wanted to be in one.

INTRODUCTION

*All I ever wanted was to help people;
love them, lift them up, spread some joy.*
Elvis Presley

*Elvis Presley's death deprives our country
of a part of itself. He was unique,
irreplaceable.*
President Jimmy Carter

In 1977 President Jimmy Carter called Elvis “a symbol of the country’s vitality, rebelliousness, and good humor.” While this was true, there is something more—something hallowed—about the soul and spirit of Elvis. Lao Tzu captures it when he says, “Encouraging others, giving freely to all, awakening and purifying the world with each movement and action, you’ll ascend to the divine realm in broad daylight.” This is what myths are made of. Rock critic Dave Marsh said, “Elvis Presley was more than anything a spiritual leader of our generation.” And Bob Dylan maintained, “When I first heard Elvis’s voice, I just knew that I wasn’t going to work for anybody; and nobody was going to be my boss. He is the deity supreme of rock-and-roll religion as it exists in today’s form. Hearing him for the first time was like busting out of jail.”

The rise and fall of Elvis reflects what has happened or can happen to each and every one of us. We all have a choice. We can follow a healing path of “egocide and transformation.” Or we can choose a self-destructive path, as Elvis did, which ended his life prematurely. Elvis might

have had Taking Care of Business as his motto, but he wasn’t able to take care of himself. His family and the Memphis Mafia, Elvis’s entourage, were also not able to do so. Why wasn’t his maxim “taking care of Elvis?” Had Elvis become such big business that the human being got lost in the whole venture? And what does this mean to us?

Shakespeare said, “The king is but a man.” Elvis, too, knew that he was but a man. J.D. Sumner, lead singer of the gospel singing group J.D. Sumner and the Stamps and one of Elvis’s idols during his youth, joined Elvis in January of 1972 for Elvis’s new season at the International Hotel in Las Vegas. Sumner recounted a moment that took place during a concert that suggests Elvis knew his limitations:

A woman ran down to the front of the stage, and Elvis leaned forward like he usually did to kiss her. As he did so, he noticed that she was carrying a crown on a small pillow. “What’s that?” he asked her. “It’s for you,” she said breathlessly. “You’re the King.” Elvis smiled and took her hand. “No, honey,” he said, “I’m not the King. Christ is the King. I’m just a singer.”

Even though Elvis knew he wasn’t a king, he seemed unable to shed the regal status that his fans projected onto him. What prevented Elvis from sacrificing the archetypal king image? Identified with this false king self, Elvis was simply unable to be his true self. So behind the glittering persona of the benevolent king lurked the shadow of a malevolent king.

Elvis represented both the best and worst of the American dream. Music critic Bill Holdship touched on this when he said, “Elvis is loved, and he is hated. He was a genius, a fraud. A saint, the devil.

The king, the clown. Even more than when he was alive, Elvis has come to symbolize everything great and everything hideous about America.”

Elvis may have been aware of his dual identity when he was first becoming famous. In 1956, after several successful national TV appearances and many hit songs including his first gold record for “Heartbreak Hotel,” Elvis was criticized as being vulgar, inciting riots, and contributing to the moral decay of America. But what others saw as immoral, Elvis saw as merely different. He felt he was expressing not raw sexuality, but something akin to spirituality. Elvis didn’t like his negative publicity, yet he was Taoist about it, saying, “There ain’t nothing I can do about it so I have to accept it, like I accept the good with the bad, the bad with the good.”

People everywhere struggle with the same thing that Elvis struggled with: the conflict between good and evil, and their true and false selves. Our only salvation is to transcend and transform the divided warring factions within ourselves. Elvis lost the human battle, but his life and death can provide us with wisdom and a deeper understanding of ourselves. In order to be our true selves, we need to let go of and transform our false selves. We need to shed inauthentic personas and acknowledge our creative genuine selves as well as our own inner, spiritual natures.

The archetypal Elvis serves a useful purpose in reminding us that the sacrifice of our false selves can lead to symbolic deaths and the rebirths of our true selves. Elvis symbolizes an American and world myth gone amuck.

The point is not to worship, imitate, or impersonate Elvis and his *false king self*, but rather to

How could the early or young Elvis, a quiet — even shy — gentle, kind, polite, innocent, sensitive, and responsible young man, end up so edgy, loud, aggressive, explosive, unkind at times, guilt ridden, depressed, self-destructive, and sometimes insensitive and irresponsible? It is the human condition — to be both true and false. But how far can a soul stretch before it snaps?

Elvis seemed superhuman in his endless performances, his charitable nature, taking care of his extended family and friends, recording over a hundred gold and platinum records, making thirty movies, completing military service, being married, having a child, getting divorced, and having countless relationships with women before, during, and after his marriage. Yet, after his mother died in 1958, he suffered from depression and, following his divorce in 1973, from worsening melancholy and drug addiction.

Elvis was intensely, even symbiotically connected to his mother. As a perpetual youth, he was also attracted to young women. Yet he always wanted his girlfriends both to mother him and to serve his sexual needs. He seemed, with a few exceptions such as Ann-Margret, to have difficulty seeing a woman as an equal. It was only near the end of his life that Elvis bridged the gap when he said “Sex [is] not the answer...you’ve got to have a spiritual connection with the woman.”

Like Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and*

Mr Hyde, Elvis had a scary split within himself. His fame and fortune cast him as a king, yet gradually his shadow asserted itself and turned him into a power-hungry man with a fascination for guns and an addiction to drugs. During the last five years of his life, Elvis's personal shadow took on a more menacing character. He shot out TV screens and spoke of hiring a hit man to kill the lover of his wife, Priscilla.

The way to mental health is facing one's shadow and healing one's inner split between good and evil. In 1965, when Elvis had a religious experience, he made a great stride in this direction, but he was unable to sustain it. If he could have transformed his false king self into his true self, most likely he would still be living today.

Did Elvis have a classic midlife crisis, which always carries with it danger and opportunity? Or was it time for his physical life to end and for the archetypal Elvis to rise up from his ashes? Assuming he had a midlife crisis, Elvis unfortunately identified more with danger and lived out the myth of Icarus. He achieved fame and fortune so quickly that he had difficulty coping and staying grounded. Sadly, like Icarus, he flew too close to the sun, his waxen wings melted, and he crashed into the sea. Elvis knew that he was not really the king, that his persona and image were transparent, and that his wings would melt. Did he willingly sacrifice himself, or was he a sacrificial dying god — cast in this role by archetypal fate, that is, the Tao — in an arid culture that needed his lifeblood as moisture to grow and change? Regardless, “King Elvis” tragically died, while reading a book on the Shroud of Turin. Sitting on the American throne he fell

forward, ending his life in a prayerful position on the thick bathroom carpet.

Lao Tzu describes how the human Elvis, who was so extraordinary, became archetypal:

Superior people can awaken during times of turmoil to lead others out of the mire. But how can the one liberate the many? By first liberating his own being. He does this not by elevating himself, but by lowering himself.... Completely emancipated from his former false life, he discovers his original pure nature, which is the pure nature of the universe.

Elvis is identified with the archetypes of sorrow, suffering, and sacrifice, which are part of the process of becoming sacred. Perhaps his being part Native American and part Jewish predisposed him to a path of sacred suffering. He was on a spiritual quest, and he said the reason he always wore a Star of David, or a *chai*, the Hebrew symbol of life, and a cross was so that he would not be “kept out of heaven on a technicality.”

Apparently Elvis didn't find enough meaning in his suffering, but perhaps we can by looking into the Elvis mirror. The task of our own healing journeys is to transform our battling opposites into a sacred whole, so that our lives have meaning and ongoing creative purpose. In this way we can be compassionate with ourselves, rejoice in the spirit and soul of Elvis the human being, and allow the archetypal Elvis to flow with the mysterious Tao.

The
TAO of **ELVIS**

1 TAO



Before Heaven and Earth were,
 it is already there:
 so still, so lonely.
 Alone it stands
 and does not change.

It turns in a circle and does not endanger itself.
 One may call it "the Mother of the World."
 I do not know its name.
 I call it Dao [Tao]. I call it "great."
 Great: that means "always in motion." Lao Tzu

The master doesn't take sides;
 She welcomes both
 saints and sinners.
 Lao Tzu

The Tao does nothing
 yet there is nothing it doesn't do.
 Lao Tzu

Elvis thought the Tao
 was another word for God.
 Larry Geller
 Elvis's spiritual adviser

It is a movement, a force, a progression to the vast universe that is so mighty even
 the gods are subordinate to it. A human being cannot know the Tao in its entirety, but
 one can learn its principles and live in harmony with it. In this way, one can follow
 the stream of life and attain immortality.

Kwan Saihung

Elvis was both
 saint and sinner.
 He was an enigma.
 Rick Stanley

*Elvis could be as quiet
and reflective as a monk.
Within the confines of his isolated life,
he remained a deeply spiritual man.*
Rick Stanley, Elvis's stepbrother

*You know, one of the most important
things to learn in life is to be able to cope
with not having anything to do.*
Elvis Presley

*I'm a soul, a spirit, a force.
I have no interest in anything of this world.
I want to live in another dimension entirely.*
Elvis Presley

David H. Rosen (DHR): Lao Tzu described the Tao as a “Mystery of mysteries.” Elvis, too, could be viewed as an enigma of enigmas. Elvis was and remains a mysterious dark force, considered both king and fool as well as saint and sinner. Yet his life was a very spiritual quest. While in the Arizona desert in 1965, Elvis saw the face of Stalin in a cloud turn into that of Jesus. Almost immediately Jesus and his numinous energy entered Elvis’s body. After this religious experience, Elvis went through a death-rebirth experience and said, “I know now. I’ve got to do something real with my life. I want out. I want to become a monk and join a monastery. I want to be with God now.”

According to the religious scholar Friedrich Heiler, “A monk should be an angel on earth living in constant remembrance...of the divine Majesty.” Elvis

seemed to know “the great Tao, that our true essential nature is the ‘primal spirit’ in which nature and all life are one.”

Artist’s Note: The word *tao* can simply mean *way*, *path* or *street*, and is seen on road signs throughout China and Japan. Look at the calligraphic character for *tao* depicted here. On the left is a pictograph of feet, on the right the pictograph of a

head. It seems to say “heading along a path, aware of the steps taken.” This leads to other meanings of the Tao: *truth*, *skill*, *method*, and *principle*. In addition, since the Chinese character for *tao* combines feet and head, it also suggests the idea of wholeness.

Using the English alphabet, it is difficult to represent how this word really sounds. Some scholars now prefer to spell it *Dào*. Since the older English spelling is more widely recognized, *Tao* is used in this book.

Elvis's music and his personality,
fusing styles of white country and black
rhythm and blues, permanently changed
the face of American popular culture.

President Jimmy Carter

The Tao doesn't take sides;
it gives birth to both
good and evil.

Lao Tzu

Know the white, yet keep to the black:
If you are a pattern for the world,
the Tao will be strong inside you
and there will be nothing you can't do.

Lao Tzu

2 OPPOSITES

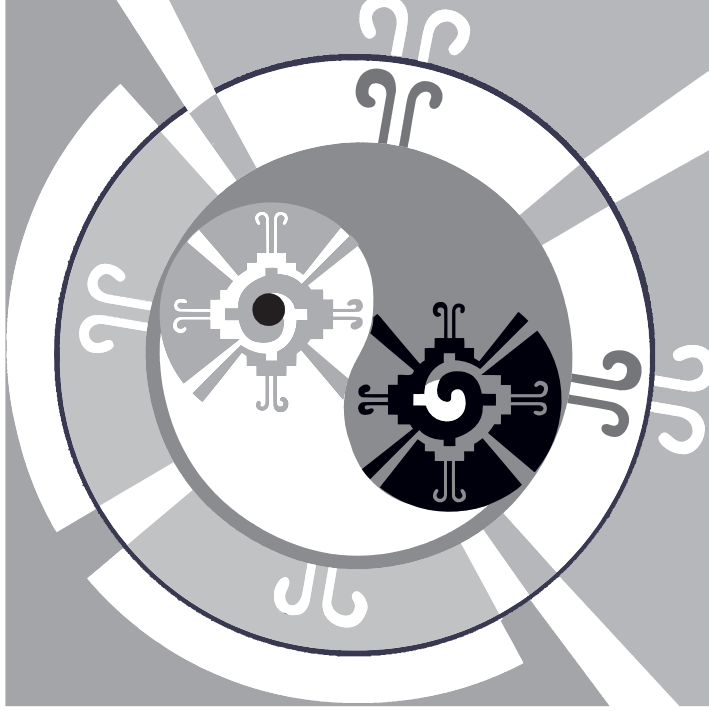
Know the male,
yet keep to the female:
receive the world in your arms.

Lao Tzu

Elvis would bounce back between
being incredibly insecure and
amazingly confident. And between
being selfish and magnanimous.

Marty Lacker

member of Elvis's entourage



The bright Way seems dim.
The forward Way seems backward.
The level Way seems bumpy.
Plain truth seems sullied.
The great square has no corners.

Lao Tzu

You accept the bad along with the good.

Elvis Presley

*It's not black, it's not white.
It's not pop, it's not country.*
Sam Phillips, owner of Sun Records,
commenting on "That's All Right [Mama],"
Elvis's first hit

*Elvis has a kindred spirit, someone who shared a secret with me—
almost a subversive attraction not just to black music but to black
culture, to an inchoate striving, a belief in the equality of man....
He was one of the most introspective human beings I've ever met.
He wasn't prejudiced. He didn't draw any lines.* **Sam Phillips**

DHR: Elvis was an integrator of opposites, hence always striving for wholeness. He preferred the yin (dark and female) over the yang (light and male), but he encompassed both. Elvis was an amalgam of good and evil. As his stepbrother Rick Stanley said, "The bottom line is that Elvis was predictably spontaneous — a total contradiction." Most likely Elvis would have agreed with the existentialist philosopher Martin Buber, who said, "Contradiction is given me to endure along with my life and also to fulfill; this endurance and fulfillment of the contradiction is the only meaning accessible to me."

Artist's Note: The yin-yang symbolizes the interaction of opposite energies in a continual motion that causes everything to happen. Here the yin-yang integrates with a symbol parallel in meaning. The Mayan *Hunab Ku* encompasses all

opposites and unites them in one God. Larry Geller told me, "Words, numbers and symbols were especially fascinating to [Elvis].... An interesting point here. All the hoopla surrounding 2012 began August 16, 1987, when the Harmonic Convergence

was kicked off, to end on December 21, 2012, the last date recorded in the Mayan calendar. Ten years to the date that Elvis died, the Harmonic Convergence was celebrated around the world — leading to the end date this coming December."

He who is in harmony with the Tao
is like a newborn child.
He is never disappointed;
thus his spirit never grows old.

Lao Tzu

Can you make your strength unitary
and achieve that softness
that makes you like a little child?

Lao Tzu

My bond with the child
[is] the bond of Tao.
Chuang Tzu



The great man does not
lose his child-heart.
Mencius
famous teacher of Confucianism
My total image of Elvis was as a child....
He was like a mirror in a way;
whatever you were looking for,
you were going to find in him....
He had all the intricacy of the very simple.
Marion Keisker
Sam Phillip's partner at Sun Records in Memphis

3 CHILD

Don't lose your ancient virtue.
Not losing your ancient virtue,
Be a newborn child again.

Lao Tzu

Elvis grew up a loved and precious child.
Peter Guralnick
author of
Last Train to Memphis

Elvis was always a little boy at heart.

Rick Stanley

From the time I was a kid, I knew something was going to happen to me. I didn't know exactly what, but it was a feeling that the future looked kinda bright.

Elvis Presley

DHR: Elvis always had a boyish charm, an innocence, and the simple spiritual characteristics of a child. As the Taoist scholar Wu Ch'eng said, "Those who possess the Way are like children. They age without growing old." During the last five years of Elvis's life, his girlfriend Linda Thompson, as well as Elvis's cousin Billy Smith and Billy's wife, Jo, cared for Elvis as "a small child," and they often spoke "baby talk to him."

Artist's Note: Carrying forward the symbolism of opposites from the previous chapter, in this and the next three chapters ("Mother," "Father" and "Family & Friends") I depict Chinese lions.

Traditionally such lions are presented in a pair: male and female again representing yin and yang. The male has a ball under his right front paw, and the female which hovers over a cub is shown here.

Elvis seemed to have a natural affinity for lions, which in Western idiom is the "king of the beasts."

4 MOTHER

I have the heart of a fool:
 so confused, so dark,
 I alone am different from all men:
 But I consider it worthy
 to seek nourishment from the Mother.
 Lao Tzu

Losing my mother
 was like losing a best friend,
 a companion, someone to talk to.
 Elvis Presley



Who knows the mother
 understands the child.
 Who understands the child
 keeps the mother safe.
 Lao Tzu

Children
 are no different
 from their mother.
 Li Hsi-chai
 Taoist master

The female is the mother.
 All creatures revere
 their mother.
 Ts'ao Tao-ch'ung
 Taoist nun

People are born when they receive breath.
 Breath is their mother. And spirit dwells in their breath.
 When children care for their mother, their breaths
 become one and their spirits become still.
 Tung Ssu-ching Taoist master

He was a mama's boy.
Barbara Pittman
singer with Sun Records

Elvis was not a "mama's boy." Nothing could have been further from the truth. He was a loving, devoted son, trying to make up for the hardships his parents had suffered in their lives.

June Juanico
an early love of Elvis

I love you so much.
I lived my whole life for you.
Oh, God, everything I have is gone.
Elvis Presley
words wailed at his mother's burial

DHR: Elvis had a special bond with his mother. When his mother died, Elvis's cousin Billy Smith said, "He was white as a sheet. He started to sob this kind of unearthly sound." Later his stepbrother, Rick Stanley, said, "Elvis never really got over his mother's death." Nearly all the women in his life, but particularly Priscilla, Linda Thompson, and Ginger Alden, his last girlfriend, had to mother him as well as be his lover. Five months before he died, Elvis dreamed that Ginger turned into his mother. In his dream his mother mounts Sun, one of Elvis's horses, bareback and says, "Son, our love is eternal, I'll never do anything to hurt you, you know that, never. No matter what, our love for each other is unconditional." As she rides off she becomes Ginger again, and she and Sun fly into the sky and clouds, and all Elvis hears is "I'll never leave, I'll never leave you."

Artist's Note: On August 21, 1957, Elvis purchased a large pair of imported marble lions to frame the front steps at Graceland, his home in Memphis, Tennessee. Just as at Graceland, great stone lions

often guard Asian buildings. According to Feng Shui, the ancient art of auspicious spaces, the female lion protects those inside the building, while the male guards the structure itself.

The female with her cub represents the cycle of life. In an ancient Chinese legend, the lioness produces milk from her paws, so the lion cub here is being suckled by its mother.



FATHER

And how shall you rise beyond
your days and nights unless you
break the chains which you
at the dawn of your understanding
have fastened around your noon hour?
Kahlil Gibran

The wise look at the patterns [of father],
but do not feel confined by them.
Deng Ming-Dao

When a hideous man becomes a father
And a son is born to him
In the middle of the night
He trembles and lights a lamp

And runs to look in anguish
On that child's face
To see whom he resembles.
Chuang Tzu

No one understands
a child better
than its father.
Kuan-tzu
Taoist prime minister

When people are simple
and their lives are good,
they fear authority.
Wang P'ang
Taoist scholar

Elvis loved his father. The problem was Vernon,
not Elvis. Early on, Vernon was basically jealous of
Elvis. As the years went by, the normal father-son
roles reversed. Elvis became the provider.

Marty Lacker

The Colonel is almost like a daddy to me
when I'm away from home.
Elvis Presley

I picked up on Elvis's attitude toward Vernon. I didn't particularly care for him either. I thought he was pretty selfish and just along for the ride. I don't think he was any kind of a father for Elvis. There seemed to be a big vacuum there.

Ann Finch
friend of Elvis's, 1960-62

I made my father retire. There isn't much sense in him working because I can make more in a day than he can make in a year.

Elvis Presley
at age twenty-one, in 1956

DHR: While Elvis loved his father, he harbored ambivalent feelings toward him. When Elvis was just three, Vernon was imprisoned for forgery. Elvis never overcame a feeling of abandonment. This feeling had set up a negative father complex that was later projected onto his manager Colonel Tom Parker, who was neither a real colonel nor a good father figure. Despite being a shady character who took up to half (and probably more) of Elvis's earnings, the Colonel propelled Elvis from being a successful regional singer to a national and international superstar. In a noteworthy reflection, Jung maintained that in men, having a positive relationship with their fathers "very often produces a certain credibility with regard to authority and a distinct willingness to bow down before all spiritual dogmas and values." This may be, in part, why Elvis was such a rebel and on his own, unique spiritual quest.

Artist's Note: Los Angeles designer Bill Belew first designed Elvis's jumpsuits to allow freedom for his karate-style moves. Bold belts, often with metal lion heads, became a regular embellishment. In an October, 1982 *Country Rhythms* interview,

Belew explained that Elvis "bought a belt that he liked very much, and we...duplicated that belt and kept embellishing it..."

In Eastern symbolism, the lion is a symbol of power and good fortune. The ball under the male lion's paw represents

a traditional form of embroidered ball and may be decorated in a great variety of ways. It often has a design of interlocking circles, which is considered sacred in many cultures, East and West. One name for this symbol is the Flower of Life.

