

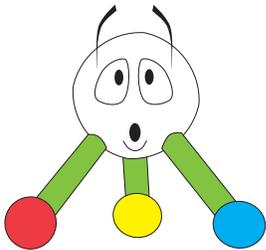
CHAPTER ONE

What is life all about, really?



Graphic by
Matt Swanson

The Tail of the Dragon



Q: *Who am I? How did I get here?*

Hal: Your name is *Jan Q. Everyhuman* and I created you.

Q: *Why?*

Hal: Because all of humanity is stuck in a frustrating fog and they need our help to advance to the next developmental state of being.

Q: *Are you God?*

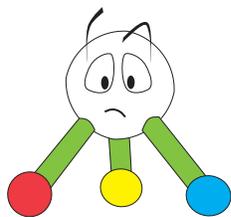
Hal: Hmmm... God with an attention deficit disorder, that would explain it.

Q: *What?*

Hal: Why the world is so screwed up, why we keep insanely repeating the same mistakes over and over again is the reason why we need you. No, if I were God and I was responsible for creating this stressful world, I would make it possible for all humans to get a weekly massage for their outer body and an hour of psychotherapy to free their inner spirits. I also would have everyone belong to a group that was so safe they would have no fear of being judged, so they could share openly, giving every part of them a voice.

Q: *Hey. I vote for you!*

Hal: No thanks, I don't want the job. I can't even keep track of my car keys, that's one of the reasons why I need you.



Q: *So you're not... God, but some guy with ADD who wants me to keep track of his car keys?*

Hal: Kind of... Your job is to keep me on track. You represent the readers of this book. You are to keep me focused by asking questions so my message doesn't get lost in my head and I lose the people. I am going to call you "Q" because you ask the questions.

Q: *We are writing a book?*

Hal: It's called **Out of the Fog for Life**. I am sharing many ideas on how to sustain a life of personal and spiritual growth by seeing more clearly why we humans get stuck.

Q: *Am I human?*

Hal: Very... you're part of me.

Q: *Which part am I?*

Hal: You're my more idealized self.

Q: *Oh... Then which part are you?*

Hal: We could say that I'm the less idealized part.

Q: *Can you tell me a little more about who you want me to be?*

Hal: You are my unique integrating center of self-consciousness and will.

Q: *Am I supposed to understand that?*

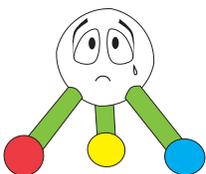
Hal: I guess you're going to have to read the book.

Q: *Then what is my value?*

Hal: That's a most human question... Yes, you are of incredible value for two reasons. The first is that my message to the world can help all humankind advance out of the fog to a saner life and second is that you serve as a revolutionary new model of the human personality that can transform our understanding of who we are. As a model, you can create a major shift in our consciousness.

Q: *Am I some kind of hero or savior?*

Hal: Sure... So we can all bow down and worship the great Q.



Q: *You don't have to be sarcastic. I am just doing my job.*

Hal: Sorry, this part of me has a bit of an attitude.

Q: *About?*

Hal: Organized religion or anyone or thing that tries to tell me what to think or feel.

Q: *So you have a “rebel” part... Does that mean you don’t believe in God and some kind of an afterlife?*

Hal: I prefer to think of myself as a “creative tinker”... I believe each of us has to work it out for ourselves. I think each of us has a spiritual nature and it is very important that we find our own answers to life’s deepest questions. It’s fine with me if I ask someone what they think and feel to share their own interpretations of their experiences with me. This book is about the process of learning to find our own answers. At least a third of life’s journey to wholeness is spiritual in nature.

Q: *Then don’t you mean “original thinker”?*

Hal: No, I just steal other people’s ideas and keep twinkie-dinking them until they’re my own and work for me.

Q: *Your point is that nobody can interpret your own experiences for you, that’s up to you.*

Hal: Very well said... Finding our own labels is critical to becoming the person that we want to be.

