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*A Question*

of

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# VALUES

SIX WAYS WE MAKE THE PERSONAL  
CHOICES THAT SHAPE OUR LIVES



**HUNTER LEWIS**

FOREWORD BY M. SCOTT PECK

# A Question of Values

SIX WAYS WE MAKE THE PERSONAL  
CHOICES THAT SHAPE OUR LIVES

Hunter Lewis



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This edition is printed on acid-free paper that meets the American National Standards Institute Z39.48 Standard.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Walter Lippmann, who assisted me when I was a young journalist still in school, whose own work (especially *A Preface to Morals*) is so central to the study of twentieth-century values, and who encouraged me to write a book like this.

“Especially useful . . . to help students . . . in actual human decision-making.”—Harvey Cox, professor of divinity, Harvard University, author of *Many Mansions* and *The Secular City*

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“Move over, Garp! This is the world according to Hunter Lewis. He dares to make common sense of our era’s intellectual and moral confusion. Audacious yet user-friendly.”—Robert K. Emerson, executive editor, Manhattan, Inc.

“A highly stimulating guide to . . . the complex, slippery, shifting value sets of real people. This book is the product of a spritely and integrative mind; the distillation of a lifetime of careful reading and thought.”—John B. Stephenson, president, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky

“For Hunter Lewis, this book has obviously been a life-long journey of discovery. His lucid writing lets the reader share his insights on an intimate, one-to-one basis.”—Samuel L. Hayes III, Jacob Schiff Professor of Investment Banking, Harvard Business School

“With remarkable perspicacity and skill, Hunter Lewis provides a convincing framework of values. . . . His analysis is objective, non-partisan, wide-ranging, current, concrete, and lucid. For general readers this work will prove lively and illuminating; for undergraduates it will be a godsend and an ideal introduction to this vital subject.”—Edgar F. Shannon, president emeritus and professor of English emeritus, University of Virginia

“Lewis provides a sweeping perspective on ethical systems in plain language and with a sparkling style. This book can make a real difference in how one approaches ethical problems.”—William F. Massy, vice president for finance and professor of education and business administration, Stanford University

# Foreword

A century ago, the greatest dangers we faced arose from agents outside ourselves: microbes, flood and famine, wolves in the forest at night. Today the greatest dangers—war, pollution, starvation—have their source in our own motives and sentiments: greed and hostility, carelessness and arrogance, narcissism and nationalism. The study of values might once have been a matter of primarily individual concern and deliberation as to how best to lead the “good life.” Today it is a matter of collective human survival. If we identify the study of values as a branch of philosophy, then the time has arrived for all women and men to become philosophers—or else.

What do theologians mean when they say that we human beings are “created in the image of God”? My own understanding of this is that we human creatures have been given free will, the extraordinary power of choice. But the power to choose is the power to choose the bad or the good; to be loving *or* unscrupulously self-centered. What is the nature of this power? What motivates our choices?

There is mystery here. But there is also some clarity. It is clear, for instance, that a great many humans of many different races, cultures, and nationalities are very strongly motivated by money. Indeed, it is so clear I think it would be quite safe to refer to the human species as *Homo economicus*. But economically motivated acts are not necessarily good acts. Often they are obviously malicious and sometimes downright murderous. If we cannot routinely learn to submit the personal profit motive, when appropriate, to higher principles, then we are in all likelihood—and probably quite quickly—going to murder ourselves off. Such

higher principles are matters of values or, as philosophers say, matters of ethics. For our species to be truly *Homo sapiens*, that is, wise enough to figure out how to survive, then it will not be enough for us to remain merely *Homo economicus*; we must somehow become *Homo ethicus*.

So this is hardly an arcane subject; it is a life-and-death matter. And not one that admits a quick and easy, simplistic solution. I mentioned that there is mystery here. Were there not, philosophers would long ago have closed the book on the subject. Indeed, the subject is so grand that no one book, no one author, could possibly address it exhaustively.