6 FAMILY & FRIENDS

*We cannot be friends
without trust.*
Deng Ming-Dao

*The first practice of indiscriminating virtue:
take care of those who are deserving; also,
and equally, take care of those who are not.*
Lao Tzu

*Honor your parents, love your children,
help your brothers and sisters,
be faithful to your friends,
care for your mate with devotion.*
Lao Tzu

*Family and Friends:
mysterious cement of the soul.*
Robert Blair
English poet

*Elvis treated me better and with more
respect than anyone else I had ever met.
He would take the time.
He would listen intently....
Anything I would ask for,
he'd give it to me.
Mack Gurley
longstanding friend,
who picked up Elvis hitchhiking in 1950*



*When you think of others
before yourself,
that is Tao.*
Deng Ming-Dao

*Elvis was an enormously loving parent.... Elvis gave [Lisa Marie]...unequivocal love....
He had no hesitation, no qualms about saying, "Your daddy loves you so much," and he would
get tears in his eyes telling her. He would laugh with her. He was very physically demon-
strative in his affection, which is also very important. She knew that her daddy adored her.
Linda Thompson, Elvis's steady girlfriend, 1972-1976*

I was raised in a pretty decent home and everything. My folks always made me behave whether I wanted to or not. I've always had a kind of a common life; we never had any luxuries, but we were never real hungry, you know. Now my folks are just real proud, just like I am. Elvis Presley

We were all together so much...Elvis...was the center of everything that went on.... It was family, we all had our one-on-one relationships with Elvis, and everybody thought that was the special relationship. Elvis had a spiritual charisma about him that made you feel like he was your best friend, and you could always depend on him. Jerry Schilling of the Memphis Mafia, Elvis's entourage

DHR: Elvis was very trusting, and based on the work of the developmental psychologist Erik Erikson, trust develops in the first two years of life when there is a good mother-infant bond. Erikson links trust to hope and faith as well as to being true and loyal with family and friends. Elvis loved and revered his parents, daughter, extended family, entourage, and many friends (girlfriends and ex-wife included).

Elvis's positive relationship with his mother, according to Jung, gave him "a great capacity for friendship, which often creates ties of astonishing tenderness between men and may even rescue friendships between the sexes from the limbo of the impossible."

Artist's Note: Initially I intended to illustrate "Family & Friends" with a totem pole because Elvis had Native American ancestry and he wore a Totem jumpsuit. The word *totem* comes from an Ojibwe word meaning *his kinship group*. Then I learned

that Elvis's great-great grandmother was full-blooded Cherokee, a tribe that does not have a tradition of constructing totem poles. I also learned from Larry Geller that "In all [my] years with Elvis, he rarely mentioned or took an interest in his Cherokee

ancestry. All the books and other sources were certainly available, but he just never pursued it. When it came to Judaism, Christianity, and Eastern mythology, mysticism and religion he dove in." Even so, Native imagery turns up in his jumpsuit designs.

7 SPIRIT, SOUL & RELIGION

The world is a spiritual thing.
Lao Tzu

You have walked among us
as a spirit.
Kahlil Gibran



Everything we do is Tao.
Spirituality is...all around us and in us.
Deng Ming-Dao

To arrive at the unshakable, you must befriend the Tao....
Simply see that you are at the center of the universe, and
accept all things and beings as parts of your infinite body.
Lao Tzu

Can you educate your soul
so that it encompasses the One?
Lao Tzu

Elvis is becoming a religion unto himself....The Church of the Risen
Elvis...and...The First Presbyterian Church.... They might as well just
build the Graceland convent.
Lamar Fike, member of Elvis's entourage

*The Gospel of Elvis is meant to teach the religion of Elvis: Elvisism.... God split the Othermind into two (the goddess of sleep, to draw man into dark slumber, and the god of wakefulness, to excite man into light and action), similar to Lao Tzu's Taoist creation story of the universe splitting into the first duality, yin and yang. Louie Ludwig, author of *The Gospel of Elvis**

I always knew there was a truth to my religion. Somehow I never lost faith in God.

Elvis Presley

Elvis was pure soul — pure soul, an astute human being.

Larry Geller

DHR: Elvis's close bond with his mother may have predisposed him to spirit, soul, and religion. As Elvis's friend Ann Finch said: "Elvis often spoke of his mother with great love and affection. He was very spiritual and expressed it through music. Elvis preferred gospel music, as did his mother. Often our time together was spent with Elvis at the piano singing gospel songs."

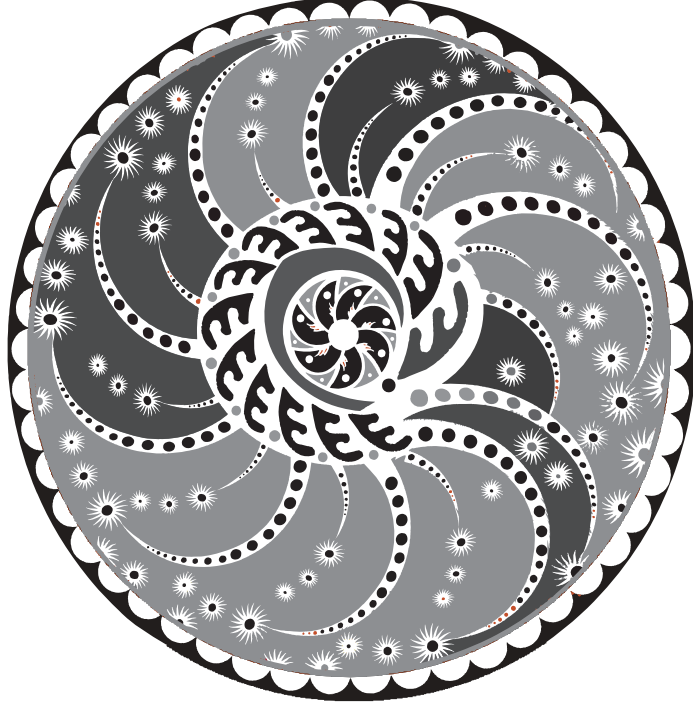
In commenting on the effects of a man's strong relationship with his mother, Jung said, "Often he is endowed with a wealth of religious feelings, which help to bring the *ecclesia spiritualis* into reality; and a spiritual receptivity, which makes him responsive to revelation." Clearly Elvis's spirit and soul were connected to his mother and their love of gospel music.

Artist's Note: Elvis attended Pentecostal services with his birth family. In a quest to deepen his experience of God, Elvis studied other spiritual traditions. Eagerly reading a wide variety of esoteric literature, he was drawn to symbols from various

traditions, including the ankh. When Chris Pfaffman Coffey met Elvis for the second time, she was wearing a new pair of earrings: "Elvis walked in and silently took a necklace from around his neck and placed it around hers.... Later, when she removed

the earrings" there, in both necklace and earrings, was the ankh! Chris later learned the Egyptian symbol is called the "key of eternal life" and felt this confirmed her "spiritual connection...with Elvis."
(*Leaves of Elvis' Garden*, Larry Geller)

8 LOVE



Much have we loved you....
And ever has it been
that love knows not its own depth
until the hour of separation.
Kahlil Gibran

Elvis was sweet.
I don't know what it was
about that boy, but you could
just love him to death.
Christine Roberts Presley
great aunt

Love your life. Trust the Tao.
Make love with the invisible subtle
origin of the universe,
and you will give yourself
everything you need. Lao Tzu

Through love
one may be courageous.
Lao Tzu

Kindness in giving creates love.
Lao Tzu

The deeper the love
The higher the cost.
Lao Tzu

Everyone knew Elvis wasn't perfect, but they loved him
for his music and for who he was. I loved him for the love
he had given me.
Rick Stanley

Elvis had a great capacity for love.
Linda Thompson

My moment of glory is being on that stage and singing and feeling all the love the audience sends to me. It's a completed circle of love we send each other. It's beyond any mortal high.
Elvis Presley

DHR: Elvis's love was expressed often and in profound and focused ways. He deeply loved his mother, Gladys, whose middle name was Love. Elvis loved many women; they loved him in return, and for quite a number, the love was everlasting.

Of course, his wife, Priscilla, gave birth to the major love of his life. Elvis said, "My love for Lisa Marie comes first: she's number one."

Of his special love relationship with his audience Elvis said, "It's like a surge of electricity going through you. It's almost like making love, but it's even stronger than that.... Sometimes I think my heart is going to explode."

Although he loved intensely and passionately, tragically he was not able to ward off love's twin, strife, best described by Kahlil Gibran, "For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you."

America, with its excessive divorce rate,

also has a problem with love, often confusing it with sexuality and allowing strife to flourish. While *eros* is important, *philos*, or friendship, is the bridge to *agape*, a deep spiritual love. This quote from Henry David Thoreau captures what happened to America's king and how Elvis still lives:

All that a man has to say or do that can possibly concern mankind is, in some shape or other, to tell the story of his love — and to sing; and if he is fortunate and keeps alive, he will be forever in love.

Artist's Note: Celebrating Elvis's loving spirit, I looked to his Fireworks jumpsuit.

Butch Polston told me how Liberace, the showman pianist, mentored Elvis towards the glitteringly-studded jumpsuits that became his signature. Liberace (who,

encrusted with big jewelry, teased women in his audience about their baubles, calling them "starter kits"), once loaned young Elvis one of his flashy jackets saying, "They want something more for their money than what they paid for." Elvis

listened, but designer Bill Belew started slowly, resisting rhinestones, to maintain a sense of Elvis's masculinity. Elvis eventually began wearing expensive jewelry, often generously flung into his audience along with scarves, belts and capes.

9 MUSIC & SONG

Music is the mediator between
the spiritual and the sensual life.
Beethoven

Elvis sang songs that were popular
and a lot of the old blues-type songs;
he did some of the old spirituals, too.
Right from the start it was as if he
had a power over people; it was like
they were transformed.
Dixie Locke
Elvis's girlfriend, 1954



A good artist lets his intuition
lead him wherever it wants.
Lao Tzu

Hold up the Great Image
and the world will come
and be beyond harm:
safe, serene and at one.

Fine food and song detain
passing guests
when the Tao speaks.
Lao Tzu

When the center is genuine
and that is reflected
in the emotions,
there is music.
Chuang Tzu

Performed with the harmony of yin and yang,
Illuminated with the brightness
of the sun and moon.
Performed with notes that would not weary
And that were tuned to a scale of spontaneity.
Chuang Tzu

He was really a natural. When Elvis was performing,
everyone had the same basic reaction. It was almost
spontaneous ... seeing people get religion.
Tom Perryman, promoter and booking agent, regarding
early Elvis performances on Louisiana Hayride in Shreveport

There was a floating sense of inner harmony mixed with a ferocious hunger, a desperate striving linked to a pure outpouring of joy, that seemed to just tumble out of the music. It was the very attainment of art and passion, the natural beauty of the instinctive soul.

Peter Guralnick, *Last Train to Memphis*
commenting on Elvis's recording of "Mystery Train"

My voice is God's will, not mine.

Elvis Presley

DHR: Elvis expressed soul in his songs, and he felt that his purpose in life was to give voice to the power of the Lord. So, in a real sense, he knew that he was expressing the Divine Mystery, or Tao. Elvis put it this way: "I feel God and His goodness, and I believe I can express His love for us in music."

Rabindranath Tagore, India's inspired Nobel Laureate poet, expressed a sentiment about the bliss of singing that was actualized by Elvis: "I forget myself and call Thee friend who art my Lord." Listening to Elvis's rendering of "How Great Thou Art," it is clear that Elvis and Tagore were on the same wavelength.

Artist's Note: This image contains musical phrases from "How Great Thou Art," a Christian hymn that takes its tune from a Swedish folk song, and its words from a poem by Swedish author Carl Gustav Boberg. Elvis sings gospel songs on *How*

Great Thou Art, his twenty-eighth album. Larry Geller describes in *Leaves of Elvis' Garden* how he and Elvis prepared in meditation for the recording session of this album. After the silence Elvis spoke, "I can remember when I first wanted to

sing. I was about three years old, and I was sitting on my mom's lap in church, and I felt this sudden urge to run up and sing with the choir... I ran up before anyone could stop me. All I ever wanted to do was sing for people and make them happy."

Simple grace...
gently penetrating.
I Ching

The man [of] Tao
Acts without impediment,
Yet he does not know himself!
Chuang Tzu
To be kind [and] gentle.

Make your mood gentle and your mind comfortable,
then enter into quietude.
Tung-pin Lu
author of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*:
A Chinese Book of Life

10 GRACE & GENTLENESS

With gentleness and goodness,
you will win their hearts.
I Ching

His small child's voice carries a quavering note of yearning — other children get up and do letter-perfect recitals, big burly men flail on their beat-up guitars, but Elvis cradles his like a bird. Peter Guralnick, *Last Train to Memphis* commenting on Elvis performing when he was a child

Gentleness (a cardinal virtue)
manifests as kindness,
consideration for others, and sensitivity
to spiritual truth.
Lao Tzu

Elvis was a gentle boy. [One time] I asked him to go hunting with me, but when he answered, "Daddy, I don't want to kill birds," I didn't try to persuade him to go against his feelings.
Vernon Presley



*Elvis never had formal dance training ...but he had that natural rhythm....
He couldn't seem to make a mistake; even if it was wrong, it was right.*

*Janice Pennington
an Elvis fan who became a good friend,
referring to his dancing in Jailhouse Rock*

*All good flows through grace.
Elvis Presley*

DHR: When Elvis bought his home, Graceland, he joined spirit (Father Sky) with land (Mother Earth). From the beginning Elvis was a shy and gentle soul. Many considered him a gentleman. He exhibited grace in his movements and in song. Elvis embodied Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's reflection: "One feels it a grace to be able to give oneself up to music, to a tone, to a song. The wave of a song carries the soul to heights which utterable meanings can never reach."

Hexagram 14 (of the *I Ching*), having to do with supreme success, seems to capture the Tao of Elvis:

Possession in great measure is determined by fate and accords with the time, which is favorable—a time of strength within, clarity and culture without. Power is expressing itself in a graceful and controlled way. This brings supreme success and wealth.

Artist's Note: What is more gentle or graceful than a snowflake? Elvis wore various versions of the White Snowflake jumpsuit in the early 1970s. By 1980, there were still only a handful of Elvis tribute artists worldwide. It was difficult for impersona-

tors to replicate Elvis's expensive costumes. That year a young carpenter from Indiana took his family to Graceland with four homemade jumpsuits he'd made just for the love of Elvis. "Too poor to pay attention," they were astonished when a professional

tribute artist offered them \$2,000 for all four suits. Over the following years the word got out, and Butch and Kim Polston, finally realizing they were in business, formed B&K Enterprises, which has made the worldwide boom in Elvis tribute artists possible.

DARKNESS, SORROW & SADNESS

The brightest path
seems dark.
Lao Tzu

Where there is sorrow,
there is holy ground.
Oscar Wilde

*The birth of a man
is the birth of his sorrow.*
Chuang Tzu

*The one we call dark
the dark beyond dark
the door to all beginnings.*
Lao Tzu

*Inside, there is a creature:
it's distant and dark.
But inside there is an essence,
an essence fundamentally real,
and inside there is a heart.* Lao Tzu



*I've made a study of Marlon Brando, ... poor Jimmy Dean,
...[and] myself, and I know why girls... go for us.
We're sullen, we're broodin', we're something of a menace.*
Elvis Presley

*[Elvis was] a sad, shy...boy.
Kenneth Holditch
childhood classmate*

*Elvis always seemed to me
to be very, very sad.*
Ann Finch

*I felt sorry for Elvis because he didn't enjoy life
the way he should. He stayed indoors all the time.*
Muhammad Ali
*a lifelong fan,
commenting on Elvis's sadness*

DHR: Elvis was at times full of sadness and sorrow. He preferred living in dark cave-like rooms. Elvis's bedroom was windowless, and his hotel rooms were sealed so that no light could seep in. In Elvis's darkness, however, he realized many dreams and fulfilled much of his potential. As Taoist scholar Red Pine (Bill Porter) said:

The Tao, the dark... the essence, the Way; and Te, the light... the spirit, Virtue. ...The dark gives the light a place to shine. The light allows us to see the dark. But too much light blinds. Lao Tzu saw everyone chasing the light and hastening their own destruction. He encouraged people to choose the dark instead of the light, less instead of more, weakness instead of strength, inaction instead of action. What would be simpler?

Sadly, in the last years of Elvis's life, when he needed light, his drug addiction drowned him in total darkness. Neverthe-

less, on some deep level Elvis resonated with Lao Tzu's saying:

*The Tao is dark and unfathomable.
How can it make [him] radiant?
Because [he] lets it.*

Meaningfully, however, Elvis was bathed in a brilliant holy light as the curtain was coming down on his earthly existence.

Artist's Note: Frequently depicted in Native American art particularly from the northwest, the Thunderbird represents the natural forces of thunder and lightning, and was believed to protect humans by fighting evil spirits. (Could these be the evil spirits of

sorrow and sadness?) When Elvis spread his wings wearing the Thunderbird jumpsuit, his chest and the cape on his back displayed elaborate visions of the mythical bird. Gene Doucette, who most often embroidered Elvis's jumpsuits, never met Elvis but enjoyed

surprising him with a wide variety of designs. According to Butch Polston, Doucette (who now embroiders Polston's reproduction jumpsuits) is of Canadian Native American extraction, which is why quite a number of the jumpsuits have Native themes.

12 LIGHT, FIRE & PASSION

The passions are like fire,
useful in a thousand ways
and dangerous only in one,
through their excess.
Christian Bovee
American author

Send me some light—
I need it bad.
Elvis Presley
he said this prayer
before performances



The light itself is the creative.
Tung-pin Lü

*In the deep dark
he alone sees light.*
Chuang Tzu

In passion we see the end.
Lao Tzu

*Where the fountains of passion
Lie deep,
The heavenly springs
Are soon dry.*
Chuang Tzu

*He's just a great big, beautiful hunk of forbidden fruit.
a female student of Mae Axton's,
who was a teacher and early promoter of Elvis in Florida*

*Music ignited a fiery pent-up passion inside Elvis and inside me.
It was an odd, embarrassing, funny, inspiring, and wonderful sensation.*

*Ann-Margret
Elvis's leading lady
in the movie *Viva Las Vegas**

*I'm afraid I'll go out like a light,
just like I came on.*

Elvis Presley

DHR: Elvis was passionate — on fire — and a light to many. But his light dimmed after his mother died, and darkness set in following his divorce. Almost prophetically Wang Tao's statement rings true: "Light does not come from light, but from dark."

After Elvis made out his will in early March, 1977, he was shaken by a dream in which he saw "The face of God." It manifested itself in the form of "a white light so bright" he almost couldn't look at it.

Artist's Note: Elvis practiced the Japanese martial art of karate. A black belt by achievement, Elvis gained honorary degrees in his later years, up to an eighth-degree black belt. When practicing in Master Kang Rhee's studio, Elvis was

known as "Tiger." In 1974, Elvis wore the Mad Tiger jumpsuit. That embroidered tiger, like the tiger on this page, had passionately outstretched forelegs. This tiger, like most of the artwork for this volume, is inspired by Chinese paper-cutting designs.

To the Chinese, the tiger represents many strong attributes: rebellious, vigorous, passionate, stimulating, daring, impulsive, sincere, affectionate, humanitarian, and generous. Elvis seems to have chosen a pseudonym that suited him well.

*Your youth has given us
dreams to dream.*

Kahlil Gibran

*Life is like a dream,...
so there is no good
in taking it too seriously.*

Deng Ming-Dao

*Dreams are the roaming of
the spirit.*

Tung-pin Lü

13 DREAMS

*By and by, there will be
a great awakening;
then we will know that this
is all a great dream.*

Chuang Tzu

*My whole life is a dream.
I hope I never wake up.*

Elvis Presley



*Once upon a time, I, Chuang Tzu,
dreamed I was a butterfly flying happily here
and there, enjoying life without knowing who
I was. Suddenly, I woke up and I was indeed
Chuang Tzu. Did Chuang Tzu dream he was a
butterfly, or did the butterfly dream he was
Chuang Tzu? There must be some distinction
between Chuang Tzu and the butterfly.
This is a case of transformation.*

Chuang Tzu

*My life's a fairy tale.
It's like a dream.
And I'm living it.*

Elvis Presley

*I was running and jumping over tall buildings—
like I was Superman or something.*

Elvis Presley
recounting a dream

*It's like Elvis came along and whispered a dream in
everybody's ear, and then we all dreamed about it somehow.*

Bruce Springsteen

DHR: Elvis sought meaning in everything; particularly his dreams. A couple of years before he died, Elvis reported an important dream, which Larry Geller recorded:

Elvis and Lisa Marie are somewhere in the Holy Land following Armageddon. There's destruction everywhere, and they're traveling around in a large armored vehicle, like a tank. Typically, Elvis's armored vehicle is being driven by a chauffeur. Lisa begins crying. Elvis looks at her and says, "Don't worry honey. Don't worry honey. Nothing's going to happen to your daddy. There's always going to be an Elvis."

Unlike many of his dreams, this wasn't one Elvis had to ponder long to understand. In his own mind, outside of his very self, there was *another* Elvis.