Q: *Sounds like it is okay to share your own beliefs with someone if they ask.*

Hal: Right.

Q: *Then will you share what your beliefs are? I think our readers deserve to know where you are coming from.*

Hal: I feel a little cornered. I get a little paranoid about labels... You’re right, they deserve to know. I will share an experience that I had with my brother LaVerne about a year before he died. I do have a set of spiritual beliefs that bring me inner peace... I started a discussion with him that I hoped could bring peace to his soul and start a healing process between himself and his estranged children. I think it is important that we clean up all our messes before we die.

Q: *How did you start that discussion?*

Hal: I asked what he thought happens to us after we die.

Q: *How did he respond?*

Hal: I remember it well. Given that we came from a family with rigid no talk rules about religion, I was very anxious at that moment and he said, “*I don’t think I believe as you do, but I think there is something.*” His tone of voice indicated he didn’t really want to talk about it and, not wanting to risk making him mad, I dropped the subject. So for the purpose of this book let’s say there is something.

Q: *So you don’t like to make people mad?*

Hal: I have to confess I am a bit of a wimp. Part of me is terrified of a devouring dragon.

Q: *A what?*

Hal: It is a concept we will discuss at length later.

Q: *So each person has to develop or define his own unique something?*

Hal: Yes... I don't believe people can find genuine inner peace until they do. At least that is my own experience.

Q: *So what beliefs bring you this inner peace?*

Hal: You're a tenacious little guy... So what I will share is that the "something" is a lot smarter than I am, so I am going to call it the ***Intelligent Something***. So, for purpose of the book, we will refer in capital letters as the ***IS***. I don't think we humans will ever have the creative intelligence that is in a single cell. How it knows to divide itself will always be a miracle.

Q: *So the IS, is what it is.*

Hal: Very good!... Or the ***IS*** is whatever you believe it to be. Also I want to share that my ***IS*** means me well and is involved in every aspect of my life to promote my growth. Its goal is to help me become the person that is in the center of my being.

Q: *The IS sounds like God to me.*

Hal: See, you are free to choose what labels you will.

Q: *So what would you say life is all about?*

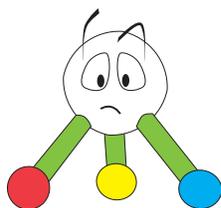
Hal: To you, **Q**, I would say your life is about one thing. Your life is about you, as in "me", "myself" and "I". That's it.

Q: *That's it? Don't I have purpose?*

Hal: Your purpose is to become fully you. We each are responsible to develop our own ***WHU***.

Q: *How do I do that?*

Hal: By following your curiosity and openly expressing what you think and feel as it bubbles up from within. What do you feel right now?



Q: *I feel confused.*

Hal: When you are confused you have more than one part speaking to you at a time, so let's take one inner voice at a time.

Q: *Part of me says, if life is just about me, then I am being selfish.*

Hal: What are other parts saying?

Q: *Another part says you're a dangerous person and your Christian friends are not going to like what you're saying.*

Hal: Just two voices?

Q: *A third part says I have no idea what a WHU is.*

Hal: It is my point of view that there is no such thing as unselfishness. My favorite author, M. Scott Peck, said it best, “*There is only stupid selfishness and smart selfishness which involves the delay of gratification for long term gain.*” Even Jesus hanging on the cross had a long-term pay-off in mind.

Q: *He did? I don't think the people are going to like this either.*

Hal: He suffered in order to become the fullness of being, his WHU. There is a great joy in becoming the person you were meant to be. It always involves the delay of gratification. It always involves some kind of sacrifice, even if it is only to say no to an impulse. The payoff is always that we become happier with our WHU.

Q: *So simply put, your life is about you and my life is about me.*

Hal: Yes, nice clear boundaries and if each of us would take full responsibility for our own growth and development, we could create a whole new world.