But that doesn't mean the frontiers of our understanding cannot be expanded. To the contrary, I hope I have made it clear that we desperately need to do so. Nor does it mean that any one probe into the mystery is going to be as worthy as any other. The subject deserves all that can possibly be brought to it in the way of clarity of thought and language, brilliance of insight, and rigor of discipline.

Although it cannot cover everything, this is a groundbreaking book. It is also an enlightening, thought-provoking, and remarkably well-written book. In it the author compellingly makes the case, through a breadth of erudition that is to all intents and purposes a kind of tour de force, that we human beings have at least six profoundly different cognitive lenses through which we view the world, and hence profoundly different styles of thinking by which we make our value judgments, our ethical decisions.

Why should such an elucidation be of groundbreaking significance? Just this: Ethical behavior is, of necessity, conscious behavior. If we are unconscious of our motives, it is unlikely that we will behave in a consistently ethical manner. If we are not *aware* of the particular lens through which we are looking at the world, then we do not have any true choice about what we are going to see and how we are going to respond.

In this work, Hunter Lewis makes us aware—conscious—not only of our own lenses, but also of a range of different lenses. There are two results. One is to make it possible for us to ques-

tion the validity of our perceptions and values. The capacity for ethical behavior is dependent on the capacity for such self-questioning. Virtually all of the evil in this world is committed by people who are absolutely certain they know what they are doing.

The other result is that it enables us to make multidimensional rather than one-dimensional simplistic decisions. If we think just logically or just emotionally or just intuitively, then our decisions will be only logical or only intuitive or only emotional. But if we become aware of the variety of different cognitive styles, it opens up the possibility for us to make decisions that are emotional *and* logical *and* intuitive. In other words, such consciousness makes it possible for us to *integrate* different ways of knowing; to think, so to speak, with both our right brain and our left brain.

I believe such integration to be essential to our collective salvation. The noun *integrity* is derived from the verb *to integrate*. If we are going to think and behave with full integrity, then we must learn how to integrate our different ways of perceiving the world so as to develop a multidimensional, integrated world view. To behave ethically is to behave with integrity. In raising our consciousness of the different styles by which we make our value judgments, this important book points us toward greater wholeness and integrity.

—M. Scott Peck



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<i>Step</i>	<i>Practice</i>
1. Tolerance	Emphasize non-violence, avoid conflict with people: moral beliefs aside, these disciplines tend to quiet the emotions.
2. Self-restraint	Avoid or limit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• alcohol</li> <li>• tobacco</li> <li>• drugs</li> <li>• sweets</li> <li>• meat</li> <li>• overeating</li> <li>• sex</li> <li>• materialism</li> </ul> all of which are thought to jeopardize health as well as mental calm. <i>Extreme</i> abstinence, "mortification of the flesh" and the like, however, is not recommended.
3. Physical exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stretch the body. (Hatha yoga exercises are designed to unlock tight muscles and relieve tension).</li> <li>• Relax the muscles. (For example, lying on your back, tense each muscle group in your body in turn, one by one, for 5 seconds,</li> </ul>

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or union. Uncapitalized, the term *yoga* usually refers to a series of social, physical, and mental exercises that may be used by anybody regardless of religious or philosophical beliefs. The capitalized term *Yoga* traditionally refers to the combination of these exercises with any specific set of religious and philosophical beliefs but especially with Yoga-Samkhya, one of the six orthodox schools of classical Hinduism.

then let them fall limp imagining that you are breathing out through the specific muscle group instead of breathing out through your lungs.)

#### 4. Breathing

Breathe deeply. (*Hatha yoga pranayama*—also designed to relieve tension and fuel the mental faculties\*.)

#### 5. Detachment

- Retreat from the world for a few hours, a few days, a few months, however long, either in a monastery or on the proverbial mountaintop (passive detachment).
- Observe yourself in the course of everyday affairs from the outside, as if you were another person (active detachment).

#### 6. Concentration

Quell mental noise by concentrating on a thought, a prayer, or an object. Repeat each day.