C.G.Jung said about dreaming that "it shows the inner truth and reality of the

person as it really is. Not as he conjectures it to be, and not as he would like it to be, but as *it is*."

Elvis seemed to realize that he would live on as an archetypal Elvis.

Artist's Note: Elvis Aron Presley dreamed Elvis into being. Then the world looked at the man and continued the dream. The world is still dreaming of Elvis.

The more he does for others,
The greater his existence.
The more he gives to others,
The greater his abundance.

Lao Tzu

He gives his wealth to the poor and uses his virtue
to teach the unwise. And like the sun or moon,
he never stops shining.

Ho-shang Kung

Taoist master

He is humane who has long been generous
with valuable goods to make people happy,
so that they enjoy their lives.

Lao Tzu

14 GIVING & GENEROSITY

When first one considers others
besides oneself, spirituality arrives.
Deng Ming-Dao
You're giving when
you don't know you're giving.
Elvis Presley



See first that you yourself
deserve to be a giver,
and an instrument of giving.

Kahlil Gibran

Elvis was always giving someone something.
Sonny West
member of Elvis's entourage

Elvis was the most generous of men.
Linda Thompson

*I'm so lucky to be in the position to give.
It's really a gift to give.*
Elvis Presley

DHR: Elvis's generous and giving nature is well documented. Elvis's dentist and friend, Dr Lester Hofman, explained, "Elvis had a special way with people, and he was always giving you gifts."

Elvis gave his friendship to Dr Hofman and his wife, Sterling. He also gave them a new car and an organ, both of which they keep in mint condition. Sterling also said that Elvis taught her yoga — she currently leads a yoga group of multiple sclerosis patients — and that he gave her a signed book on yoga, which she keeps in a safety deposit box.

Elvis gave tens of millions of dollars to local and national religious and social charities.

On a more personal note, when Jerry Schilling, one of the Memphis Mafia, told Elvis of his interracial marriage to Myrna Smith, of the Sweet Inspirations, Elvis responded with emotional support — and

bought them a new home. Elvis had first met Jerry in 1954, as a twelve-year-old filling in for a team that needed an extra player in a touch football game. At the official housewarming, Elvis said, "I know I drove all those other guys [the other members of the Mafia] crazy buying you this house, but your mother died when you were a year old, and you never had a home, and I wanted to be the one to give it to you."

Artist's Note: Elvis jumpsuits and the Chinese zodiac both feature a menagerie of animals. The twelve zodiac animals are part of a system for understanding personality according to year of birth. Many animals have animated Elvis's jumpsuits. Find-

ing one to represent any given chapter's theme has been an interesting exploration in animal symbolism (not just Chinese).

Mammals make milk for their children, yet domestic cows continually give milk to nourish humans. In Celtic mythology, the

bull offers a lesson about generosity: in order for wealth to manifest in our world, wealth must be first in the human heart and soul.

Elvis had red, white and black Matador jumpsuits with capes that Elvis flourished to attract, not a bull, but the audience.

15 ALONE & LONELINESS

Other people are excited,
as though they were at a parade.
I alone don't care.
Lao Tzu

To live the life of Tao
is a lonely life.
Deng Ming-Dao



As soon as you are really alone
you are with God.
Thomas Merton

All spirituality begins and ends
with the self.
Deng Ming-Dao

What men hate is forlornness, loneliness,
being a trifle. And yet,
princes and kings choose
these to describe themselves. Lao Tzu

Elvis was an intensely lonely person,
so alone with his fame and his thoughts.
Bill Browder
friend of Elvis

I get lonesome right in the
middle of a crowd.
Elvis Presley

Elvis was a loner.
He liked people, but he was quiet.
Elois Bedford
Elvis's first girlfriend,
second through fifth grades

People think I'm lonely,
but I love that lonesome
feelin'.
Elvis Presley

DHR: The word *alone* derives from *all One* and can mean *being close to God*. It's fitting that, being a religious person, Elvis liked to be alone. He was also sad and sometimes lonely. As Elvis once said, "I swear to God, no one knows how lonely I get. And how empty I feel." But it was this very emptiness that allowed Elvis to contact "Spirit." Unable to sustain it, however, Elvis filled the emptiness with drugs, to dull and eventually escape the pain from the fame of his false self.

This relates to John Lennon's theory about what killed Elvis: "The king is always killed by his courtiers. He is overfed, overindulged, overdrunk to keep him tied to the throne. Most people in the position never wake up."

Artist's Note: Elvis's Mermaid suit was a leather two-piece, decorated with a blue-garbed female on the back. The mermaid symbolizes deep loneliness and aloneness in Hans Christian Andersen's story, "The Little Mermaid." A young mermaid rescues

a drowning sailor. Her love for the sailor drives her out of her family's water-bound community to grow beyond it: she becomes a human with a soul. Loneliness comes not only because her love is not requited. The Mermaid belongs neither in

the sea nor on dry land because the Sea Witch grants her wish for painful new legs.

On a painful journey created by the choices she alone has made, what she gains in the end is an eternal soul. Might this have been Elvis's story as well?

16 TWINNING & PAIRING

[Tao] causes being and non-being
But is neither being nor non-being.
Chuang Tzu

They say when one twin dies,
the other grows with all
the qualities of the other, too.
If I did, I'm lucky.
Elvis Presley
referring to the death of his twin,
Jesse Garon, at birth



Whether laughing
or crying
all I hear is an echo.
Soen Nakagawa
Zen master

The existence of things, the difficulty of affairs, the
size of forms, the magnitude of power, the pitch and
clarity of sound, the sequence of position, all involve
contrasting pairs. When one is present, both are present.
When one is absent, both are absent. Wu Cheng

The coexistence of have and have not
The coproduction of hard and easy
The codependence of high and low
The correspondence of note and noise
The coordination of first and last is endless. Lao Tzu

So everything we feel of the world is always the Tao of two,
or to put it another way, the relative Tao.
And the relative, by definition,
cannot be the absolute One.
Deng Ming-Dao

[At] the funeral when Elvis's uncle died...there sat Elvis and Priscilla,
looking like twins! Elvis had blue eyes; Priscilla had blue eyes. Elvis
had his hair dyed coal-black; Priscilla had her hair dyed coal-black.
Geraldine Kyle
good friend of Elvis's stepmother, Dee Stanley

*As Elvis's life grew larger and larger... Jesse
(his dead twin brother) remained a constant.
The shadow that would forever haunt him.*

Peter Whitmer
*author of *The Inner Elvis**

*I dreamed that you were my twin, and you let me come out first—but while
you were saving me by letting me be born first you suffocated to death.*

Elvis Presley
*in 1975 Elvis told Linda Thompson
about this dream in which she was his twin, who died*

DHR: The loss at birth of Jesse Garon, Elvis's twin brother, represented something positive (empathy, love and joy) and negative (ache, emptiness and sorrow). It resulted in over-protectiveness by his mother. That is, Elvis was paired with her, particularly early on in his life, when his father was away. This was a kind of twinning that would continue with other women before—and especially after—his mother's death.

Carrying the tension of the opposites and evolving to a higher level allows for great creativity. Elvis's songs served this purpose, and when singing, he was able to get it together and be at peace. In Elvis's twinning we can see both integration and disintegration, happiness and unhappiness, as well as success and failure.

Artist's Note: As I write, the design drawing that Gene Doucette made for Elvis's Egyptian or Prehistoric Bird jumpsuit is offered for purchase at Jordan's Elvis World. The sketch depicts a stylized, svelte Elvis with two great

birds, in profile, crossing his chest and turning their heads to face each other.

On the completed jumpsuit the birds' bodies do not cross, but their heads are now adorned with wild crests of splayed feathers.

These birds, with breasts each facing in its own direction, but whose eyes turn back to lock on each other, seem a perfect symbol of Elvis's lifelong connection to his twin.

Thus also is the Man of [Tao]: he encompasses the One
and sets an example to the world. He does not want to
shine; therefore will he be enlightened. He does not want
to be anything for himself; therefore he becomes resplendent.
He does not lay claim to glory; therefore he accomplishes works.

Lao Tzu

Whoever knows himself is wise. Whoever conquers
himself is strong. Whoever asserts himself has
will-power. Whoever is self-sufficient is rich.
Whoever does not lose his place [endures].
Whoever does not perish in death lives. Lao Tzu

17 MAN OF TAO

The Man of [Tao] disregards himself,
and his Self is increased.
He gives himself away and his Self
is preserved.

Lao Tzu

Man, all I did is what came natural;
I guess if you have a dirty ol' mind,
that's exactly what
you're gonna see in others.

Elvis Presley

All those who follow Tao
become eccentric.

Deng Ming-Dao



Thus also is the Man of [Tao]: he is genuine
he sets an example without
cutting others down to size;
he is conscientious
without being hurtful;

Lao Tzu

[Tao] was just so different; all the other guys were like replicas of their
dads.... I think he knew he was different. I knew the first time I met him
that he was not like other people.... He was not a phony, he was not a put-
on, he was not a show-off, and once you were around him long enough to
see him be himself, not just act the clown, anyone could see his real self;
you could see his sweetness, you could see the humility. Dixie Locke

Elvis came in to make a record one Saturday.... Elvis had to wait awhile..., but...was very polite.... I asked him what kind of singer he was. He told me he sang all kinds of songs. I asked him, "Well, who do you sound like?" He said, "I don't sound like nobody." We got all set up...and he recorded two songs: "That's When Your Heartaches Begin" and "My Happiness," and something struck me about him. **Marion Keisker**

Elvis's love for people was his greatest quality.
He tried to help everyone....
He could have anything,
and he shared it beautifully.
 Mack Gurley

DHR: Elvis was a man of Tao: singular, natural, spiritual, kind, and humble. All these traits and more were described by one of Elvis's co-stars in *Wild in the Country*, Millie Perkins, who said: "Elvis... was a man ... who truly cared about people. He was this very humble person ... with a refined heart and soul.... The essence of Elvis was as fine a person as I've ever met."

In some way, through the ecstasy and the agony of fame, the profound loss of his mother, the pain of divorce, and the madness of drug addiction, Elvis embodied the Tao. Perhaps Wu Ch'eng was right to ask and answer the basic question that clearly pertained to Elvis: "Lao Tzu extols simplemindedness and weakness over wisdom and strength. Why then does he also extol wisdom and strength? Wisdom and strength are for dealing with the inside. Simplemindedness and weakness are for dealing with the outside."

Artist's Note: When, for this chapter, I was contemplating the Chinese calligraphic characters of *man* and of *Tao*, I saw that, one on top of the other, they so easily formed a human figure —

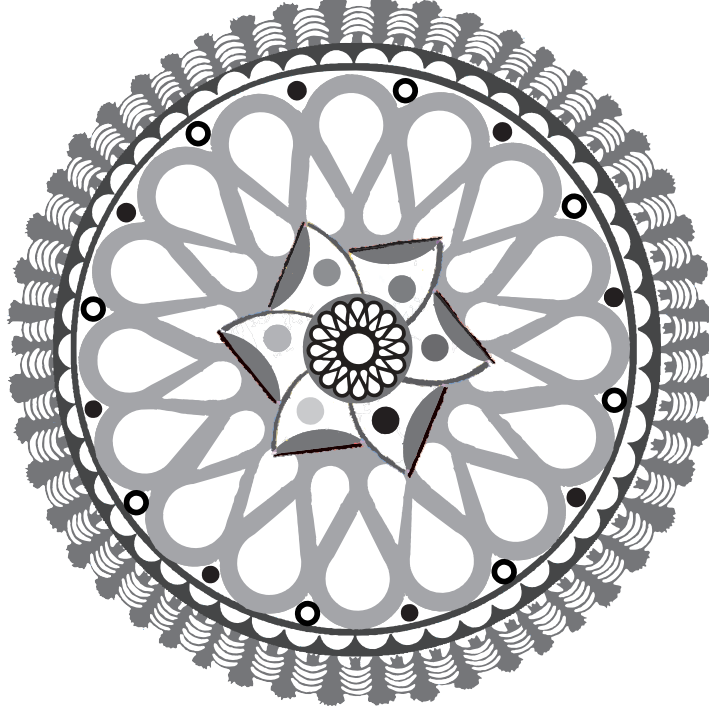
the "Man of Tao."
(My apologies to scholars of the Chinese language.)

18 INNOCENCE & PLAY

*Verily the ocean laughs always
with the innocent.*
Kahlil Gibran

*In innocence
we see the beginning.*
Lao Tzu

*Innocence is inside us,
and we need to go inside to find it.
Those who follow Tao emphasize
the concept of returning [to it].*
Deng Ming-Dao



*Innocence does not need to make efforts.
Innocence does not need to belong to groups.
Innocence does not need to be anything.
Innocence is inherently pure,
and that inherent purity is Tao.*
Deng Ming-Dao

*Elvis didn't radiate purity, yet something
about his innocence has always [shone]
through. And I believe that is because
he was an honest man who sincerely
cared about those he loved and about
those who loved him.*
Larry Geller

*It didn't matter what he did. He would act silly or say some
thing silly—get the words wrong or make up words. He just couldn't do any-
thing wrong. But it was because ... he really loved his audience. He loved his
fans more than anybody I've ever seen.*
Wanda Jackson
a singer who traveled with Elvis

*Playing is as precious as jade and
helps us find our way back to the
beginning—the source.*
Deng Ming-Dao

Elvis looked like an innocent little boy.
June Juanico

*Elvis was always real hyper. He would run and play so hard,
he'd just wear himself out.*

Harold Lloyd
Elvis's first cousin

DHR: Like the Tao, Elvis loved to move and play with passion. He also, like the Tao, was fond of meditation and stillness. Elvis embodied these wise Taoist words of Ts'ao Tao-ch'ung:

*Innocence and passion,
or in other words,
stillness and movement...
provisionally different,
they are ultimately the same.*

In the words of Moriz Cammerloher, an expert on art and depth psychology, Elvis had "this [God-given] talent for giving oneself entirely to the free flow of one's thoughts or ideas, feelings or intuitions, this ability to play...[which] is the secret of the creative mind."

Artist's Note: What better symbol of innocent play than the pinwheel? Elvis had three versions of the Pinwheel jumpsuit, in red, white and black, which he wore in 1971-72.

Gene Doucette has said that he was "like a kid in a candy shop" designing for Elvis, who for Doucette was "the world's greatest easel."

Doucette, working for Pzazz Designs,

started embroidering for Elvis early in 1970. Bill Belew designed the shape of the jumpsuits, and Doucette created the embroidery designs

19 KNOWLEDGE & WISDOM



Knowing others is intelligence;
knowing yourself is true wisdom.
Lao Tzu

Tao is the middle way. We cannot
have one side without the other in life:
it is wisdom to strike a balance between
them both. Deng Ming-Dao

Reading gives God more glory when we get more out
of it, when it is a more deeply vital act not only of our
intelligence but of our whole personality, absorbed
and refreshed in thought, meditation, prayer, or even
in the contemplation of God. Thomas Merton

For he who knows does not speak,
He who speaks does not know.
Lao Tzu

He had incredible native intelligence,
the ability to read a human being,
to watch someone's eyes
and look inside their soul.
Bob Abel
filmmaker,
along with his partner Pierre Adidge,
of Elvis on Tour

Mastering books is part of
mastery of Tao.
Deng Ming-Dao

I have my own way of learning.
I learn from the people I work with.
I learn from everyday life itself.
Elvis Presley

A long time ago, someone very special [June Juanico] gave
me a book to read [The Prophet by Kahilil Gibran]. I've read
it at least a million times.... It's my favorite book. I try to
keep a copy with me at all times. It's my unwinder. It helps
me relax and forget everything.
Elvis Presley

Although it hardly fits his public image as the King of Rock and Roll, Elvis was a voracious and careful reader. The books we shared offered ideas about religion [and] God.... Almost all of the works dealt with abstract metaphysical concepts, ... writ-

ten in an archaic, convoluted style.... He impressed me with his diligence and determination to understand each word.... Before long, you rarely saw Elvis when he wasn't carrying his newest book and a dictionary. [He was] inquisitive by

nature and eager to learn. The first work Elvis read was *The Impersonal Life* by Joseph Benner, [which] appealed to Elvis.... [I]t speaks... of an intelligence—God, if you will—guiding seekers to the knowledge of God within us all. Larry Geller

DHR: Elvis craved knowledge, particularly of a spiritual nature. And as the Taoist Loy Ching Yuen said, “Knowledge comes with perseverance.” Elvis was on a lifelong quest to figure out why he was picked to be Elvis. He felt that he was chosen by God for a special purpose, and he read widely, seeking spiritual knowledge. As his spiritual adviser, Larry Geller, said, “He remained a Christian his whole life, but... he was open to other beliefs and teachings.” Once you experience or live the spiritual knowledge, it becomes wisdom. Angelus Silesius, the Catholic mystic, stated, “Wisdom laughs to be where her children are — why? O Miracle! She herself is a child.”

Artist's Note: Who in the West doesn't think of the owl as representing knowledge and wisdom? Perhaps it started with the ancient Greeks, who attributed the owl to Athena, their goddess of wisdom. Owls also play a part in various Native American

mythologies. Cherokee shamans call upon owl medicine for insight into hidden truths. Some Native tribes use an owl feather to protect the sacred council space from deception.

In the 1972 film, *Elvis on Tour*, Elvis wore a cast-metal owl belt, studded with stars,

and a dark blue suit with a silver-lined cape. The effect was that of a night bird in flight.

There is something special about a bird with large eyes who can sit still on a branch in the dark and see in all directions with the turn of her head. What does she see?

20 IMAGE (PERSONA & SHADOW)

Your shadow
has been a light
upon our faces.
Kahlil Gibran

No one
can live up to that image
and survive.
Elvis Presley

If a man, born in Tao,
Sinks into the deep shadow of non-action
To forget aggression and concern,
He lacks nothing. His life is secure.
Chuang Tzu

Image refers to
the breath of something
before it is born.
Wu Ch'eng

Whoever holds fast to the great primal image,
to him the world will come.
It comes and is not violated:
In calmness, equity and blessedness. Music and allurements:
They may well make the wanderer stop in his tracks. Lao Tzu



The Great Image has no form [it is the Great Way]. To hold means to focus or keep. Those who can keep their body in the realm of Dark Virtue and focus their mind on the gate of Hidden Serenity possess the Way. All things come to them. Clouds appear...rain pours down, and all creatures are refreshed...and...nourished.”
Li Jung, Taoist master

The image is one thing:
the human being is another....
It's very hard to live up to an image.
Elvis Presley

Elvis, unlike most famous people... looked and moved and spoke exactly as he did on television or in the movies.... Elvis didn't "develop" an image for public consumption: on some level, he was his image. On the other hand, his low-key manner and friendly demeanor seemed incongruous,

as if he were trying to tell you, yes, he was Elvis Presley, but he was someone else, too. Over the years I would come to see how wide a line divided the public Elvis, the man we all thought we knew, from the private Elvis, the man he wanted us all to understand.

Larry Geller

They know about Elvis, the image, but not... the inner me. Elvis Presley

DHR: When we look at our image in a mirror, it's critical that we see not only our outer persona, but also our shadow and inner soul. Elvis realized that his image was merely a part of himself and that his true self was not visible to others. He told Linda Thompson, "They don't know me. They just look at me. They love what I can do, that I can sing, that I move the way that I do. But they don't know my heart. And they don't know my soul." Once, on the verge of tears, Elvis said to Larry Geller, "Do you realize I'll never know if a woman loves me or Elvis Presley."

The risk of creating and accepting an inflated image and identity is that it can crystallize as a false self. People then treat you as if you are something you are not. And in due course you become something you are not. Since the king archetype exists in everyone, it gets projected onto an unfortunate person cast in the role. This

happened to Elvis, and millions of women projected their inner masculine (father, lover, partner, and spiritual figure) onto him. Priscilla Presley did this, as she said, "He taught me everything.... Over the years he became my father, husband, and very nearly God."

Artist's Note: Here we have the dark side of the mythological owl. The owl is attributed with shamanic abilities by cultures throughout the Americas, Africa and across the world to East Asia. The

owl is often considered a guide to and through the underworld, being a creature of keen sight in the night. Indeed, the owl has been called a "cat with wings" because the two animals share various personality

and behavioural traits. The owl has been considered a shamanic aid to unmasking those who would deceive or take advantage, and a guide for souls transitioning from one plane of existence to another.

21 TRUTH & TRUTH OF CHARACTER



Those who want to know the truth of the universe should practice the four cardinal virtues:

- The first is reverence for all life; this manifests as unconditional love and respect for oneself and all beings.
- The second is natural sincerity; this manifests as honesty, simplicity, and faithfulness.
- The third is gentleness; this manifests as kindness, consideration for others, and sensitivity to spiritual truth.
- The fourth is supportiveness; this manifests as service to others without expectation of reward.

The truest truth
[seems] uncertain.
Lao Tzu

You have got lost, and are trying
To find your way back
To your own true self.
Chuang Tzu

I knew in my own way. I knew.
Elvis Presley

talking about his true calling
to be a singer with a special purpose

In public, we may be pursuing our responsibilities. In our private time, we put all that aside and [attempt] to return to the source. In that returning, we no longer have names, we no longer have anything credited to us. We are who we are, and no more. But who we are at that point: that is truth.