Q: *So what is the best way to think about our life?*

Hal: I think the best way to think about one's life is go to the very end of your life and work backwards, it's the same process as building a house; you visualize what you want first or in this case of your WHU, the person you want to be at the end of your life. I am sure my brother LaVerne would have preferred to have all of his children around him in loving support when he died. Instead he died pretty much alone leaving a long history, a legacy of unresolved disturbances his children will be burdened with for the rest of their lives. If there is life after death then I don't want to live in eternity being unhappy with myself.

Q: *That sounds like a long time to be regretful...*

Hal: Maybe that's hell.... So I ask people this question, when you get to the end of your life, you look back and you are unhappy with it, who are you going to blame? Your parents, God, yourself, or perhaps just bad luck. Too many people live their whole lives as powerless victims; they act as if they don't have a choice.

Q: *But everybody has a choice, right?*

Hal: Everybody who can read this book does. People who read this book already know they have a choice and are looking to improve the quality of their choices.

Q: *What is a WHU?*

Hal: It's a concept I made up. It stands for Wholeness, Health, and yoU. It's our potential, a best self that exists in the center of our being. It's what we all subscribe to wanting to be. A unique identity having a specialized gift to give to the world. My brother Vern was a wonderfully gifted individual with little opportunity to take the inward journey. Early in his life his development got stuck in addiction, shorting the world of his gifts.

Q: *Is your WHU an ideal?*

Hal: Is a seed in the ground an ideal?

Q: *You mean just because we can't see it doesn't mean it's not there.*

Hal: If a seed receives the right nutrients it will grow into the fullness of its **WHU**.

Q: *So everyone has a purpose?*

Hal: Yes, I want to think that, and the purpose of each of our lives is to develop our **WHU**. Only by you becoming fully you and me becoming fully me will humankind significantly advance out of the fog. This book presents important puzzle pieces for those who sense the truth within themselves. They know they have not fully arrived. What do you suppose happens when we can't tell at any given moment whether we are physically, emotionally or spiritually hungry?

Q: *We feel confused?*

Hal: Yes, and we usually keep recycling the wrong solution; some get obsessive, some get drunk, most just get fat.

Q: *Apparently, there is a lot more to learn.*

Hal: I think on a 10-point scale humankind has evolved to about a 3. So in my opinion, when we expand the use of our marvelous brains to anywhere near its potential to create what's in the deepest parts of our hearts, we will have a win-win world. Our future is glorious. So when people present themselves as already having all the answers, I resist.

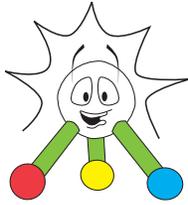
Q: *You don't like a "know it all" attitude?*

Hal: I prefer a little humility when we are talking about things that are subjective. Life is always in process.

Q: *So we are progressing and life is going to get better?*

Hal: I see a lot of progress in my 66 years, yes I am very hopeful. Let's read a quote from Marianne Williamson's book *A Return to Love*.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, or fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."



Q: *Wow, that's really powerful!*

Hal: The deepest part of me witnesses the truth of this quote. It is the statement about our potential, our **WHUs**. Hopefully, all of our readers are deeply touched.

Q: *What if they are not? What would that mean?*

Hal: They are probably already dead and don't know it yet. They are just hanging around until the body gives up the ghost. I don't know who said it, but I remember I liked it - someone said, "The real question is when death catches up to you, will it find you still alive?"

Q: *Isn't that being a little judgmental?*

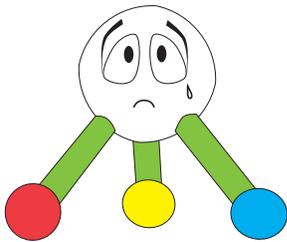
Hal: Hey, I am not a perfect being. Part of me has an attitude about people who are unwilling to face their fears, and another part understands people are just people.