Deng Ming-Dao

What is true is real, but nothing more.
Su Che
Chinese author

Elvis...was [a]...very loyal person,
very loyal friend, very loving man, very
funny [human being]; he loved to laugh,
loved life, loved living, and loved people.

Linda Thompson

Son,...always remember...no matter what
happens when you grow up, never look down
on others or think that you are better than
they are, because in the eyes of God we are
all equal.

Gladys Presley

There is something magical about watch-
ing a man who has lost himself find his
way back home.

John Landau
rock critic, in his review of Elvis's
1968 NBC *Comeback* TV special

DHR: Elvis was true to himself. He embodied the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Insist on yourself; never imitate." In one of Elvis's favorite spiritual books, *The Impersonal Life* by Joseph Benner, Elvis found confirmation of his true self:

That the truth lies within us all, that God is in fact "the divine I." "Are you ready?"... "Do you want to go?"... In order that you may learn to know Me, so that you can be sure it is I, your own True Self, who speaks these words, you must first learn to Be Still.... I may be expressing through you beautiful symphonies of sound...that manifest as music ...and which so affects others as to cause them to acclaim you as one of the great ones of the day.

Artist's Note: Many Native American tribes used the Answering Feather, often from an eagle, at their sacred councils to enable an appointed speaker to see, with the scope of a soaring eagle, the highest truth.

The American Eagle jumpsuit, created

for the *Aloha from Hawaii* concert, had a long cape studded with a huge eagle. During dress rehearsal, Elvis laughed as the ponderous cape pulled him backwards.

President G. W. Bush flew Elvis fan Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi to Graceland

on Air Force One. Elvis songs played while Elvis's signature fried peanut-butter-and-banana sandwiches were served. At Graceland, the heads of state were each presented with an American Eagle cape and belt recreated by Butch and Kim Polston.

22 HAPPINESS & JOY

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked....
When you are sorrowful
look again in your heart,
and you shall see
that in truth you are weeping
for that which has been your delight.
Kahlil Gibran

Happiness rests on unhappiness;
unhappiness lies in wait for happiness.
Lao Tzu



To increase life is called happiness.
Lao Tzu

You never find happiness
until you stop looking for it.
Chuang Tzu

If you practice non-doing (wu wei),
you have both happiness
and well-being.
Chuang Tzu

Someone to love, something to look forward to, and something to do.
Elvis Presley
Elvis's "Philosophy for a Happy Life"
written down for his friend, Pat Parry

It's...important...to surround yourself with people who
can give you a little happiness, because you only pass
through this life once...you don't come back for an encore.
Elvis Presley

*Elvis had a great sense of humor — always laughing,
telling jokes, and reading to you.*

Myrna Smith
*friend and member
of the Sweet Inspirations*

*Elvis was one of the funniest people I ever met... his wry
sense of humor and funny way of looking at things had
us cracking up most of the time.*

Larry Geller

DHR: Many believed that Elvis was basically a sad person. Yet Elvis knew laughter and the joy of singing, and he brought happiness to others. We now see that Elvis was Taoist and embodied both sides of art and its creative process. In a poem by Herman Melville these dualities are captured well:

*A flame to melt—a wind to freeze;
Sad patience—joyous energies;
Humility—yet pride and scorn.
Instinct and study; love and hate;
Audacity—reverence. These must mate.
And fuse with Jacob's mystic heart,
To wrestle with the angel—Art.*

The inner Elvis might have been content to meditate on this verse by Yogananda, whom Elvis loved to read:

*From joy I came
For joy I live,
In sacred joy I melt.*

Artist's Note: Many of Elvis's jumpsuits were accompanied by karate-belt-inspired macramé belts. Macramé textiles are composed of knotted patterns of string or yarn. This illustration includes

a Celtic knot which is a symbol of luck and happiness. Elvis's I Got Lucky suit, with its macramé belt, got its name from appearing on the cover of the *I Got Lucky* album.

In thinking about what made Elvis hap-

piest, it is interesting to note his Chinese astrological sign, Wood Dog, which indicates someone who particularly finds that their greatest happiness is in bringing happiness to others.

He who contains virtue in abundance
resembles a newborn child.

Lao Tzu

Cultivated in the self, virtue becomes real.

Lao Tzu



The reason people don't understand me
is because my virtue is dark
and not visible from the outside.
Ho-shang Kung

The Way begets them.
Virtue keeps them.
Lao Tzu

23 VIRTUE

The virtue of nonaggression
is uniting with Heaven.

Lao Tzu

Elvis came out for the boxing team at Hunnes High School.
I put him in the ring against Sambo Barrom, and this guy bloodied
Elvis's nose pretty good. Then Elvis came to me and said, "Coach, I
hate to tell you this, but I'm quitting the team. I'm a lover, not a fighter."
Walt Doxey, high school boxing coach

I admired Elvis because he was nice to me.... I was a younger guy that Elvis spent time with for no apparent reason other than just either to help me out or whatever.
Fred Fredrick, classmate and friend

Elvis was good
“with a tender heart.” That’s
all I can ever say about him.
Laverne Farrar
childhood and lifelong friend

He felt he had been given this gift, this talent, by God. He didn’t take it for granted. He thought it was something that he had to protect. He had to be nice to people. Otherwise, God would take it back.
Natalie Wood
actress; dated Elvis during 1956

DHR: Elvis realized Thomas Merton’s idea that “The pleasure of a good act is something to be remembered—not in order to feed our complacency, but in order to remind us that virtuous actions are not only possible and valuable, but that they can become easier and more delightful and more fruitful than the acts of vice which oppose and frustrate them.” He opted for love and life for most of his existence, even though the shadows—overeating and drug abuse—pursued him. Eventually, the darkness of melancholy and the pull of death tipped the balance for Elvis.

Artist’s Note: The bear’s long winter hibernation, along with its strength and courage, have resulted in shamanic recognition of the balance between this animal’s instinctive industry and its receptivity to the hidden world. This, to

me, is an interesting description of virtue. “(Let Me Be Your) Teddy Bear” was a 1957 hit song for Elvis, which was written by Kal Mann and Bernie Lowe. It was included in that year’s movie *Loving You*, and the album by the same name. “I don’t

wanna be a tiger/Cause tigers play too rough/...Just wanna be your teddy bear.”
Elvis is pictured on the album cover with a furry teddy, an inspiration for future Elvis bears.

Beautiful words aren't truth.
Lao Tzu

What we call beautiful or ugly depends on our feelings. Nothing is necessarily beautiful or ugly until feelings make it so. But while feelings differ, they all come from our nature, and we all have the same nature. Hence the sage transforms his feelings and returns to his nature and thus becomes one again.
Lu Hsi-sheng, Taoist scholar

24 BEAUTY

Elvis was probably the most handsome, perfect, flawless creature that I had ever laid my eyes on.
June Juanico

All the world knows beauty, but if that becomes beautiful this becomes ugly.
Lao Tzu



The butterfly
is a reminder that life,
though ephemeral, is beautiful.
Deng Ming-Dao

Beauty is eternally gazing at itself in a mirror.
But you are eternally and you are the mirror.
Kahlil Gibran

He was the total androgynous beauty.
I would practice Elvis in front of a mirror
when I was twelve or thirteen years old.

K. D. Lang
singer/songwriter

Elvis was truly an Adonis. But he didn't
think himself handsome.

Jess Stearn
American writer

You're beautiful
just the way you are.

Elvis Presley
speaking to June Juanico

DHR: Beauty is often thought of as one's outer appearance, and in that sense Elvis was beautiful. We usually describe men as handsome, not beautiful, but Elvis had an androgynous beauty. Beauty is also one's inner sacredness, and a beautiful soul can cause an ordinary person to appear outwardly beautiful. Elvis had both inner and outer beauty. Like a mirror, Elvis reflects beauty back to us. The key to lasting beauty is its spirituality, as is reinforced by this Celtic expression. "Only in solitude can you discover a sense of your own beauty." Elvis went a step further when he said, "Silence is the resting place of the soul."

Artist's Note: The fleeting life of a brilliant butterfly makes this insect a suitable symbol for the transitory nature of beauty. In Chinese symbolism, the image of a butterfly on a plum blossom is a symbol of long life and beauty. *Tieh* means *seventy* and is

part of the word *hu-tieh*, meaning *butterfly*.

Elvis's Black Butterfly jumpsuit features butterfly-shaped studs.

Another butterfly connection is to the song "Spring Fever," which Elvis recorded in June 1964 for his *Girl Happy* album.

Written by Florence Kaye, Bill Giant (Harvey Zimmerman) and Bernie Baum, the song starts, "A little bird, he told me so/ He said come on, get on the go/ Open your eyes the sky is full of butterflies."

25 NATURE & WATER



The Supreme good is like water,
which nourishes all things without trying to.
It is content with the low places that people disdain.
Thus it is like the Tao.

Lao Tzu

What is firmly established
cannot be uprooted;
What is tightly embraced
cannot slip away.

Lao Tzu

Nothing in the world is weaker than water,
but against the hard and the strong
nothing excels it.

Lao Tzu

Express yourself completely,
then keep quiet.
Be like the forces of nature:
when it blows, there is only wind;
when it rains, there is only rain;
when the clouds pass, the sun shines through.

Lao Tzu

Elvis Presley arrived as *El Niño*, an enormous
weather-changing pattern in a culture trying to
avoid even the first hints of changing weather...
A culture that both resisted the joyous body,
and yearned for it at the same time, created an
opening ripe for a soul like Elvis to step through.
He would act out the wishes of others, show
the way, trail-blaze.

Clarissa Pinkola Estés

Water is the source of creation,
the ancestor of all living things.
It's the bloodstream of the Earth.

Kuan-tzu

I found Elvis sitting on the balcony staring out at the ocean. He seemed
so solemn. I asked him, "Are you okay?" He said, "Oh, yes, Ma'am. I just
can't believe what I'm seeing. I've been sitting here for almost an hour.... I can't
believe that it's so big.... I'd give anything in the world if I had enough money to
bring my mama and daddy down here to see the ocean."

Mae Axton

You've got to have rain
in order to have a
rainbow.
Elvis Presley

To Sam Phillips [Elvis] represented the innocence that has made the country great, in combination with the elements of the soil, the sky, the water, even the wind, the quiet nights,...lights up the river—that's what they used to call Memphis. That was where it all came together. And

Elvis Presley may not have been able to verbalize that—but he damn sure wasn't dumb, and he damn sure was intuitive, and he damn sure had an appreciation for the spirituality of human existence.... That was what he cared about. Peter Guralnick, *Last Train to Memphis*

DHR: After Elvis would act and sing, he would retreat and meditate. He would ebb and flow like water, like nature. He represented the dark and wet *yin*, perfect for the dry and parched *yang* America of the 1950s. However, like water on a mountaintop, he went down, down, down—eventually into the sea. Yet water gives life; we would die without it.

Now, like a redwood, Elvis is planted deeply in the American soil and psyche, as well as being firmly rooted in the Tao. He is here to stay. Forever.

Artist's Note: Blue, commonly used to depict water, was the color of Elvis's Blue Rain Suit. Blue was also a spiritually significant color for Elvis as his birth story told by Vernon shows: "I remember walkin' outside to have a cigarette. As I

looked around, Son, I noticed something strange ... all 'round that ol' house there was this blue light, a weird kinda blue light that lit up the house." In *Leaves of Elvis' Garden*, Larry Geller goes on to say, "Long before he learned about the story of the

blue light, Elvis was drawn to the color blue.... The light he visualized in his healing and meditations was blue, not white."

Focusing on blue light, Elvis helped friends and family members with a laying on of hands.

26 WORK (BUSINESS)

When you work
you are a flute through whose heart
the whispering of the hours
turns to music.
Kahlil Gibran

Work without working.
Lao Tzu



He works and does not keep.
When the work is done,
he does not tarry with it.
He does not desire to show off
his importance to others.

Lao Tzu

To live is to work.
Deng Ming-Dao

Work for what is lasting.
Deng Ming-Dao

[Elvis] came up with a TCB Oath, too. It said, "more self-respect,
more respect for fellow man.... Respect for all styles and techniques. Body
conditioning, mental conditioning, meditation for calming and stilling of mind
and body. Sharpen your skills, and increase mental awareness, for all those
who might choose a new outlook and personal philosophy." Lamar Fike

[In 1970, Elvis] played six shows in three days
at the Houston Astrodome for \$1 million....
A total of 208,000 people saw the six shows.

Marty Lacker

Taking Care of Business (TCB)
in a flash.

Elvis's motto and logo, TCB,
which included a lightning bolt

When I don't do a good job,
I know it and
I'm blue as Hell.

Elvis Presley

DHR: Elvis loved to work hard. He often strove for perfection. He said, "I choose all my own songs.... I've gone through more than a hundred numbers to get just one that I thought was right." His performances seemed effortless, but behind the natural flow were hours and hours of rehearsals.

Elvis was consumed as part of "the McDonaldization of society." In the 1960s, he was efficiently managed as good, clean, and predictable. Elvis projected an All-American image, particularly during his Hollywood years. In that period of making twenty-five films, Elvis was controlled, packaged—and the focus was on quantity, not quality, with "the illusion of intimacy."

Ideally, in a Taoist sense, work is like play, the work of a child. Since Elvis was childlike, his work often was creative play—especially in the early years of his success.

After his divorce in 1973, money became a motivating factor. With his greedy, con-artist, pseudo-colonel manager taking up to fifty percent of Elvis's earnings and gambling away millions, Elvis turned into a workaholic. Besides the drain on his income, Elvis was spending more and more money on his increasing addiction to drugs. In the final five years, the child-like joy of work had left him.

Artist's Note: The spider who works her web is a symbol of labor and creative effort. Elvis had studded Cobweb suits in white and blue, and used his TCB logo in the design of a ring, a necklace, and his karate logo (with the words *faith, spirit*

and *discipline*). He also had a band (1969-77) called TCB. Gene Doucette in a 2012 letter wrote, "Polston...has researched ... every bit of symbolism connected to Elvis, the...jewelry he wore and...the famous TCB emblem." At work with the Polston

family, Doucette says, "I'm able to remember endless details [re-sketching] the patterns as closely as I can. Where I have a 'gray area,' ...the blanks are filled in by research, which is Butch's department. He remember[s] when I did it. I remember what I did."

27 TRANSCENDENCE & TRANSFORMATION

People who cultivate the Tao
are concerned with nothing
except transcending
[the] boundaries of life and death.
Ch'eng Chu, Taoist scholar

When the faculties are empty,
the heart is full of light.
Being full of light,
it becomes an influence by which others
are secretly transformed. Chuang Tzu

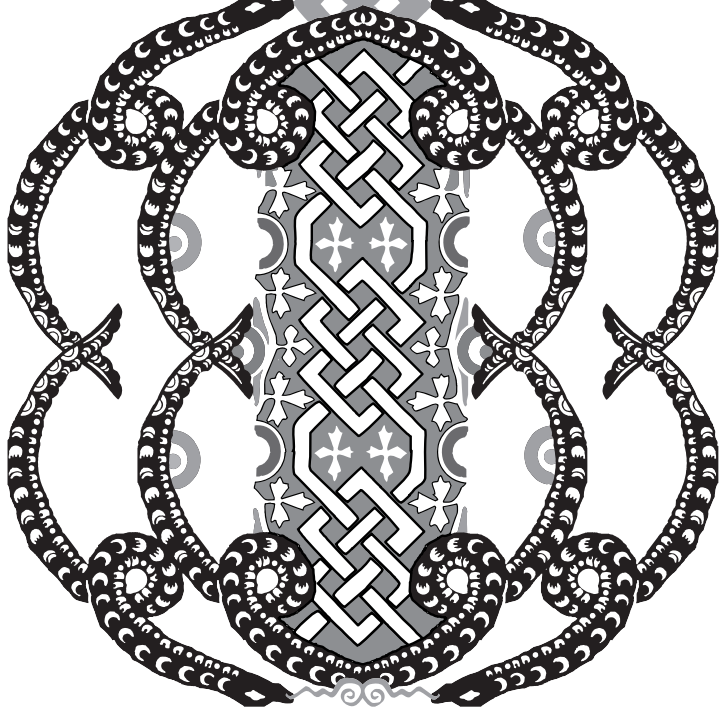
Those who follow Tao seek
to change with it...
and do not hesitate to act
in unorthodox ways.
Deng Ming-Dao

To understand yet not understand
is transcendence.
Lao Tzu

It was strange that he should have died
in the same month as his mother—and
only two days beyond the date on which
she died. It was almost as if she had
reached out and pulled him through.
Linda Thompson

Elvis's life was the truest of American success stories: One day he was a
virtual failure, driving a truck for \$1.65 an hour, and the next day he was on his way
to leading a revolution in music and in culture.
David Halberstam
Historian and author of *The Fifties*

Truly, the greatest gift you have
to give is that of your own
self-transformation.
Lao Tzu



Elvis, like America, started out loving,
but later turned on himself.

Bono
lead singer of the band U2

A big part of the problem was that people had put him in a place
he couldn't live up to. They just didn't understand that he wasn't
a god, he was a man. He carried a very heavy burden—he didn't
belong to me, he belonged to the world.

Priscilla Presley

DHR: Transcendence is a step, not a place to get stuck. It can lead to aloofness, inflation, and isolation. Transformation—the next and most important step—results from a union of opposites and leads to something new, which is real and creative change.

Before Elvis recorded *How Great Thou Art* in May of 1966, he said to Larry Geller, “Millions of people around the world are going to hear this album. It’s going to touch people in ways we can’t imagine. And I know this album is ordained by God Himself. This is God’s message, and I’m His channel. Only I can’t be a channel if my ego is there. I have to empty myself so that the channel is totally pure and the message is heard loud and clear. Let’s sit down, close our eyes, and meditate. I’m not going to move out of this chair until I’m guided by that still, small voice within.”

Larry Geller reports that after they

meditated for over half an hour, Elvis said softly, “So be it. I’m ready.”

Recording *How Great Thou Art* was a transcendent experience for Elvis. When ten years later he learned that listening to it had saved a woman named Darlene from suicide, Elvis was deeply moved. “God works in mysterious ways, that’s for sure. If that happened to Darlene, what about others? I mean, a person’s life was saved! That’s a fulfillment that transcends everything!”

Providing spiritual affirmation of what Elvis thought and felt, the Talmud posits that in the eyes of God, “Whoever saves one life saves the world.”

Artist’s Note: As a student at Swami Yogananda’s Self-Realization Fellowship, Elvis would have known the word *kundalini* (literally *coiled*), which refers to a subtle energy that rests at the base of the spine, coiled there like a serpent. Meditation and

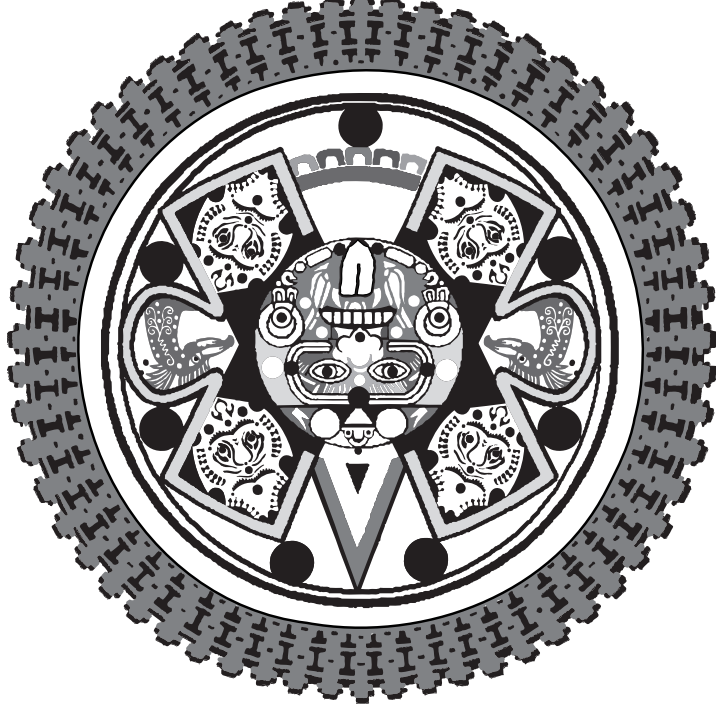
other practices can raise kundalini up the spine, leading to higher mystical experience. In China this energy is called *chi* or *qi*. In Japan it is *ki*, which Elvis may have known through his karate practice.

Skin-shedding snakes symbolize trans-

formation. In Celtic belief, a shamanic vision of a snake suggests shedding something in order to prepare for something greater.

In the ‘70s, Elvis wore a Red Ladder suit with red snakeskin belt, and a navy blue suit with a snakeskin design on the shoulders.

28 SUCCESS & FAILURE



He does not rejoice in success
Or lament in failure.
Chuang Tzu

You don't have to live in the mountains and forests or cut
yourself off from human affairs to enter the Way. Success and
fame, wealth and honor are all encouragements to practice.
Liu Shih-ti
Taoist sage

The vanity of success invites
its own failure.
Lao Tzu

Let those who succeed be one with success.
Let those who fail be one with failure.
Be one with success,
for the Way succeeds too.
Be one with failure,
for the Way fails too.
Lao Tzu

Elvis dug his own grave.
Billy Smith
Elvis's closest cousin

When you are deeply into the Way,
your virtue is deep; and when your virtue is deep,
then success and honor are eventually achieved.
This is called mysterious virtue. It is deep,
far-reaching, and opposite of ordinary people. Lao Tzu

Because he has no goal in mind,
everything he does succeeds.
Lao Tzu

It was not only Elvis's deep, exotic voice, bodily gyrations, and musical talent that were responsible for his success. It was also his sense of mission, his rebelliousness, his sexuality, his marginality, his intense struggles with autonomy and dependency.
Bruce Heller & Alan Elms, professors of psychology

Elvis would be nothing, totally unknown, and go into a city and perform, and he would become an instant star before he even left town. It was unreal.
Buddy Killen
music publisher of "Heartbreak Hotel,"
Elvis's first million-seller

DHR: Summarizing Elvis's rise and fall, Bruce Heller and Alan Elms wrote, "Rising from rural poverty and obscurity to enormous professional success, Elvis captured the American imagination. Yet in spite of his abilities, his opportunities, and his accomplishments, Elvis never fully realized his creative potential. He was lonely and unhappy most of his life, he failed to establish genuine long-term reciprocal relationships..., and he died at age forty-two from a combination of sustained physical self-neglect and multiple drug abuse."

Elvis ensured that he was both a success and a failure; in a Taoist sense they are the same.

After Lao Tzu stated that "success is as dangerous as failure," he continued:

*What does it mean
that success is as dangerous as failure?
Whether you go up the ladder or down it,
your position is shaky.
When you stand with your two feet on the
ground, you will always keep your
balance.*

The Elvis mirror reflects our own struggle. America is a successful nation, with great prosperity, but we have poverty and hunger, and we are failing with regard to stability of the family, violence, obesity, and other ills from poor diets and sedentary living, as well as drug abuse and addiction.

Artist's Note: When a great civilization ends, was it a great success or a failure?

Elvis wore the Mexican Sundial jumpsuit with an embroidered Aztec calendar-like design on the chest during his final June 26, 1977 concert. In *Fit for a King*, a

film by Andy Dumas, Gene Doucette describes Elvis's affection for this suit: it easily adjusted to fit his waist, and the calendar set off his now middle-aged face.

The Harmonic Convergence began ten years to the day after Elvis died. Larry Geller

told me, "Elvis was intrigued with indigenous culture—one of the main reasons he selected the [Aztec] calendar [for] his jumpsuit. Not that he understood the meaning of the symbols on the calendar..., but...he intuitively felt it held great significance."

29 HOME (GRACELAND)

Retreating to hide in secrecy
is eternal calm.
Tung-pin Lu
I only really feel at home in Memphis,
at my own Graceland mansion.
I'll never leave.
Elvis Presley

My mamma was so beautiful, and when I'm home
back at Graceland, I can feel her presence.
I know she's there. I can feel it.
Elvis Presley



Houses full of treasure
can never be safe.
Lao Tzu

The Tao protects the home.
Richard Wilhelm
Chinese scholar
who translated the Tao Te Ching

Tao is the homeland.
Lao Tzu

And though of magnificence and splendor, your house shall not hold your
secret nor shelter your longing. For that which is boundless in you abides in
the mansion of the sky, whose door is the morning mist, and whose windows
are the songs and the silences of the night.

Kahlil Gibran

*I had never before seen the inside of any house,
even in the movies, that was as beautiful and
luxurious as Graceland Mansion.*

Rex Mansfield
army buddy

*It turned out that visiting a dead person's house, no matter
who the person was, is an intimate experience. After all, Elvis
didn't die in the 1800s. He died in 1977.*

Mary Pipher
best-selling American author

DHR: Graceland was more than a house; to Elvis it represented “the residence of the heart.... To me my home is all wound up with the acts of kindness and gentleness that my mother and my grandmother and my daddy lovingly provided.... All of this love still remains within its walls. It’s an enduring way of life for me.”

Graceland is a powerful name and symbol, and Elvis’s home is a symbolically integrated *temenos*, or sacred place. Graceland, Elvis’s mansion on earth, is like the great mansion in the sky, Heaven. Elvis had always maintained that when he died, he’d be going home. So, in a real way, Paul Simon’s song about going to Graceland is like the line of the poet Shinsho: “No matter what road I’m traveling, I’m going home.”

Graceland is the site of a yearly candlelight vigil celebrating the anniversary of Elvis’s death, on August 16. This spiritual

ritual involves entering the gate, walking up the drive to the mansion, and passing in front of Elvis’s grave in the Meditation Garden.

Artist’s Note: My Asian-style portrait of Graceland features the Chinese lions that illustrate chapters three to six.

When Butch Polston first visited Gene Doucette in the early 1980s, Polston saw a small porcelain monkey he recognized. It

had a limited-edition mark: it was number three of only four made. Polston exclaimed “there’s one of these at Graceland!” Doucette didn’t know. They then went to the nearby curio shop where Doucette had purchased the monkey years before. The

owner recalled displaying the monkeys, when Elvis came in and bought numbers one and two of the edition. The next day some young fellow (Doucette) bought number three, and the day after that, Robert Goulet came in and bought the last one.

... the king is but a man, as I am.

The violet smells to him

as it doth to me.

Shakespeare

The Life of King Henry the Fifth (IV, i)

The Tao is great.

The king is also great.

Lao Tzu

Use the Tao to help your king.

Lao Tzu



30 KING

When you realize

where you come from,

you naturally become tolerant,

disinterested, amused,

kindhearted as a grandmother,

dignified as a king.

Immersed in the wonder of Tao,

you can deal with whatever

life brings you,

and when death comes,

you are ready.

Lao Tzu

Kings would fall

if they were always high and noble.

Thus the noble is based on the humble;

the high is founded on the low.

Lao Tzu

as orphaned, widowed and destitute,

but this is the basis of humility.

Thus do kings refer to themselves

I'm not the King...

I'm just a singer.

Elvis Presley

[Elvis] knew exactly who
he was. He was the King.

Lamar Fike

He was,
and remains, the King.
Bruce Heller & Alan Elms

When the King died holding a book about
the Shroud of Turin,
the entire world has joined in
the task of his resurrection.
Louie Ludwig

DHR: If you were to ask nearly any American, “Who is the king?” they would respond, “Elvis.”

Elvis was trapped by his image, as expressed by Chuang Tzu:

*... I looked into your eyes.
I saw you were hemmed in
By contradictions. Your words
Confirm this.
You are scared to death....
You have got lost, and are trying
To find your way back
To your own true self.*

Regardless, Elvis clearly felt a link to the divine.

Artist's Note: Gene Doucette designed and embroidered the Chinese Dragon suit, which Elvis wore on the cover of the *Dragon Heart* album, recorded live at a Notre Dame concert in October 1974. In Chinese mythology, dragons represent auspicious

heavenly powers controlling the weather—impelled torrents of the sky. In 1336, it was decreed that depictions of completely gold, five-clawed dragons belonged exclusively to the Chinese emperor. Improper use was punishable by death of the offender and

his entire clan. The four-clawed dragon was reserved for imperial nobility and other high officials. Three-clawed dragons were used by lower ranks and the public.

(At first I drew a five-clawed dragon for Elvis the King, then thought better of it.)

31 PAIN & SUFFERING

And you would watch with serenity
through the winters of your grief.
Much of your pain is self-chosen.
It is the bitter potion by which
the physician within you
heals your sick self.
Therefore trust the physician,
and drink his remedy in silence
and tranquility.
Kahlil Gibran



*We ache, because that is human.
To learn from it, that is wisdom.*

Deng Ming-Dao

*Clouds and thunder:
The image of difficulty.
Thus the superior man
Brings order out of confusion.*

I Ching

*One of the hardest things to accept is that
disaster has nothing to do with you....
Misfortunes happen, and we should face
them and act without fear or panic.*

Deng Ming-Dao

*If he gives himself over to extravagance,
he will have to suffer the consequences,
with accompanying regret.*

I Ching

*The fans, the fans—
they don't know
my pain.*

Elvis Presley

*He'd go to great lengths to get pills.... This time he dug a hole
in his foot... the size of a quarter, ... [a] gaping, oozing, bloody,
pus hole. I said, "God Almighty, Elvis, what have you done?"
And he said, "Bet I get some good stuff now."*

Marty Lacker, with Elvis in a doctor's waiting room

Those last five years...he was just a tormented person.... He didn't know how to stop the drugs. And he didn't want to.

Lamar Fike

When you chronicle the demise of Elvis Presley, you have to realize that the tilt started when Gladys died. That was the most devastating thing that ever happened to him. He would never be the same.

Lamar Fike

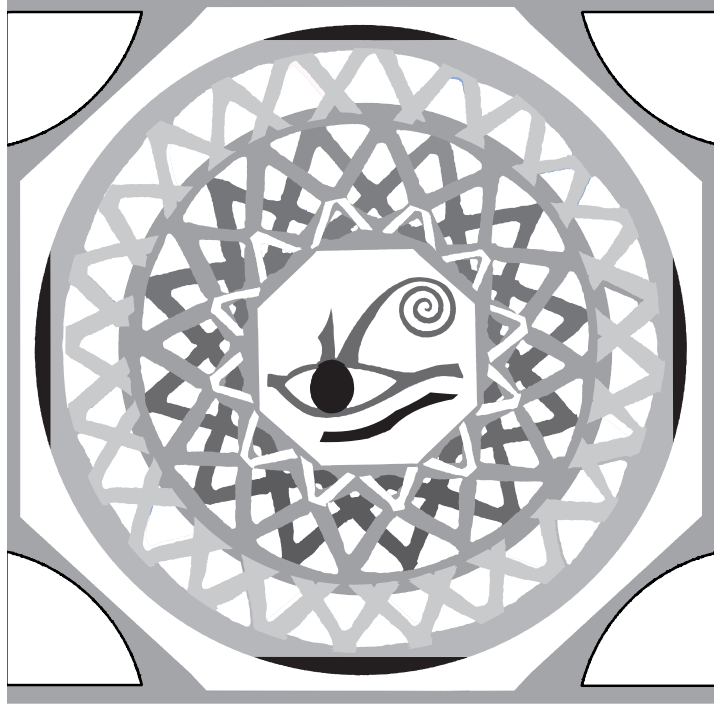
DHR: Late in his life Elvis isolated himself, was very melancholic, and was increasingly in deep pain and suffering. He longed for the abyss—to be unconscious, out of it, and wasted—to escape the suffering. He felt immense agony and grief over the losses of Jesse Garon, his mother, and Priscilla. Elvis's divorce from Priscilla was the most horrific, during and after which he intensified his drug abuse, becoming an addict. It's ironic that after President Richard Nixon made Elvis an honorary federal agent for the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs in 1970, he became what he was supposed to fight. In June of 1976, Elton John had attended one of Elvis's last concerts and later said, "He already seemed like a corpse."

Artist's Note: It evidently pained Elvis to sing "Burning Love," his 1972 hit written by Dennis Linde. The lyrics foreshadowed experiences to come: "...flames are now reaching my body/Please won't you help me/I feel like I'm slipping away/And

my chest is a-heaving." Larry Geller helped Elvis through a near-death experience: "...I felt [Elvis's heart] pulsating wildly against the palm of my hand...'I'm leaving my body...dying. Please don't let me die alone'" (*Leaves of Elvis' Garden*). The

song continues, "I'm burning a hole where I lay." Elvis died reading about the Shroud of Turin, which bears the negative image of a man who appears to have suffered something akin to crucifixion, as if the ancient image had been burned into the cloth.

32 HARMONY & BALANCE



Those who cultivate the Way should act with humility and harmony... For those who understand that what moves them is also the source of their life, the pill of immortality is not somewhere outside.

Huang Yuan-chi, Taoist master

All things have darkness [yin] at their back and strive towards the light [yang], and the flowing power gives them harmony. Lao Tzu

Simply balance the polarities... and... harmony naturally arises. Lao Tzu

The Tao moves the other way; the Tao works through weakness. The things of this world come from something; something comes from nothing.

Lao Tzu

If we make Elvis a saint, we learn nothing from the tragic failures of his life. If we make him an unredeemed sinner, we discount the good of his music, his triumph over abject poverty, his generosity, and his spiritual longings. Balance is the key to appreciating the legacy of Elvis Presley.

Rick Stanley

Perfect harmony is whatever is natural. Lin Hsi-yi

Taoist scholar

Gospel music became such a part of my life it was as natural as dancing. Elvis Presley

*Elvis was harangued by choice:
flesh vs. spirit, God vs. rock and roll,
mother vs. lover, father vs. Colonel.*
Bono

*He was a real, complete human being—
a combination of good and bad
like everyone else.*
Priscilla Presley

DHR: When Elvis sang, especially gospel music, he seemed to be in a state of harmony and balance. Late in his life, however, when Elvis was addicted to drugs, he was increasingly in a state of disharmony and imbalance.

Little Richard summed up Elvis's plight: "He got what he wanted and lost what he had."

Artist's Note: The Egyptian Eye of Horus symbol mathematically embodies balance, not unlike the golden section. The glyph is composed of six fractions representing the six senses. (The sixth being the inner ear's perception of space

orientation.) Adding the fractions together, $1/2 + 1/4 + 1/8 + 1/16 + 1/32 + 1/64$, comes close to the sum of one. This nearness to unity without achieving it symbolizes that ultimate unity cannot be grasped through earthbound senses and experiences.

Elvis wore the white studded Pharoa [sic] jumpsuit for the cover of his 1975 album *Today*. The colorfully-embroidered Egyptian jumpsuit was worn as late as 1976, as was the Egyptian Bird jumpsuit previously mentioned in chapter sixteen.

PRISONER & FREEDOM

I know what people think. "Yeah, Elvis is an old recluse like Howard Hughes. He's holed up in his house, he's a prisoner." Bullshit! I love my life. I wouldn't trade my position for anything or anyone. I've earned it. It's what I've always wanted all my life.

Elvis Presley

He comes very quietly, oppressed in a golden carriage. Humiliation, but the end is reached.

I Ching

Be content with the moment, and be willing to follow the flow; then there will be no room for grief or joy. In the old days this was called freedom from bondage.

Chuang Tzu

Care about people's approval and you will be their prisoner.

Lao Tzu

The worst imprisonment is the one we impose on ourselves.

Deng Ming-Dao



Addiction is most abhorrent to those who follow Tao because it destroys the health of the individual, corrodes the mind, and cuts off freedom.

Deng Ming-Dao

Elvis was like a prisoner. He couldn't get out and do things like other people. Whenever we'd go, people were there; that comes with the territory.

Red West, prior to being fired in 1976, he was a member of Elvis's entourage

What drove us crazy about Elvis wasn't necessarily the sexual freedom his critics claimed he was unleashing, but freedom, period. Freedom to be yourself, to express yourself, to wear what you wanted to wear, to look the way you wanted to look, to have your own style, your own talk.

Larry Geller

The spiritual teachings didn't necessarily change Elvis so much as they gave him a freedom to express his true self. His newfound, or more likely rediscovered, personality was quieter; energetic but not manic; disciplined and more sensitive.

Larry Geller

DHR: Elvis was an introvert, and all introverts are, in a way, prisoners of themselves. Ironically, he liberated others, though even on stage he could be shy. He broke free and became extraverted through fame and fortune, but then returned to Graceland and his parents.

The Army became another kind of prison, as did Hollywood. His marriage was also a trap. Yet the *Comeback Special*, in 1968, represented a new kind of release because Elvis did it despite the Colonel's opposition. Again, however, he opened doors for others, but shut himself in. The final blow was his drug addiction. He was essentially in solitary confinement after that. Nevertheless, by dying, he freed himself eternally.

Artist's Note: Doucette tells, in *Fit for a King*, about a sketch he made of a pair of facing zebra heads for a jumpsuit he wanted to cover with a jungle menagerie of embroidered animals. He sent the drawing to Elvis along with other design ideas.

Elvis said he liked everything but the odd bird. Doucette hadn't sent a bird design, so it took a moment to figure out that Elvis had been looking at the zebra heads upside down. Viewed this way, Elvis saw the necks of the zebra as wings of a large bird.

Doucette went with what Elvis saw, making the zebras into a striped bird. The Phoenix jumpsuit became a favorite of Elvis's.

For this chapter's illustration, among the jail-stripes a pair of zebra heads flip into a bird ready for flight.

The Master does his job and then stops.
He understands that the universe
is forever out of control, and that trying
to dominate events goes against
the current of the Tao.

Lao Tzu

In a real sense all life is interrelated.
All [people] are caught in
an inescapable network of mutuality,
tied in a single garment of destiny.
Dr Martin Luther King, Jr

Find out destiny,
govern mental functions,
make preferences orderly
and suit real nature.
Lao Tzu



Nothing is better than
to fulfill your destiny,
but that's the hardest of all.
Chuang Tzu

He was destiny's child,
but he was never prepared
to be what he was.
Lamar Fike

34 DESTINY

Their lives appear miraculous, but all they do is take advantage of natural events.
Timing is everything in Tao. To act in a way that is harmonious to circumstances and
in accord with one's own heart is rare but precious. Force doesn't matter. Weight
doesn't matter. Even being morally right doesn't matter. All that matters is timing....
Deng Ming-Dao

I always felt that some day, somehow,
something would happen to change
everything for me.
Elvis Presley

I think Elvis often thought he was a prophet. He was very religious.... Everything in his life was connected to spirituality.... As Elvis got older, he was seeking and searching, and therefore, in a strange way he became more religious as time went on.

Bill Browder

Elvis saw Jesse's death as an act of God, or destiny. It logically followed that Elvis's living wasn't an accident of fate, either.

Larry Geller

DHR: Elvis adhered to Lao Tzu's wise words: "The Way is to straighten oneself and await the direction of destiny." In Memphis Elvis recorded two songs for his mother, then waited. He seemed to intuitively know that, as Deng Ming-Dao explained: "No one can set out to be a hero. No one can fake being a hero. Being a hero is a matter of being prepared for a gift in time. Time will give you the opening. It is how you then respond that will decide whether you have taken advantage of your opportunity."

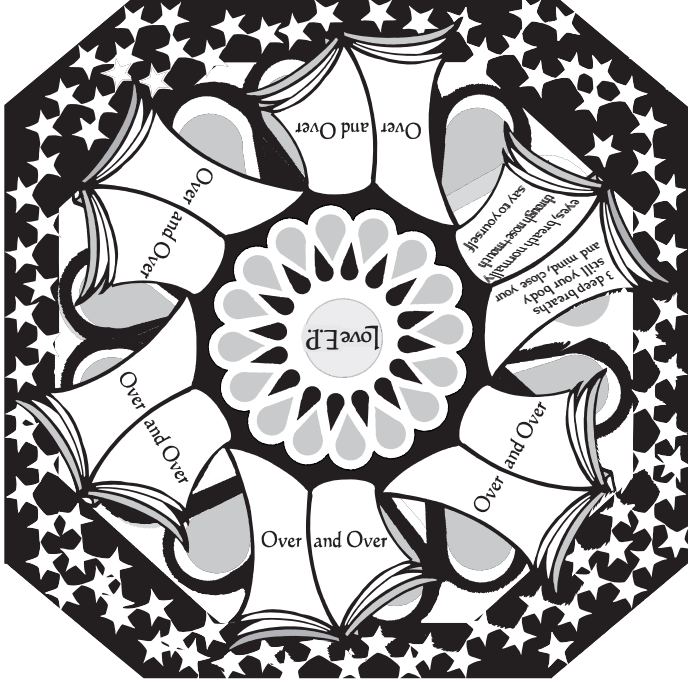
Artist's Note: The Gypsy jumpsuit has a bodice-like yoke embroidered in an East European or Middle Eastern-style pattern incorporating the hamsa, the Hand-of-God symbol protectively used in Jewish and Islamic cultures. Inside the palm may be other

symbols, including a mystical eye. Elvis may have known the hamsa from his studies of the Jewish mystical science of Kabbalah.

When Larry Geller took the last living disciple of Cheiro to Elvis's Bel Air house to give a palm reading, Elvis was told he had

"the heaviest fate line" she had ever seen. Cheiro was astrologer and palmist to Mark Twain, Bernhardt, royalty, etc. "Elvis loved Cheiro's books, and...spoke of producing a film about Cheiro in which he would portray the seer." (*If I Can Dream: Elvis' Own Story*)

35 MEDITATION & HEALTH



Those of us who aspire to meditation
need only become like a rock.
A rock is stable.
It knows how to meditate.

Deng Ming-Dao

How can I get to know myself?...
by meditating.

Bede Griffiths

To know peace
means to be eternal.

Lao Tzu

When your mind is detached, simple, quiet,
then all things can exist in harmony,
and you can begin to perceive
the subtle truth.

Lao Tzu

Many of his books (including the Bible) said, in so many words, that the
body is a temple, to be nourished and cared for, but Elvis overlooked those
parts. Intellectually, he knew it was correct, but he figured, what the hell.
Anything concerning health invariably fell into one of Elvis's blind spots.

Larry Geller

If you want to see the gods,
just sit down and close your eyes.

Deng Ming-Dao

Meditation is better
than any drug I know.
I can relax,
I can breathe deeper,
I'm calmer.