Q: *I am kind of figuring out what you mean by saying you are the "less idealized part"... So when people are born they just don't automatically become their **WHUs**?*

Hal: A purple tulip will always become what it was meant to be. You could scream at it everyday and it will never become a weed. But if you scream at a human every day, they will not bloom.

Q: *So, many humans grow up thinking they might be a weed?*

Hal: When we don't get the right kinds of nurturing, our development gets twisted. It's a tragedy beyond our comprehension. Too many miss the mark and live half their lives stuck spinning around in the same circles in a weedy sea of mediocrity until they sink.

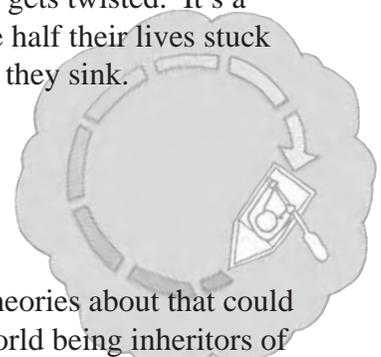


Q: *That's sad.*

Hal: Very.

Q: *Why do we get stuck?*

Hal: That's a really big question and all the theories about that could fill a library. We are all born into an unsafe world being inheritors of way too many unresolved disturbances. We are burdened at birth and live our whole lives in a state of recovery from the invalidation we have absorbed.



Q: *This invalidation is the reason why people struggle with feelings that they are a weed?*

Hal: Our identities are fragile and obscured at birth by the many burdens we carry. How we learn to resolve our inner disturbances determines the quality of our lives. We are driven from birth through death to resolve one inner disturbance after another, that's how we learn.

Q: *And if we stop learning?*

Hal: When we are either unwilling or just don't know how to face our own wounds, we get stuck. It is like rowing our boats with just one oar, around and around the same boring circle. I think more people die of boredom than anything else.

Q: *We can't fill a library, so where do we start?*

Hal: We will have to narrow our focus down to what's hidden in the fog that makes it so difficult to bloom. Most of the world is preoccupied with survival and doesn't have the time nor the resources to look inward. World wide our institutions, family, education, religion, and government teaches about conformity, and little about individualization and finding yourself. To most of the world our **WHUs** are perceived as threats. The question this book addresses is looking at overcoming the barriers that get in the way of those who have the inclination, the wherewithal to take the inward journey. The more that people learn to live from the light of their consciousness the better chance the world will experience a major paradigm shift.

Q: *I get that whatever we can do to encourage people to take the journey is important. So what are the barriers?*

Hal: You will have to read the book. We cannot solve problems that we can't define. There are major fog producing gaps in our psychologies and our religious theologies that leave us to struggle with our inner confusion. We don't know how, there are no inner road maps. The number one problem is we don't have a good theoretical model of personality, one that can help integrate our three natures. A model that can help us find labels to understand our inner experiences.

Q: *Am I the model?*

Hal: Yes, when we understand you, we will have taken a huge step forward in our development.

Q: *I have this big head and three legs and no body. How can I be the model of the human personality?*

Hal: It is really important that we all get you. I think you will understand by the end of the book.



Q: *What if I don't?*

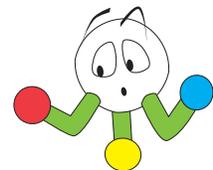
Hal: Then I will put away my pen, pack my bags and we will move to a beach in Hawaii.

Q: *Sounds like a plan... What do you mean our three natures?*

Hal: In our model we have a physical nature, a psychological nature, and a spiritual nature, and you have three legs.

Q: *I see, and they each are a different color.*

Hal: Blue is the physical, red is the psychological and yellow is our spiritual.



Q: *And my head is white.*

Hal: White is a mixture of all the colors and represents the light of, or the energy of, our consciousness.

Q: *So does my head represent our minds or our intelligence?*

Hal: Good questions! The answer is yes and no, but I don't want to discuss that until a later chapter.

Q: *You're the boss... So, what is the difference between our three natures?*

Hal: They are different colors.