Elvis Presley

I asked him one time, "Elvis, if you were ever to have anything done in your honor or your memory what would you like?" He said, "I would like a chapel so my fans would have a place to meditate."

Janelle McComb
lifelong friend of Elvis

Elvis really took to meditation, and he practiced it daily. In 1964, he decided to create [the] Meditation Garden at Graceland where he, or anyone, could go to be alone, to meditate or to converse in private.

Larry Geller

DHR: Elvis had long-standing practices, such as meditation and reading religious books like *The Prophet*, that helped him detach, relax, and attain a peaceful state of mind. Spiritual music was something else that helped him feel at peace. He once said, "Gospel singing more or less puts your mind to rest. At least it does mine, since I was two."

From the time he was a boy, he was mesmerized by the moon. Lying on a blanket in the middle of the yard, gazing at the full moon and stars, Elvis said to his girlfriend, June Juanico, in 1956, "Keep your eyes on the moon, and you'll see a glowing blue ring appear. [Then], let yourself totally relax, and just focus on the space between the moon and the stars. Don't think about anything! Just let yourself float. If you can relax enough, you can go right up there with them.... It takes a little practice, but you can do it if you really want to."

Artist's Note: Growing up in an evangelical church, Elvis was familiar with hands-on spiritual healings. Similarly, Larry Geller, as a child, learned from his father a Japanese method of focusing healing light called Johrei. Geller later shared

with Elvis some of what he had learned.

The night after a motorcycle fall, Jerry Schilling, one of Elvis's retinue, "heard a knock on his bedroom door.... Elvis placed his hands on Jerry's back and prayed, visualizing a blue light. 'The next thing I

knew,' Jerry said later, 'I woke up the next morning and my back felt fine.'"

Elvis wrote down one of his meditations for his friend Chris Coffey, and signed it, "Love E.P." The meditation begins, "3 deep breaths..." (*Leaves of Elvis' Garden*).

36 MADNESS & ILLNESS

Without controlling
how we eat,
we cannot control
our existence.
Deng Ming-Dao

only I am as if forgotten.
I have the heart of a fool: so confused, so dark.
Men of the world are shining, alas, so shining—bright;
only I am as if locked into myself, unquiet, alas, like the sea,
turbulent, alas, unceasingly.
Lao Tzu

Only I am so reluctant,
I have not yet been given a sign:
like an infant, yet unable to laugh;
unquiet, roving as if I had no home.
All men have abundance,

Which is worse,
the madness of following Tao
or the madness of an existence
without awareness?
Deng Ming-Dao
People will come
from miles around
to see a freak.
Elvis Presley



When illness is overcome,
recovery is complete.
Deng Ming-Dao

The brighter it burns,
the quicker
it burns out.
Yen Tsun, Taoist sage

Elvis was never the same after his mother died.... After the Army...
he started taking all this medicine—the pills, the tranquilizers, and sleeping
medication like the doctor had him on and prescribed to him immediately
following Gladys's death. Anita Wood, one of Elvis's early loves

On October 9, 1973 [Elvis and Priscilla divorced]. Six days later he was admitted to Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis in a semi-comatose condition. He had started having trouble breathing in California and chartered a plane to fly home.... [Eventually Dr Nichopoulos, better known as Dr Nick, discovered that] Elvis was getting almost daily injections of Demerol [from a] doctor in California. **Peter Guralnick**, author of *Careless Love*

[After five years of being in 'perfect shape' in late] 1975 Elvis starts [to] gain weight and he don't want to show me he is out of shape. I think he shamed himself. The end of 1975 he goes to the hospital, and I lose contact after. His health is going down the hill.... He was out of the control.... He is locked in his room and he never comes out.

Kang Rhee, Elvis's Memphis karate teacher

DHR: "Blessed are the goofballs...for they refuse to take things seriously." Rick Stanley said this about Elvis's spontaneous singing of "That's All Right [Mama]" at a break because the song Sam Phillips had asked him to sing, "I Love You Because," wasn't working. Elvis often liked to act silly and crazy. As Larry Geller reported, "He could be wild. His nickname for himself, which he later had inscribed on a bracelet, was Crazy."

Although Elvis's use of sedatives and uppers worsened during the 1960s, it was 1972-74 when his drug use intensified. Larry Geller documented this change, writing, "In addition to his health problems—hypertension, high blood sugar, glaucoma, and a twisted colon that caused him to retain pounds of water weight — [Colonel] Parker's problems [huge debts from compulsive gambling] created stresses for Elvis, adding yet another good 'reason' for him to up his dosages of sedatives,

hypnotics, and uppers."

Larry Geller wrote that Elvis once asked him, "Do you think there's a tie-in between medication and meditation?" Elvis grinned, obviously amused by his observation. "It must mean something. It's too similar." Geller admitted, "Sad to say, without medication Elvis wasn't as good, onstage or off, as he was when he had it. There were times when he was more lucid with the drugs than without them. He was an addict."

On January 8, 1975, Elvis spent his fortieth birthday in self-imposed seclusion. Linda Thompson, his girlfriend at the time, characterized Elvis then as "a man suffering from severe depression, someone who ...seemed a willing partner in his self-immolation." When asked what he thought his biggest character flaw was, Elvis said, "I'm self destructive...but there's not a lot I can do about it." Though Elvis felt there was little he could do to change, he could have done something, if

he'd only been willing. He could have channeled his rage into killing his false self, then undergone a symbolic death of his self-destructive self and rebirth of his creative true self, like the transformation illustrated in "The King and the Corpse," a fairy tale from India about the king:

A decisive triumph on the inner battlefield of the soul bestows an essential and thoroughgoing metamorphosis. ... The moment [things] change for [the corpse], [the king] too is changed. Even the darkness around him is transformed into a dawn, glowing with light from the Light of the World.

So, what is the meaning of Elvis's kingly struggle? "Change yourself...and you inherit a renovated world." Although Elvis did, in part, suffer from madness and illness, diagnosing him with a mental illness would be, in the words of Tao Lzu, "like pinning a butterfly. The husk is captured, but the flying is lost."

Artist's Note: My Asian-style interpretation of Elvis's Mad Tiger suit was last seen in chapter twelve, "Light, Fire & Passion." Madness and illness can be the flip side of light and energy-giving

passion.

In Chinese astrology, some negative qualities of those born in a year of the tiger can be restlessness, obstinacy, recklessness, moodiness, aggressive behavior,

and a quick temper.

Again, Elvis seems to have chosen in "Tiger" an apt nickname for himself.

37 COMPASSION & FORGIVENESS

If you have a heart,
you have compassion.
Deng Ming-Dao

All people
love a compassionate person
as they do their own parents.
Wu Ch-eng

I treasure and uphold [compassion]...
because I am compassionate. I can be valiant....
Compassion wins every battle and outlasts every attack.
What Heaven creates
let compassion protect. Lao Tzu

Those who are truly [compassionate]
are so not because of theory or ethics,
but because they feel
the suffering of others as directly
as they would their own.
Deng Ming-Dao

God, forgive me for my sins.
Let...people...have compassion and
understanding of the things I have done.
Amen.
Elvis Presley



Through compassion—that is,
identifying with others and finding the
possibilities of their weaknesses within
yourself—you move them to loyalty
and gain their obedience. I Ching

Elvis assumed the mantle of family leadership,
a role burdened by poverty, lack of social status,
his mother's [and father's] alcoholism, his father's
prison record [eight months of a three-year sentence
for check forgery in Parchman, the Mississippi
state penitentiary], and the simple fact that he
was a child. If any of his critics need a lesson
in compassion, they don't need to look any fur-
ther than Elvis's childhood to gain respect for
what he accomplished. Rick Stanley

In Monroe, Louisiana, Elvis visited a little girl who was terminally ill. She had written him a letter. Before he went to see her, he got a garnet cross from me, which he took out there to the Crippled Children's Hospital and gave to her. He did a lot of neat things like that. Most of the time, no one ever knew.

Lowell Hays, Elvis's Memphis jeweler

*Elvis really
always found a way
to forgive.*

Larry Geller

DHR: Compassion means to suffer with the sufferer—Elvis clearly had compassion—and forgiveness is a gift to oneself. However, Elvis may not have fully experienced either until the day before he died. For as Thomas Merton said, “We cannot have true compassion [for] others until we are willing to accept pity and receive forgiveness for our own sins.”

Artist's Note: When Larry King interviewed Elvis's friend Linda Thompson in 2006, she said, “He derived much more pleasure from giving than receiving. You know, his life was lived very bibli-

cally.... He also was on a spiritual quest to find out how other people of other faiths lived their lives. And he used to wear an Egyptian ankh, a star of David and a crucifix around his neck.”

The ankh was often depicted as a gift from the sun in ancient Egyptian art. The sun's rays ended in human-like hands. Each hand held out an ankh or another gift from the deity.

38 MIRROR

The brightest path
seems dark.
Lao Tzu
Where there is sorrow,
there is holy ground.
Oscar Wilde



Can you wipe your
Dark Mirror free of dust?
Lao Tzu

Our spirit dwells in our eyes. When the eyes see something
[in the mirror], the spirit chases it. When we close our eyes and
look within, everything is dark. But within the dark, we still
see something. There is still dust. Only by putting an end to
delusions can we get rid of the dust.
Wu Ch'eng

The heart of a wise man is tranquil.
It is the mirror of
heaven and earth.
Chuang Tzu

A deeper truth was revealed:
He was like a mirror.
Sam Phillips

They had to watch me.
Elvis Presley

We looked at each other move
and saw virtual mirror images.

Ann-Margret

He was like a wild stallion, just snorting and stomping. And the whole time he was
walking on [his] bed he was looking in the mirror... all of a sudden he stopped and said...

"I'm a handsome son of a bitch!" And then he died laughing.

Jo Smith

wife of Elvis's cousin Billy,

recalling Elvis's reaction to being called "fat" by a rude woman at a theater in 1975

DHR: A favorite Bible verse of Elvis's was
1 Corinthians 13:12, which contains:

*For now we see in a mirror darkly, but
then face to face; now I know in part, but
then shall I know even as also I have been
known.*

Elvis sensed that his image could mirror
the Tao or the *imago Dei* (image of God).
It is as if Don Miguel Ruiz were writing
about Elvis, when he wrote this passage:

*He has discovered that he was a mirror
for the use of the people, a mirror in which
he could see himself. "Everyone is a mirror,"
he said. He saw himself in everyone, but
nobody saw him as themselves. And he
realized that everyone was dreaming, but
without awareness, without knowing who
they really were. They couldn't see him as
themselves because there was a fog or
smoke between the mirror.*

By viewing Elvis as a mirror, we can de-
velop the "capacity for reflection," about

which author Robert Bosnak writes in
connection with animated feelings from
the magic of earliest childhood. So we,
too, can achieve the goal of Taoism:
becoming like children again—reborn
as our true selves.

Of course, some people see but don't
see themselves in the mirror. Elvis saw
himself only at the last minute. Sometimes
seeing kills you. Regardless, self-forgive-
ness and forgiveness by a Higher Power
is the Way.

Artist's Note: In 1974, Elvis wore the
Nail Mirrored suit, which was embellished
with tiny mirrors.

There are so many ways to think about
what a mirror does. It can show us a true

reflection or a distorted one. A single
mirror provides a reversal, while facing
mirrors bounce back a fractured world of
many selves.

This owl appeared in chapter nineteen,

representing knowledge and wisdom.
What does the mirrored owl represent?

39 PURPOSE & MEANING

It's important for us to have goals and to strive toward them with the valor and the determination of the carp. Those of us who have goals have meaning and direction in our lives.... Just as the carp will swim against the current to reach its goal, so too must we know when we must stand up to fate in order to be successful.

Deng Ming-Dao

Tao is everything....
A person is part of Tao.
And a person is completely made up of Tao.

Deng Ming-Dao



When you do something, don't hold back.
Shoot it all, go for it all....
To be with Tao is to live a creative life.
To live a creative life always means
that you express who you are.
All I knew was, the only way to do it, the only
way to make it, what got me to this point, was
to just be natural and let it happen. And don't
stop. The minute I started thinking, it would
turn off. So, you don't think. Just do. Just be.

Deng Ming-Dao

Elvis Presley

Other people are bright; I alone am dark.
Other people have a purpose;
I alone don't know.

Lao Tzu

I've always known that there had to be a purpose
for my life. I've always felt an unseen hand
behind me, guiding my life.

Elvis Presley

There's a meaning for everything....
I always knew there was
a real spiritual life.

Elvis Presley

Elvis...wondered where he fit into the scheme of things, what his purpose might be, what meaning lay behind the improbable and extraordinary events in his life. A passage such as this [from *The Impersonal Life*] spoke [to

him] very clearly: "When you have found The Kingdom, you will likewise find your place in it, realizing...that your work was all laid out for you from the beginning, and that all that has gone before has been but a preparation

and a fitting of your human personality for that work." In the years to come, Elvis always kept a copy of *The Impersonal Life* with him wherever he went and gave away hundreds of copies to others. **Larry Geller**

DHR: Elvis felt he was born for a purpose that was amplified twofold because of his twin's death.

Larry Geller noted that "the culmination of his readings and his involvement with the Self-Realization [Fellowship] made [Elvis] feel quite strongly that he was chosen to help humanity, to carry a message."

In the margins of one of Elvis's favorite books, *Letters of Helena Roerich*, he wrote, "Self-purification will clear our path and make [the] understanding better [of] our purpose."

Artist's Note: Varying by bird and Native tribe, feathers are attributed meaning and purpose. Eagle, buzzard, owl, hawk, and other feathers carry shamanic significance.

Both Elvis and Gene Doucette descend from Native Americans. Doucette origi-

nally designed the Chief jumpsuit with real feathers on the chest and down the pants legs. But to be practical, he instead embroidered elaborate feathers that seemed to be real, until Elvis moved and the feathers failed to float in the air. (*Fit for a King*).

Only Doucette and Butch Polston know where one stone is intentionally missing from the Native American-inspired designs on the Chief jumpsuit. Doucette, following his inherited Native tradition, left the stone out to "let bad spirits leave the suit."

PRAYER & SACRIFICE

Each one
prays to God according
to his own light [and] the world
is touched by sacrifice.
Mahatma Gandhi

I cried out to God,
If that's really me, Lord, I want to die.
All I truly want is you.
Please, God, fill me with Yourself.
Destroy me, if that's what it takes."
Elvis Presley



We are moved to pray,
not because we want something, but
because we are moved to devotion over
the presence of Tao.
Deng Ming-Dao

Prayer is a form of meditation.
It is an act of reflection.
Deng Ming-Dao

The gods...will test our willingness to sacrifice
and reach the other side of enlightenment
instead of succumbing to greed
and our own degradation.
Kwan Saihung

Heaven and Earth are not
benevolent. To them men are like straw
dogs destined for sacrifice.
Lao Tzu

He felt like Jesus betrayed by his disciples.
Peter Guralnick, *Careless Love* (commenting
on Elvis's reaction to the book *Elvis: What Happened?*, published the year
he died, by Red and Sonny West and Dave Hiebler as told to Steve Dunleavy)

I took both his hands in mine and said, "Elvis, right now I want to pray for you." He said, "Please do," and started weeping.

Rex Humbard

televangelist, with Elvis after his last performance
in Las Vegas, December 12, 1976

Dear Lord, please show me a way. I'm tired and confused,
and I need your help.

Elvis Presley

one of his prayers the night he died,
recorded by Rick Stanley

DHR: A devotedly spiritual person, Elvis prayed and in a real way sacrificed himself so he could join his mother in Heaven.

The archetypal Elvis remains a kingly hero. As Heinrich Zimmer said, "The king's way leads from earthly pomp, through realms of death, to the summit of glory. The empty attitude of kingly splendor—brittle and doomed—contained within itself the seed of death; but the way of death is itself the way of initiation. The fiends of the grave reach out with a ghostly grip at the throat, and the life forfeited to death is broken on the rack; nevertheless, the end is life reborn, with exemption from death forever, self-entirety and consecration."

Artist's Note: The male Emperor Penguin stands for more than two months without food or water, through the frozen Antarctic winter, in order to protect his mate's eggs with his body's warmth.

In 1975-76, Elvis wore the Penguin suit on and off stage. The two-piece suit was boldly blocked in black and white.

41 DEATH & REBIRTH

Don't forget,
angels fly
because
they take themselves
so lightly.
Elvis Presley
his last words to Larry Geller,
before he died



Who uses his light
who trusts his vision
lives beyond death.
This is the Hidden Immortal.
Lao Tzu

Daring to act means death.
Lao Tzu

The strong
do not die a natural death.
Lao Tzu

Going out is life,
going in is death.
Lao Tzu

The soul's free.
The soul is going back to God,
going home again.
Elvis Presley

Estranged and re-united,
the new being.
Paul Tillich
existentialist philosopher

*I'm not afraid of death.
Only the ignorant,
the unenlightened person
is afraid of death.*
Elvis Presley

*I'm not surprised that people want him alive,
but Elvis Presley was laid to rest
on August 18, 1977.
He will live forever.*
Larry Geller

DHR: Twelve days before Elvis died, he telephoned Larry Geller at his home in California and said, "If you didn't help me on the spiritual path, I would've been dead years ago. You know, we have to leave on the sixteenth and I really need you here." Larry responded, "Don't worry, Elvis, I'll be there."

Elvis then said, "Look, Larry, I'm on fire, man. Why me, Lord, why me?" He then reminded Larry, "Don't forget to get me the best book on the Holy Shroud of Jesus. I really need to look into it. It seems that it's definite proof that Jesus...did walk the earth and for some reason left behind His own cloth that they wrapped His body in that made His imprint. His spirit. The Christ is eternal and now we have physical proof."

Elvis felt that there was a relationship between himself and Christ. Nearly ten years after Elvis's religious experience in the desert, he shared a secret with Larry

Geller: "I, ah, ah... I wanna tell you something. Cause, ah, you're the only person who could possibly understand... when I had that experience in the desert. I didn't only see Jesus's picture in the clouds—Jesus Christ literally exploded in me. Larry, it was me! I was Christ... I swear to God, Larry, I thought I might be him... Elvis Christ, Jesus Christ... I stood alone, Larry. I had a secret.... All I had were my prayers. I said many times, 'Lord, if you want me, if I'm the one, You gotta show me. Cause by myself, I'm lost. And if I'm wrong, if I'm not what I suspect, then show me, give me strength.'"

Many criticize Elvis for his grandiose and strange ideas—for example, claiming that he was a Christ-like figure. Regardless, it's important (if not vital) for us to have compassion for the human Elvis and adhere to the words of C. W. Bradley, who gave a beautiful and honest eulogy

at Elvis's funeral: "Elvis was a frail human being. And he would be the first to admit his weaknesses. Elvis would not want anyone to think that he had no fears or faults. But now that he's gone, I find it more helpful to remember his good qualities, and I hope you do, too."

The archetypal Elvis leaves a powerful imprint of his own spirit and soul, as well as the Tao that operates through him. Larry Geller's observation rings true: "It is as if Elvis never really left us, and in a sense that is true, for his image, his music, and the force of his personality remain. Through his greatness, his fans' love and a once-in-a-lifetime confluence of circumstances, he evolved into a reflection not only of our hopes and dreams, but of our struggles and weaknesses."

The death and rebirth motif, associated with Elvis, continues to evolve — this is the mysterious Tao of Elvis.

Artist's Note: Many cultures have the myth of the phoenix, which may look like a heron, eagle or peacock and is able to be reborn from its own ashes. The Chinese phoenix is called (in Japan and Korea as well) "immortal bird."

The Peacock jumpsuit was Elvis's favorite, because Gladys Presley loved peacocks. For his mother, Elvis kept peacocks on the lawn at Graceland and installed a large pair of blue, stained-glass peacocks inside.

Gene Doucette, isolated in the creative

space of his workshop, didn't know any of this. He designed his blue peacock out of his own love for the magnificent bird. It wasn't until later that Elvis's feelings towards the suit and the bird were made clear to Doucette.

42 SPIRITUAL WHOLENESS



Pray to roundness ... Wholeness.
The cycle of the moon, the seasons. We thank the Great
Creator for the new life and for the life it sprang from.
The past and future, cinched together.
The roundness of things.

Wally Lamb

The universe
is a harmonious
Oneness.
Lao Tzu

Tao is creation's sanctuary.
Lao Tzu

One
is the beginning and end of things.
All things become complete
when they become one.
Wang Pi
Taoist scholar

Once I go,
the world is going
to really start changing.
That's when it will all start.
Elvis Presley

The kingly man's glory is in knowing
That all things come together in One
And that life and death are equal.

Chuang Tzu

Our soul, our life force,
goes on when the body dies.
We have nothing to fear;
God will take the last journey with us.
Elvis Presley

God has a reason for everything.
We just have to fit the pieces
together.

Elvis Presley

As Jennifer was dying, she seemed to light up. The light looked as though it were coming from within her. She smiled a big smile. She was looking upwards and holding her arms out like she was trying to reach toward and hug someone. She said it twice, "Here comes Elvis." Then she collapsed and died.

Sherry Reed, interviewed by Dr Raymond Moody for *Elvis After Life*.

This is what she said upon the death of her eleven-year-old daughter.

DHR: Spiritual Wholeness, the Tao, and Oneness all represent the totality of the psyche and cosmos. A person who wishes "to cultivate Tao [the Oneness], must first know Tao."

In Taoism, death and birth are equal. As Lao Tzu said, "The Way gave birth to Unity," and in death, one returns to Unity and the Way, or Tao. Rousselle echoes this sentiment: "Our true essential nature is the 'primal spirit' in which nature and life are one: it is the great divine Tao... the great One." Remember what Lao Tzu said about the Tao: "It turns in a circle and does not endanger itself."

The Tao of Elvis is the essence of Elvis. "[He] who dies but doesn't perish lives on." Elvis lives!

Artist's Note: This brush-painted circle, painted by the author, is called an *ensō*, which is a ubiquitous form in Chinese and Japanese painting. The *ensō* was first used in China as a symbol of

perfection and enlightenment. For Zen Buddhists, the process of painting an *ensō* creates a moment when the mind is free.

NOTES

PREFACE

“Elvis Presley is the greatest”

Higgins, 66.

“I love Elvis and hope”

http://elvisinfonet.com/spotlight_james_brown.html.

The Tao, a mysterious force

Rosen (1997), 23.

evolution of the psyche

Rosen and Luebbert.

“archetypes and the collective unconscious”

Jung (1968), 42-43.

“This is the profound, simple truth”

Lao Tzu (1992a), 48.

“the force of God”

Geller and Spector, 66.

“Free from care”

Chuang Tzu (1992), 196.

“But he had insight”

Ming-Dao (1993), 474.

prefigured the civil rights movement

Early, G. This view is shared by Calvin Newborn, an African-American blues guitarist in Memphis, who knew Elvis as a teenager when he used to visit clubs on Beale Street.

See *Why Elvis?*, a documentary by David Leonard, 1994, Kulter.

“In Elvis white Americans”

Walker, 187-188.

When Elvis’s Scotch-Irish and Jewish...

see Dundy.

central to his spiritual life

Read by Elvis at home and on tour: *The Prophet*, by Kahlil Gibran; *The Impersonal Life*, by Joseph Benner; *Autobiography of a Yogi*, by Paramahansa Yogananda; and the *Holy Bible*, especially the Old Testament, or Torah. For a complete listing of Elvis’s spiritual books, see the appendix in *If I Can Dream*, by Geller and Spector, 325-328.

Self-Realization Fellowship

In Guralnick (1999), there are eight references to the Self-Realization Fellowship, which was founded by Yogananda and after his death, in 1952, run by his disciple Faye Wright (Sri Daya Mata), who was an important figure to Elvis. Guralnick (1999) makes eleven references to Faye Wright.

Elvis is everywhere

Scherman. Also Mojo Nixon and Skid Roper’s song by the same name is a humorous but serious mythic hymn: “Elvis is Everywhere,” Bo-Day-Shus, Enigma Records, 1987.

Muhammad Ali

Miller. It is made clear in this book that Muhammad Ali is a very spiritual person who, like Elvis, has the Tao working through him. It is understandable that when they met, they liked each other, and gave each other gifts.

“Sightings” are almost

See Eicher.

In 1998, twenty-one

Pareles, sec. E, 5.

“Before Elvis there was nothing”

Higgins, 12.

The Tao of Elvis is a psychological and philosophical work



NOTES

Philosophy derives from *philo*, which means friend, and *sophia*, which means wisdom. Sophia is also known as the mother of God, another parallel with Tao, which is matriarchal.

“*When we were kids*”

Higgins, 48.

At this meeting I failed

Someday I'll write about this in more detail. Subsequently, I took it again and passed without difficulty.

I decided to write

This book is about the Elvis mirror and how the Tao of Elvis touches one deeply on a spiritual level. It is not a biography of Elvis Presley. For the best biography, see the definitive two volumes by Peter Guralnick.

INTRODUCTION

“*All I ever wanted*”

Geller and Spector, 233.

“*Elvis Presley's death*”

http://www.elvis-presley.com/html/elviso_q_about.html.

“*a symbol of the country's vitality*”

Brown and Broeske, 42.

“*Encouraging others*”

Lao Tzu (1992a), 106.

“*Elvis Presley was more*”

Higgins, 56.

“*When I first heard*”

Higgins, 42.

“*egocide and transformation*”

Rosen (2002), xxi-xxviii, 61-84.

The Memphis Mafia

The name of Elvis's entourage, usually twelve male members, made up of friends, companions, and bodyguards.

“*A woman ran down*”

Sumner in Haining, 147.

“*Elvis is loved, and he is hated*”

Higgins, 161.

“*There ain't nothing*”

Farren, 89.

“*Don't go crazy*”

Lao Tzu (1992a), 55.

Elvis was intensely, even

According to Carl Jung, a man's anima (soul or feminine side) evolves through contact with: (1) *mother*. During boyhood; women are seen as caretakers who love unconditionally;

(2) *lover*. During adolescence; women are seen primarily as sexual, an opportunity for physical

merging;

(3) *equal partner*. In the later years; women are seen as equals, which allows for adult relationship;

(4) *spiritual wise old woman*. As men age, women are experienced as mature beings and

spiritual companions. Elvis (like our society) was (is) stuck in the first and second levels.

Jung (1966a), 188-211.

“*Sex (is) not the answer*”

Whitmer, 419.

was he a sacrificial dying God

Estes, 19-20, 22.

a book on the Shroud of Turin

This book, *The Scientific Search for the Face of*

Jesus, by Frank O. Adams, was brought to Elvis

by his spiritual adviser, Larry Geller. Geller and

Spector, 303.
"Superior people can awaken"
 Lao Tzu (1992a), 98.
"kept out of heaven"
 Nash, 3.

1: TAO

"Elvis thought the"
 Larry Geller, interview by author, 1999.
"The Tao does"
 Lao Tzu (1996), 74.
"Before Heaven and Earth"
 Lao Tzu (1985), No 25, 37.
"The Master doesn't take"
 Lao Tzu (1988), No 5.
"It is a movement"
 Ming-Dao (1993), 202.
"I'm a soul"
 Guralnick (1999), 222.
"You know, one"
 Ibid., 205.
"Elvis could be"
 Stanley, 180-181.
"Elvis was both"
 Ibid., 203, 190.
"Mystery of mysteries"
 Lao Tzu (1990), No 1, 59.
"I know now."
 Geller and Spector, 114.
"A monk should"
 Heiler in Campbell (1960), 195.
"the great Tao"
 Rouselle in Campbell (1960), 96.

2: OPPOSITES

"Elvis's music and his personality"
http://www.elvis-presley.com/html/elviso_q_about.html.
"Know the male"
 Lao Tzu (1988), No 28.
"The Tao doesn't"
 Ibid., No 5.
"Know the white"
 Ibid., No 28.
"The bright Way"
 Lao Tzu (1990), No 41, 7.
"You accept the bad"
 Farren, 90.
"Elvis would bounce"
 Nash, 375.
"It's not black"
 Guralnick (1994), 99.
"Elvis has a kindred spirit"
 Ibid., 134-135.
"The bottom line"
 Stanley, 190.
"Contradiction is given"
 Buber in Campbell (1960), 184.

3: CHILD

"The great man"
 Lao Tzu (1996), 56.
"He who is"
 Lao Tzu (1988), No 55.
"Can you make"
 Lao Tzu (1985), No 10, 30.



NOTES

“Elvis was not a ‘mama’s boy’”

Juanico, 162.

“He was white as”

Nash, 137.

“Elvis never really”

Stanley, 190.

Five months before he died

Geller and Spector, 229-230.

“Son, our love”

Ibid, 230.

“I’ll never leave”

Ibid.

5: FATHER

“And how shall”

Gibran, 52.

“No one understands”

Lao Tzu (1996), 104.

“When a hideous”

Chuang Tzu (1992), 116.

“The wise look”

Ming-Dao (1996), 197.

“When people are”

Lao Tzu (1996), 144.

“I made my”

Farren, 17.

“Elvis loved his”

Clayton, 225.

“The Colonel is”

Farren, 80.

“I picked up”

Ann H Finch, interview by author, 1996.

“very often produces”

Jung in Campbell (1954), 10.

“My bond with”

Chuang Tzu (1992), 172.

“Don’t lose your”

Lao Tzu (1996), 56.

“From the time”

Farren, 35.

“Elvis grew up”

Guralnick (1994), 13.

“My total image”

Ibid, 120.

“Elvis was always”

Stanley, 171.

“Those who possess”

Lao Tzu (1996), 61.

During the last

Nash, 539, 618-619.

4: MOTHER

“People are born”

Lao Tzu (1996), 105.

“Who knows the”

Ibid, 104.

“I have the”

Lao Tzu (1985), No 20, 35.

“The female is”

Lao Tzu (1996), 122.

“Children are no”

Ibid, 104.

“I love you”

Geller and Spector, 47.

“Losing my mother”

Farren, 30-31.

“He was a mama’s boy”

Guralnick (1994), 36.

6: FAMILY & FRIENDS

"Family and Friends"

Carleton's, 62.

"Honor your parents"

Lao Tzu (1992a), 64.

"The first practice"

Ibid., 4.

"We cannot be"

Ming-Dao, 127.

"When you think"

Ibid., 89.

"I was raised"

Farren, 107.

"Elvis treated me better"

Clayton, 124.

"Elvis was an enormously"

Ibid., 278.

"We were all"

Guralnick (1999), 217.

psychologist Erik Erikson

See Erikson.

"a great capacity for friendship"

Jung (1968), 86.

7: SPIRIT, SOUL & RELIGION

"You have walked"

Gibran, 9.

"The world is"

Lao Tzu (1996), 58.

"Can you educate"

Lao Tzu (1985), No 10, 30.

"To arrive"

Lao Tzu (1992a), 50.

"Everything we do"

Ming-Dao (1996), 15.

"I always knew"

Geller and Spector, 51.

"Elvis was pure"

Clayton, 340.

"Elvis is becoming"

Nash, 339.

"The Gospel of Elvis"

Ludwig, 144-145, 107-108.

"Elvis often spoke"

Ann H Finch, interview by author, 1996.

"Often he is endowed"

Jung (1968), 87.

8: LOVE

"Much have we"

Gibran, 9.

"Through love one"

Lao Tzu (1985), No. 67, 58.

"Kindness in giving"

Lao Tzu (1970), 18.

"Love your life"

Lao Tzu (1992a), 106.

"The deeper the"

Lao Tzu (1996), 88.

"My moment of"

Geller and Spector, 233.

"Elvis was sweet"

Clayton, 11.

"Elvis had a great"

Ibid., 319.

"Everyone knew Elvis"

Stanley, 148.



NOTES

Grace RCA (two compact discs of Elvis's greatest sacred performances of fifty-five gospel songs) is quite convincing. "I forget myself" Yogananda, 262. "How Great Thou Art" Elvis received two Grammy awards for this hymn. He received a third Grammy for another spiritual song, and a fourth Grammy for his lifetime achievements as a creative artist.

10: GRACE & GENTLENESS

"Simple Grace" *I Ching* (1967), 93, 221. "The man" Chuang Tzu (1992), 137. "Gentleness" Lao Tzu (1992a), 63. "With gentleness" *I Ching* (1982), 14. "Make your mood" Lü, 31. "All good flows" Written, during the last year of Elvis's life, in the margin of page 265 of one of his favorite books, *Letters of Helena Roerich*, published in 1939 by the Agni Yoga Society (a photocopy of the page was provided by Larry Geller). "Elvis was a" Guralnick (1994), 16. "His small child's" Ibid., 22. "Elvis never had" Clayton, 121.

Stevens, 12. Stevens linked strife to Freud's *thantos*, the power of death, which is contrary to its opposite, *eros*, the pull of love and life.

"My love for Lisa" Geller and Spector, 297. "It's like a surge" Guralnick (1999), 315. *love's twin, strife* Stevens, 12. "For even as" Gibran, 12. "All that a man" Iyer, frontispiece.

9: MUSIC & SONG

"Music is the" Edwards, 430. "A good artist" Lao Tzu (1988), No 27. "Hold up the Great" Lao Tzu (1996), 70. "Performed with the harmony" Chuang Tzu (1994), 133, 135-136. "When the center" Ibid., 149. "My voice is" Guralnick (1994), 331. "Elvis sang songs" Ibid., 79. "He was really" Ibid., 151. "There was a floating" Ibid., 205. "I feel God" Guralnick (1999), 223. Listening to *Amazing*

“One feels it a grace”

Heschel, 33.

“Possession in great measure”

I Ching (1967), 60.

11: DARKNESS, SORROW & SADNESS

“Where there is sorrow”

Edwards, 632.

“The one we call dark”

Lao Tzu (1996), 2.

“The birth of a man”

Chuang Tzu (1992), 147.

“Inside there is”

Lao Tzu (1996), 42.

“The brightest path”

Ibid., 82.

“[Elvis was] a sad”

Guralnick (1994), 26.

“Elvis always seemed”

Ann H. Finch, interview by author, 1996.

“I’ve made a”

Guralnick (1994), 323-324.

“I felt sorry”

Guralnick (1999), 488.

“The Tao, the dark”

Lao Tzu (1996), xi.

“The Tao is dark and”

Lao Tzu (1988), 21.

12: LIGHT, FIRE & PASSION

“The passions are”

Edwards, 467.

“In the deep”

Chuang Tzu (1992), 109.

“The light itself”

Lü, 15.

“In passion we”

Lao Tzu (1996), 2.

“Where the fountains”

Chuang Tzu (1992), 89.

“Send me some”

Geller and Spector, 211.

“I’m afraid I’ll”

Guralnick (1994), 269.

“He’s just a”

Clayton, 69.

“Music ignited a”

Guralnick (1999), 149.

“Light does not”

Lao Tzu (1996), 57.

“The face of God”

Guralnick (1999), 628.

13: DREAMS

“Your youth has”

Gibran, 8.

“Life is like”

Ming-Dao (1996), 230.

“Dreams are the”

Lü, 15.

“Once upon a”

Chuang Tzu (1974), 48.

“By and by”

Ibid., 45.

“My whole life”

Clayton, 44.



NOTES

“I know I drove”
Guralnick (1999), 550.

15: ALONE & LONELINESS

“As soon as”
Merton, 113.
“What men hate”
Lao Tzu (1985), No 42, 46.
“All spirituality”
Ming-Dao (1996), 200.
“Other people are”
Lao Tzu (1988), No 20.
“To live the life”
Ming-Dao (1996), 234.

“People think I’m”
Geller and Spector, 13.

“Elvis was a”
Clayton, 28.
“I get lonesome”
Farren, 10.
“Elvis was an”
Guralnick (1999), 560.

“I swear to God”
Geller and Spector, 34.

“The king is always killed”
Pearlman, 142.

16: TWINNING & PAIRING

“Whether laughing or”
Shimano, 98.
“The coexistence of”
Lao Tzu (1996), 4.

“I hope I”

Farren, 17.

“I was running”

Juanico, 224-225.

“My life’s”

Clayton, 260.

“It’s like Elvis”

Higgins, 114.

“Elvis and Lisa Marie”

Geller and Spector, 292-293.

“It shows the inner truth”

Jung (1966b), 142.

14: GIVING & GENEROSITY

“See first that”

Gibran, 23.

“The more he”

Lao Tzu (1996), 162.

“He is humane”

Lao Tzu (1992b), No 16, 23.

“When first one”

Ming-Dao (1996), 132.

“He gives his”

Lao Tzu (1996), 163.

“I’m so lucky”

Geller and Spector, 281.

“Elvis was always”

Clayton, 214.

“You’re giving”

Ibid., 214.

“Elvis was the”

Ibid., 262.

“Elvis had a special way”

Dr Lester Hofman, interview by author, 1996.

“So everything we”
 Ming-Dao (1996), 217.
 “The existence of things”
 Lao Tzu (1996), 4.
 “[Tao] causes being”
 Chuang Tzu (1992), 183.
 “They say when”
 Geller and Spector, 37.
 “As Elvis’s life”
 Whitmer, 139.
 “[At] the funeral”
 Clayton, 217-218.
 “I dreamed that”
 Guralnick (1999), 582-583.

17: MAN OF TAO

“All those who”
 Ming-Dao (1996), 216.
 “The Man of”
 Lao Tzu (1985), No 7, 29.
 “Thus also...he encompasses”
 Ibid., No 22, 36.
 “Thus also...he sets”
 Ibid., No 58, 53.
 “Whoever knows himself”
 Ibid., No 33, 41.
 “Man, all I”
 Geller and Spector, 23.
 “Elvis was just”
 Guralnick (1994), 68, 79.
 “Elvis came in”
 Clayton, 45.
 “Elvis’s love for”
 Ibid., 128.

“Elvis...was a man...who truly”
 Guralnick (1999), 85-86.
 “Lao Tzu extols”
 Lao Tzu (1996), 66.

18: INNOCENCE & PLAY

“Verily the ocean”
 Gibran, 48.
 “In innocence we”
 Lao Tzu (1996), 2.
 “Innocence is inside”
 Ming-Dao (1996), 244.
 “Innocence does not”
 Ibid., 31.
 “Playing is as”
 Ibid., 144.
 “Elvis looked like”
 Juanico, 47.
 “Elvis was always”
 Clayton, 11.
 “Elvis didn’t radiate”
 Geller and Spector, 323.
 “It didn’t matter”
 Clayton, 72.
 “Innocence and passion”
 Lao Tzu (1996), 3.
 “this [God-given]”
 Cammerloher, 431.

19: KNOWLEDGE & WISDOM

“Reading gives God”
 Merton, 62.



NOTES

“Mastering books is”
 Ming-Dao (1996), 38.
 “Knowing others is”
 Lao Tzu (1988), No 33.
 “For he who”
 Quoted in Chuang Tzu (1992), 177.
 “Tao is the”
 Ming-Dao (1996), 137.
 “A long time ago”
 Juanico, 250, 314-315.
 “Although it hardly”
 Geller and Spector, 49.
 “He had incredible”
 Guralnick (1999), 463.
 “I have my”
 Ibid., 135.
 “Knowledge comes with”
 Harvey, 32.
 “He remained a”
 Geller and Spector, 51.
 “Wisdom laughs to”
 Harvey, 208.
 “Your shadow has”
 Gibran, 9.
 “Whoever holds fast”
 Lao Tzu (1985), No 35, 42.
 “If a man”
 Chuang Tzu (1992), 94.
 “Image refers to”
 Lao Tzu (1996), 43.
 “The Great Image”
 Ibid., 70.

20: IMAGE (PERSONA & SHADOW)

“The image is”
 Higgins, 14.
 “They know about”
 Geller and Spector, 215.
 “No one can”
 Ibid., 14.
 “The interesting thing”
 Ibid., 32.
 “They don’t know me”
 Whitmer, 404.
 “Do you realize”
 Geller and Spector, 233.
 “He taught me”
 Higgins, 88.
 21: TRUTH & TRUTH OF CHARACTER
 “What is true”
 Lao Tzu (1996), 162.
 “The truest truth”
 Lao Tzu (1996), 82.
 “In public, we”
 Ming-Dao (1996), 204.
 “You have got”
 Chuang Tzu (1992), 193.
 “Those who want”
 Lao Tzu (1992a), 63.
 “I knew in”
 Geller and Spector, 40.
 “Son...always remember”
 Clayton, 25.
 “There is something”
http://www.elvis-presley.com/html/elviso_q_about.html.
 “Elvis...was [a]”

Clayton, 378.
“*Insist on yourself*”
Kabat-Zinn, 210.
“*That the truth*”
Guralnick (1999), 175.

22: HAPPINESS & JOY

“*Your joy is*”
Gibran, 32-33.
“*To increase life*”
Lao Tzu (1985), No 55, 52.
“*You never find*”
Chuang Tzu (1992), 149.
“*If you practice*”
Ibid., 150.
“*Happiness rests on*”
Lao Tzu (1985), No 58, 53.
“*Someone to love*”
Nash, 553.
“*Elvis had a*”
Clayton, 260.
“*Elvis was one*”
Geller and Spector, 96.
“*It’s...important*”
Guralnick (1999), 136.
“*A flame to melt*”
Melville, 144.
“*From joy I came*”
Yogananda, 146.

23: VIRTUE

“*The reason people*”
Lao Tzu (1996), 141.

“*The Way begets*”
Ibid., 102.
“*Cultivated in the self*”
Ibid., 108.
“*He who contains*”
Ibid., 110.
“*The virtue of*”
Ibid., 136.
“*Elvis was good*”
Clayton, 23, 383.
“*He felt he had*”
Guralnick (1994), 337.
“*Elvis came out*”
Higgins, 20.
“*I admired Elvis*”
Clayton, 36.
“*The pleasure*”
Merton, 31.

24: BEAUTY

“*Beauty is eternity*”
Gibran, 83.
“*All the world*”
Lao Tzu (1996), 4.
“*Beautiful words*”
Ibid., 162.
“*What we call*”
Ibid., 4.
“*The butterfly is*”
Ming-Dao (1996), 229.
“*Elvis was probably*”
Clayton, 69.
“*You’re beautiful*”
Juanico, 69.



NOTES

“He was the total”
[http://www.elvis-presley.com/html/elviso_q_](http://www.elvis-presley.com/html/elviso_q_about.html)

“Elvis was truly”
Stearn, 17.
“Only in solitude”
O’Donohue, 135.
“Silence is the”
Guralnick (1999), 456.