Q: *I suppose that's another one of those good questions that I will have to wait until later to ask.*

Hal: Good guess... Our readers could check out Chapter 7 if they want an overview. It is critical that we understand that we have three natures. So much of our inner confusion and conflicts comes from having no definite way of labeling what we are feeling. What we can learn to notice and label appropriately we can learn to manage better for our well being. Otherwise our misinterpretations of feelings will continue to manage us. What's your next question?

Q: *What else do the people need besides understanding me?*

Hal: You, more than anyone else, will help us live more consciously. Each chapter in this book introduces new concepts that in my opinion help fill in the gaps. Our readers will find the chapters, *The Four Levels of Being* and *The Phases of a Complete Life* interesting. Of course, these are constructs, ideas that hopefully in time will lead us in having many insightful discussions.

Q: *How will these discussions take place?*

Hal: The website *outofthefog.org* will be interactive and I hope that our readers will attend a seminar or two.

Q: *Is it true that you see all human beings as being partially insane, or are you just overstating the issue to make a point?*

Hal: I think we could all use a little help. The dragon is a fearful force to be dealt with.

Q: *There is that dragon again.*

Hal: Let's look at the graphic for this first chapter and tell me what you think.

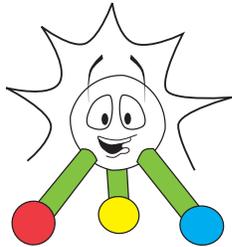
Q: *I guess the guy rowing the boat is humanity and because he is looking backwards he doesn't really see the fog. He can't really see what's ahead. He is curious about the tail of the dragon. He doesn't understand it is a dragon and it is affecting his life.*

Hal: Fear of the dragon is the biggest reason we resist looking inward and why humans stay insanely stuck repeating the same mistakes. The chapter on the phases of a complete life is mainly about the dragon.

Q: *I thought I was the biggest reason?*

Hal: You are like a compass that can help guide us through the fog but we still have to face

what is in the fog. None of us naturally wants to face our unresolved disturbances. We felt that pain once - it is an act of courage to be willing to revisit those disturbances in order to unburden ourselves from their hold on us.



Q: *I am like a tool, an improved model.*

Hal: A superior model, a brilliant model.

Q: *Are you bragging?*

Hal: I have a bit of an ego to go with my attitude.

Q: *So, are you the only totally rational person?*

Hal: If you are asking me if I am crazy too, the answer is that I am not as insane as I once was. This book is a response to the pain I absorbed as a child and many regrettable mistakes I have made because I had to hide my fear that I was weed. I write this book with the hope of helping my children and my grandchildren to profit by what I've learned through my many failures. I have always had an awareness that a better life was possible. I now put myself in the class of the healthy insane for I am aware I still have a few more issues. I think I have more to learn. In the third grade I was overweight, still sucked my thumb and had not really begun to read. All my life I have fought against sometimes overwhelming feelings of inadequacy. I was an anxious child.

Q: *You have been on a life long journey and you want to share what you have learned. You want all humans to get out of the fog by living more consciously, less insanely.*

Hal: Yes, I want all human beings to take the inward journey that I call ***The Great Voyage*** to find the center of their being and to discover increased levels of wholeness, health and the fullness of being that I call the **WHU**. I can point the direction, provide a few tools, but each will have to find his or her own courage.

Q: *It's not logical that people wouldn't take the voyage if they knew about it.*

Hal: It is an act of courage just to stop smiling and admit that you are confused. Inner confusion is universal, the bane of our existence.

Q: *When did you find the courage to tell the truth about your own confusion?*

Hal: Besides "no talk" rules we also had "no feel" rules in my normally insane family. So I grew up learning to smile on the outside, when I was locked in turmoil on the inside. I smiled and acted 'as if' I knew what I was doing and it brought me rewards until mid-life when my house of cards came crashing around me. A sneaky depression brought me to my knees. I lost a job, found religion, started a divorce, entered graduate school and entered psychotherapy in a matter of a couple of years. My real life began when I finally admitted I was confused and entered therapy. Looking back now I can see it was one of my finest moments for it was an act of courage to admit that I don't have all the answers. It is humbling for a man who spent most of his life building defenses to cover his deep feelings of inadequacy to admit that he has a problem.