25: NATURE & WATER

“Water is the source”
Lao Tzu (1996), 16.
“Express yourself”
Lao Tzu (1988), No 23.
“What is firmly”
Lao Tzu (1990), No 54, 23.
“Nothing in the world”
Lao Tzu (1996), 86.
“The Supreme good”
Lao Tzu (1988), No 8.
“You’ve got to”
Juanico, 75.
“To Sam Phillips [Elvis] represented”
Guralnick (1994), 121.

“I found Elvis”
Clayton, 69; Guralnick (1994), 186. At Daytona Beach on May 7, 1955, during Elvis’s first trip to Florida. Mae Axton gave Elvis early-concert exposure in Florida, co-wrote “Heartbreak Hotel,” and saw to it that he brought his folks to Florida to see the ocean. She and Elvis remained friends for the rest of his life.

“Elvis Presley arrived”
Estés, 37, 39.

26: WORK (BUSINESS)

“When you work”
Gibran, 27.
“Work without working”
Lao Tzu (1996), 126.

“He works and”
Lao Tzu (1985), No 77, 62.

“To live is”

Ming-Dao (1996), 110.

“Work for what”

Ibid., 113.

“When I don’t”

Farren, 27.

“Taking Care of”

Brown, 353.

“[Elvis] came up”

Nash, 481-482.

“[In 1970, Elvis]”

Ibid., 483.

“I choose all”

Guralnick (1999), 143.

“the McDonaldization of Society”
Ritzer.

“the illusion of intimacy”

Ibid., 100, 113.

27: TRANSCENDENCE & TRANSFORMATION

“People who cultivate”
Lao Tzu (1996), 100.

“To understand yet”

Ibid., 142.

“Those who follow”

Ming-Dao (1996), 65.

“When the faculties”

Chuang Tzu (1992), 78.

“Truly, the greatest”

Lao Tzu (1992a), 96.

“Elvis’s life was”

DePaoli, 9.

“A big part”

Haining, 161-162.

“Elvis, like America”

DePaoli, 17.

“It was strange”

Haining, 152.

Transcendence is a step

Rosen (2002), xxx.

“Millions of people”

Geller and Spector, 142.

“So be it”

Ibid., 142.

When ten years later

Ibid., 232.

“God works in”

Ibid., 233.

28: SUCCESS & FAILURE

“You don’t have”

Lao Tzu (1996), 18.

“When you are”

Lao Tzu (1992b), 117.

“Because he”

Lao Tzu (1988), No 22.

“He does not”

Chuang Tzu (1992), 130.

“Let those who”

Lao Tzu (1996), 46.

“The vanity of”

Ibid., 18.

“Elvis would be”

Clayton, 90.

“It was not”

DePaoli, 96.

“Elvis dug his”

Nash, 763.

“Rising from rural”

DePaoli, 97.

“success is as”

Lao Tzu (1988), No 13.

29: HOME (GRACELAND)

“And though of”

Gibran, 37.

“The Tao protects”

Lao Tzu (1985), 137.

“Tao is the”

Ibid., 55.

“Houses full of”

Lao Tzu (1996), 18.

“Retreating to hide”

Lü, 63.

“I only really”

Farren, 99.

“My mama was”

Geller and Spector, 35.

“I had never”

Guralnick (1994), 468.



NOTES

“It turned out”
 Comments made by Mary Pipher in a letter to
 the author after a visit to GraceLand, 1996.
GraceLand was more
 Guralnick (1999), 222-223.
 “No matter what”
 Iyer, 251.
This spiritual ritual
 Durkheim described this kind of *rite of passage*
 as a religious “collective effervescence, when
 human beings feel themselves transformed,
 and are in fact transformed, through ritual doing.
 A force experienced as external to each individual
 is the agent of that transformation, but the force
 itself is created by the fact of assembling and
 temporarily living a collective life that transports
 individuals beyond themselves.” Durkheim, xli.

30: KING

“... the king”
 Carleton, 87.
 “Use the Tao”
 Lao Tzu (1996), 60.
 “The Tao is”
 Ibid, 50.
 “Kings would fall”
 Ibid, 78.
 “When you realize”
 Lao Tzu (1988), No 16.
 “I’m not the King”
 Haining, 147.
 “[E]lvis] *knew exactly*”
 Nash, 585.

“When the King”
 Ludwig, 143.
 “He was, and”
 DePaoli, 77.
 “I looked into”
 Chuang Tzu (1992), 192-193.
 31: PAIN & SUFFERING
 “And you would”
 Gibran, 58-59.
 “We ache, because”
 Ming-Dao (1996), 95.
 “One of the”
 Ibid, 168.
 “If he gives”
 I Ching (1967), 233.
 “Clouds and thunder”
 Ibid, 17.
 “The fans, the”
 Geller and Spector, 286.
 “When you chronicle”
 Nash, 141.
 “He’d go to”
 Ibid, 365.
 “Those last five”
 Ibid, 531.
 “He already seemed”
 Guralnick (1999), 603.
 32: HARMONY & BALANCE
 “Perfect harmony is”
 Lao Tzu (1996), 131.

“*The Tao moves*”

Ibid., 80.

“*All things have*”

Lao Tzu (1985), No 42, 46.

“*Those who cultivate*”

Lao Tzu (1996), 81.

“*Simply balance the*”

Lao Tzu (1992a), 56.

“*Gospel music became*”

Farren, 29.

“*Elvis was harangued*”

Depaoli, 18.

“*He was a real*”

Haining, 160.

“*If we make*”

Stanley, 203-204.

“*He got what*”

Interview with Alfred Wertheimer on National Public Radio (in which he quoted Little Richard), December 1, 1997.

33: PRISONER & FREEDOM

“*The worst*”

Ming-Dao (1996), 211.

“*Care about people’s*”

Lao Tzu (1988), No 9.

“*Be content with*”

Chuang Tzu (1974), 59.

“*Addiction is most*”

Ming-Dao (1996), 211.

“*He comes very*”

I Ching (1967), 184.

“*What drove us*”

Geller and Spector, 23-24.

“*I know what*”

Ibid., 13-14.

“*The spiritual*”

Ibid., 155.

“*Elvis was like*”

Clayton, 296.

the Comeback Special

This live TV broadcast on NBC in 1968 was orchestrated by Elvis, but opposed by the Colonel. It marked the end of the cookie-cutter movies and the renewal of live performances, which Elvis faithfully executed until his death.

34: DESTINY

“*In a real*”

Brussat, 471.

“*Nothing is better*”

Chuang Tzu (1994), 35.

“*Find out destiny*”

Lao Tzu (1992b), No 51, 48.

“*Their lives appear*”

Ming-Dao (1996), 68-69.

“*The Master does*”

Lao Tzu (1988), No 30.

“*I always felt*”

Farren, 10.

“*Elvis saw Jesse’s*”

Geller and Spector, 132.

“*I think Elvis*”

Clayton, 254.

“*He was destiny’s*”

Nash, 231.

“*The Way is*”

Lao Tzu (1992b), No 61, 55.



NOTES

35: MEDITATION & HEALTH

“No one can”
Ming-Dao (1996), 63.

“How can I”

Giffiths, 35.

“When your mind”

Lao Tzu (1992a), 14.

“If you want”

Ming-Dao (1996), 200.

“To know peace”

Lao Tzu (1985), No 55, 52.

“Those of us”

Ming-Dao (1996), 17.

“Elvis really took”

Geller and Spector, 127.

“Meditation is better”

Ibid, 127.

“Many of his”

Ibid, 71.

“I asked him”

Clayton, 366. Janelle McComb actualized Elvis's wish and saw to it that a memorial chapel was built in Tupelo, Mississippi, next to the house where he was born. It opened August 19, 1979.

“Gospel singing”

Stanley, 20.

“Keep your eyes”

Juanico, 129-130.

36: MADNESS & ILLNESS

“Which is worse”
Ming-Dao (1996), 188.

“Only I am”

Lao Tzu (1985), No 20, 35.

“The brighter it”

Lao Tzu (1996), 18.

“Without controlling”

Ming-Dao (1996), 102.

“When illness is”

Ibid, 179.

“People will come”

Guralnick (1999), 411. Told to Kathy Westmoreland (singer who worked with Elvis; she also was his lover and friend) as she and Elvis watched crowds arrive, when on tour in 1970. Kathy noted that the remark made everyone laugh and that Elvis laughed louder than anyone.

“Elvis was never”

Clayton, 190.

“On October”

Guralnick (1999), 514-515.

“[After five years”

Clayton, 301.

“Blessed are”

Stanley, 12.

“He could be”

Geller and Spector, 56.

Although Elvis's use

Ibid, 149-150.

“In addition”

Ibid, 191-192.

“Do you think” and “Sad to say”

Ibid, 192.

“a man suffering”

Guralnick (1999), 555-556.

“I'm self-destructive”

Ibid, 556.

“A decisive”
Zimmer, 231.
“Change yourself”
Ibid.
“like pinning”
Lao Tzu (1992a), 8.

37: COMPASSION & FORGIVENESS

“If you have”
Ming-Dao (1996), 128.
“All people love”
Lao Tzu (1996), 135.
“I treasure and”
Ibid., 134.
“Those who are”
Ming-Dao (1996), 133.
“Through compassion”
I Ching (1982), 14.
“Elvis really always”
Geller and Spector, 55.
“In Monroe”
Clayton, 282.
“Elvis assumed”
Stanley, 23.
“God, forgive”
Nash, 717. On his knees, praying, the day before he died. Recorded by Rick Stanley, who was with him.
“We cannot”
Merton, 37.

38: MIRROR

“Elvis presents”
Stanley, 15.

“The heart”
Chuang Tzu (1992), 119.
“He forgets”
Lao Tzu (1996), 70-71.
“Can you wipe”
Ibid., 20.
“Our spirit dwells”
Ibid.
“They had to”
Guralnick (1999), 467.
“A deeper truth”
Ibid., 469.
“We looked”
Ibid., 149-150. Guralnick also notes that Joe Esposito (a member of the Memphis Mafia) told Elvis that Ann-Margret was “a female you!”
“He was like”
Nash, 616.
“For now we”
Geller and Spector, 178.
“He has discovered”
Ruiz, xviii-xix.
“capacity for”
Bosnak, 195.

39: PURPOSE & MEANING

“Tao is everything”
Ming-Dao (1996), 201.
“It’s important”
Ibid., 23.
“When you do”
Ibid., 108.
“Other people”
Lao Tzu (1988), No 20.



NOTES

“*Estranged and re-united*”
Chiseled in stone at the entrance to the Tilllich
Garden, where Paul Tilllich is buried in New
Harmony, Indiana.

41: DEATH & REBIRTH

“*Dear Lord*”
Stanley, 142.
“*The king’s way*”
Zimmer, 232.

“*Daring to act*”
Lao Tzu (1996), 146.
“*The strong do*”
Lao Tzu (1985), No 42, 46.
“*Going out is*”
Ibid., No 50, 49.
“*Who uses his*”
Lao Tzu (1996), 104.

“*Don’t forget*”
Clayton, 340.
“*I’m not afraid*”
Geller and Spector, 316.
Ibid.
“*I’m not surprised*”
Clayton, 360.

“*If you didn’t*”
Geller and Spector, 300.
“*Don’t worry*”
Ibid., 300.
“*Look, Larry*”
Ibid., 300.
“*Don’t forget*”
Ibid., 301-302.

“*Self-purification*”
Elvis wrote this passage in the margin of page
195 in *Letters of Helene Roerich* (a photocopy
of the page was provided by Larry Geller).

40: PRAYER & SACRIFICE

“*I’ve always*”
Geller and Spector, 33.
“*There’s a meaning*”
Ibid., 34.
“*All I knew*”
Ibid., 45.
“*For someone*”
Ibid., 53.
“*the culmination*”
Whitmer, 412.
“*Self-purification*”
Elvis wrote this passage in the margin of page
195 in *Letters of Helene Roerich* (a photocopy
of the page was provided by Larry Geller).
Official Mahatma Gandhi website <http://mkgandhi.org>.
“*Prayer is a*”
Ming-Dao (1996), 158.
“*We are moved*”
Ibid., 158.
“*The gods...will*”
Ming-Dao (1993), 4.
“*Heaven and Earth*”
Lao Tzu (1985), No 5, 28.
“*I cried out*”
Geller and Spector, 110.
“*I took both*”
Gurabnick (1999), 617.
“*He felt like*”
Ibid., 636.

“I, ah, ah”
Ibid., 186-187.
“Elvis was”
Ibid., 315.
“It is as”
Ibid., 323.

42: SPIRITUAL WHOLENESS

“Pray to roundness”
Lamb, 883.
“One is the beginning”
Lao Tzu (1996), 78.
“Tao is”
Ibid., 124.
“The kingly”
Chuang Tzu (1992), 106-107.
“The universe”
Lao Tzu (1992a), 9, 17, 57.
“God has a reason”
Stearn, 97.
“Our soul, our”
Ibid., 245-246.
“Once I go”
Geller and Spector, 322.
“As Jennifer was”
Moody, 61. Sherry Reed also said, “I’ll always
love Elvis for what he did for Jennifer.”
“to cultivate Tao,”
Rousselle, 64.
“The Way gave”
Lao Tzu (1990), No 42, 9.
“Our true essential nature”
Rousselle, 96.

“It turns in”
Lao Tzu (1985), No 25, 37.
“[He] who dies”
Lao Tzu (1996), 66.



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ABOUT the AUTHOR

Dr David H. Rosen is a physician, psychiatrist, and Jungian analyst. The vast array of his interests includes finding meaning in suffering; spirituality as it relates to healing; dreams; all kinds of creativity, especially visual art and haiku; “egocide” as a meaningful alternative to killing oneself; and practicing what he preaches.

He is the author of eight books, including *The Tao of Jung: The Way of Integrity*; *The Healing Spirit of Haiku* with co-author Joel Weishaus; *Transforming Depression: Healing the Soul through Creativity* (now in its third edition) written after interviewing survivors of jumps off the Golden Gate Bridge, and treating many suicidally depressed patients; *Medicine as Human Experience* with co-author Dr David Reiser, a classic in the field; and the children’s book *Henry’s Tower*. Rosen’s books have been translated into many languages.

David was born in 1945 in Port Chester, New York, and attended University of California, Berkeley and the University of Missouri School of Medicine, received psychiatric training at the University of California, San Francisco and subsequent training in Jungian analysis. He was the initial holder of the McMillan Professorship in Analytical Psychology at Texas A&M University (the first of its kind in the world). Though he retired in 2011, he still edits the Fay Books in Analytical (Jungian) Psychology. He is Affiliate Professor in Psychiatry at the Oregon Health & Science University.

Currently living in Eugene, Oregon, with his wife Lanara and their rescued dog Willow, David walks, paints, sees analytic patients, and leads a

dream group.

Laughter and song are especially important to Dr Rosen. He has tried his hand at stand-up comedy and has written his first song, “Where Elvis Lives,” which is performed on iTunes by Chris Hopwood and Miranda Zent.

ABOUT the ARTIST

The drama in Diane Katz’s work can be traced to the theater, where a trained actor may reinvent herself with each role. Her range and versatility in visual arts was nurtured through this actor’s craft. The desire to create through collaboration led her, from early experiences in theater and Contact Improvisation (a dance technique), to the field in which she is now known: book illustration and design.

Through Rosenberry Books, Ms Katz’s work has been seen at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian, the Chicago Institute of Art, and the Washington National Cathedral, and has been recognized by Design Observer of the Winterhouse Institute.

Through theater, dance and martial arts, Diane feels connected to Elvis. For over twenty years, she has studied Tai Chi in martial styles (including two-person *San Shou*, Folding Fan, and three versions of Chen style) from Chinese and cinophile teachers.

Ms Katz, author of *On All My Holy Mountain: A Modern Fraktur* and *Apples Dipped in Honey: a Jewish ABC*, has illustrated many books, including *Purple: a Parable*; *The Stone House*; *Garden Snippets*; and *Pieces of History: Quilt Patterns from the North Carolina Museum of History*.

AFTERWORD

Elvis: Bright New Life Born

to Transform a Land of the Dead

Dr David Rosen writes with a tender love of Elvis. It seems so poignant then that Elvis sang “Love Me Tender” and that this came true through many of us. We love the heart of this soul Elvis, and tenderly so. Elvis, who once walked this earth and left a wide swath of music and essence of his soul, is still with us. In this sense, Elvis has never died. As we know, despite any foibles and hard turns of fate, whatever and whomever we love never die. Whatever and whomever we truly love and learn from take up domicile in our hearts in good ways. It has now been nearly six decades since Elvis first rose upon the waves of a constrained post-war culture...a culture still knee-deep in the dried blood of WWII. Most every nation on earth during that war and its aftermath was shocked by the profound loss of literally millions of the young. Elvis was bright New Life born to a culture suffering so much — from too much death of the young.

The culture was ripe for a public moistening. In a manner similar to that of the ancient Greek goddess Athena, who was said to have been born from the forehead of Zeus, Elvis was also “birthed” by a man. As with the stories of the old gods, it was all uphill, downhill, uphill, downhill from there onward with the Olympian Colonel Tom Parker, Elvis’s oracle, handler, and business manager. Elvis was given life even more so in the hearts of those who saw his youth, who heard his songs, who hoped he would never, as had generations before him, ever be sent to die. They gathered around, not

only to love his music, but to proclaim life, and to protect his life as well.

I recently watched one of Elvis’s film clips on television. He sang (we would say, in the back country woodlands of Indiana where I grew up, “he romped and he stomped”) “Jailhouse Rock.” Long ago I was only a young girl. I knew he was carrying the heartbeat of New Life for a nation hung with black crepe for those who had lost their children to war. But now as a young crone seeing the old TV clip, I could see immediately that Elvis was far more than just a pretty-boy Rock & Roll singer. He was representing in his music and his beautiful flame of life something immortal: the ability to lift the hearts of others through something that gave life instead of death, that lifted spirit. Whether with his Gospel songs or love songs, he lifted the true souls of many, many human beings.

In the film clip, one could see that he was a naturally gifted athlete, that he possessed an innate boon for mastery of any dance, and that he had been granted an astonishing charisma of voice. *Charism* means *gift from Creator*. It is not a skill, not a learned trope. It is a mysterious gift. His charisma of voice is far more than the ability to sing. By using the superior tones of such a voice — whether singing, speaking, teaching, or preaching in others. And this was Elvis’s gift. The richness of his speaking voice alone touches more than just the ear. The resonance of his deep voice, that has ever a songbird inside its tone, touches the heart. Too, there was an even more striking aspect about Elvis. His spirit, the animating force of a person, showed on the outside of his body. This spirit of

flaming life seemed so well and deeply fitted into his body. He was undeniably and unselfconsciously at ease in relation to his every limb, every digit, every pulse, every moment. Remember, this was in contrast to most other mainstream men of his time, both the young and the old, who were most often swathed in cloth from their shoes up to their collars. Most women of the time pressed themselves into flesh-squishing girdles and hydraulic underwear, with all skirt hems held at mid-calf and ankle. But more so, the customs of the times required that everything be held in, held up, and held down—flesh, emotion, thoughts, longing, and especially, deportment of the body.

And along came Elvis, the living man who also had a twin brother-angel, Garon, in heaven. In the holy and sacred ways of healing, in the pathways of many spiritual disciplines across the world, being a twin is a special charism in itself. And some say, to have a twin who passed away leaves the other twin with twice the energy, twice the life force. And this may in some way be true of Elvis's inimitable quality of energy, bright energy that was double the life energy that most others carried. His energy ran like a silver lasso circling and drawing in so many, so many who felt as people often do, fiercely protective and fiercely loving, toward one whom they perceive as a lively and eternal child ... as do the many fans of Elvis.

The high spirit and stunning physical lyricism of Elvis seem to be pure habitation of the psychic space he occupied on earth. In psychoanalysis, Jung refers to this soulful way of being as the “number two personality.” That side of the individual burgeons with innate knowing and is filled

with uncanny and intuitive impulses, both mental and physical.

In contrast, the “number one personality” is understood as solely ego-oriented and earth-bound. Often embarrassingly self-conscious and hesitant to “just do it,” that side of the individual thinks things through a thousand times before acting, if ever.

However, the “number two personality” has legendary attributes of charisma, grace, excellent insight, a natural feel for optimum motion, and optimism. It also contains, amongst other aspects, the natural abilities of timing, “attack” (as it is used as a musical term), and follow-through that all coaches work to inspire in their athletes, that all Olympics trainers teach in order to develop their protégés, that all operatic teachers and all music teachers attempt to draw out and mature in their so-talented performers.

All these superior traits, both mindful and entrancing, seem to have been innately present in the young Elvis Presley, the otherwise ordinary boy from Tupelo. We still remember this ordinary extraordinary human being as the boy who brought New Life to a culture of post-war grief. He kept singing and dancing and creating his way across other wars that would come during his time on earth ... and that ever he sang for life, for life, for Life. It is no wonder that so many, also dedicated to the principles of life, and life, and Life, loved Elvis dearly. I do, also.

¡Para la vida—siempre! To Life, Always!

Dr Clarissa Pinkola Estés

author of *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*

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