Q: *So why did you choose to go into psychotherapy?*

Hal: Because the only way through the fog is to find a guide who knows the way through. Someone who has started their own **Great Voyage** and understands the process of becoming fully you.

Q: *What is the difference between seeing a counselor and a psychotherapist?*

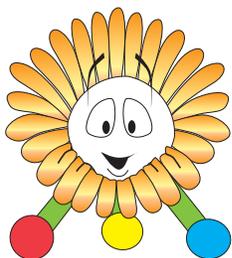
Hal: To most there is little difference, the terms are used interchangeably. This is a very subjective field and people need to be aware they should check out the credentials of the practitioners. I think a state license is a must. Before I refer someone to another therapist I want to know that that therapist has faced their own dragon and has worked their way through the fog for themselves. I want to know that they walk their talk. I do not do drug and alcohol counseling because I am not a person in recovery, however, I know a great deal about depression, anxiety and what it's like to feel like a weed.

Q: *How do you see yourself?*

Hal: I refer to myself as a psychotherapist, but I do counseling too. In my opinion, counseling is more information-oriented and is involved with developing a new understanding or new parts that can better manage the old hurt parts. In psychotherapy, we go back and fix the old hurt parts, freeing them to become part of the whole, correcting the internal distortions (our weediness) that cause the person to doubt their value.

Q: *It is important to value ourselves.*

Hal: To me, it's life's most important issue. If we think we are a weed we will never bloom.



Q: *A blooming WHU.*

Hal: I like that, I like that a lot.

Q: *Thanks.*

Hal: To bloom or not to bloom - that really is the question.

Q: *So what is it about psychotherapy that helps people bloom?*

Hal: What a great question to launch us into the **Great Inward Voyage** and the **Four Levels of Being**.

Q: *Do you think everybody needs therapy?*

Hal: Absolutely... I am writing this book to encourage all people to take the great voyage by taking some of the fear out of it. By creating a more visual conceptual model we can better see where we are going.

Q: *What about those people who have been or currently are in therapy?*

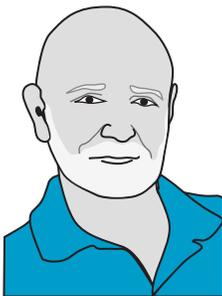
Hal: I think they are the ones who will benefit most from the book because they will most identify with the presentation and be able to use some new labels for what they have already experienced. They will now have much better visuals for where they have been or are going.

Also, I look forward to helping all seekers. Before we move onto the next chapter, do you have any questions?

Q: *I think it would be good if you could summarize your/our perspective.*

Hal: Good.... My basic point of view is:

We are all cast into the same foggy sea. By the age of three, we have already soaked up all of the unresolved disturbances and all of the undeveloped stuff that our parents carry with them, most of which they inherited from their parents. We are all insane, at least in part, and there is much to learn. We all flounder with inner confusion while learning to row our own boats. We all suffer with inner confusion while becoming the person we most want to be. We all struggle with inner confusion while creating the life we all deserve. We are all cast into the same stormy sea as equals, no one better and no one worse. If we should meet, then we are just two people floundering to find the answers, two Seekers trying to find the missing piece to our wholeness. I could say, "Hello, my name is Hal and I am pretty insane." You could respond, "Me too." Any thought we have that we are somehow different from one another is only an illusionary mask created by fear dominating our minds. The fog will not clear, the light of our inner guidance system will not emerge until we have developed enough courage to drop our mask and share our inner confusion. My insanities will not allow me to take this voyage alone.



“We are terrified to drop our smiley mask for fear that we’ll be devoured by a dragon of our own perfectionism.”