#### 7. Meditation

Meditate (using any of innumerable techniques), or simply evoke Dr. Herbert Benson's "relaxation response": At a minimum, sit comfortably; close eyes or, if in public,

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\* Frequent running, although not a specifically yogic discipline, potentially combines three of the above stages: self-discipline, physical exercise, and deep breathing. Running, however, tightens muscles unless accompanied by stretching, and may become "violent," "pounding," "competitive," and "agitating," rather than "graceful," "easy," and "calming," especially if the day is hot, the runner is in poor physical condition, or is in competition.

ignore outside stimuli; breath steadily, deeply, and slowly; repeat a word (for example, "One") on each exhalation or count each exhalation up to ten, then repeat (never go over ten); let distracting thoughts pass gently without paying attention to them, and either stop when completely relaxed or when distractions break your concentration, usually after ten or twenty minutes. With daily repetition, induction (falling into meditative state) comes easily.

#### 8. Trance

Meditate deeply (self-hypnosis). While in a state of maximum receptivity, review desirable changes in habits or instruct yourself to suppress physical pain or other unwanted physical symptoms.\* Then clear the mind to receive innermost intuitions.

### The way of pure intuition

The central problem—or paradox—of intuition is that it is nonverbal. Once intuitive insight is translated into language, it sounds like something else: authority, logic, experience, or emotion. One way to transcend this problem is to say, with the Indian sages Ramakrishna and Vivekenanda, that religious doctrines are equally true and false, because they are just shadows of an underlying, incommunicable truth. Another way is to refuse to verbalize one's insights—to take the position that religion is nonverbal and has nothing to do with beliefs per se.

\* Even without self-hypnosis, mind and body sometimes respond to auto-suggestion. On the physical level, for example, studies indicate that the act of smiling, even if forced, tends to evoke happy emotions, whereas pretending to be angry brings forth the actual emotion of anger.

To see how this latter method works in real life, we may turn to the Sawan Kirpal Ruhani Mission, based in New Delhi, India, with 150,000 followers worldwide and five thousand in the United States. To be a part of the Mission, one need not give up Christianity or Buddhism or any other faith into which one has been born. One need not give up one's job or family or pledge allegiance or donate money—donations in particular are never requested. All that is required is sincerity; abstinence from drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and meat; and a willingness to explore one's "inner space" through daily meditation ("When you slowly withdraw the feeling from feet, and knees, and waist, and so on . . . the soul actually withdraws from your body [and] you go into inner space").

Instruction on meditation (but never on religious beliefs or values per se, which are thought to be entirely inexpressible and personal) is given by a kindly looking white-bearded and white-turbaned Sikh in his late sixties named Darshan Singh (all Sikhs bear the common name Singh, which means "lion"), who characteristically insisted on keeping his job as a deputy secretary in the Indian government even after founding the Mission but who is now widely regarded in India as a "living Master," a person of "oceanic calm" in whose presence one feels neither excitement nor electricity, only total relaxation and openness. Having retired from the civil service, the master is now free to travel, has visited the United States twice, and has been quietly encouraged by the devotion of the people he has met and enrolled in his movement, people such as a professor of international relations at Rhode Island University ("I've studied most of the world's religions and this is a way to bring them together") and a Phi Beta Kappa member of Ohio Senator John Glenn's staff.

Darshan Singh is intensely humble (his followers say that if you rolled out a red carpet for him, he would not walk on it) and refuses to be glorified or to let anyone follow him slavishly: "Masters come and go. All of them have spoken of love. But the 'religions' they found became [full of themselves], and instead of love they preach hatred. . . . So masters have to come again and



again. This time let us hope and pray that the message will spread. We are like the lotus blossom, which has its roots in muddy water, yet it blooms into a beautiful flower. We must live in this world, but have the ultimate aim of knowing ourselves."

The Sawan Kirpal Ruhani Mission advises us to live fully and actively in the world, albeit with daily ventures into "inner space." Another viewpoint, however, says that the Mission is right to regard religious truth as totally intuitive, incommunicable, inexpressible, but wrong to remain rooted in the world of maya or illusion. Our real goal should be absolute extrication from this world through the most persistent practice, the deepest, truest, most continual trance, with as little time as possible devoted to the distractions of eating, drinking, and sleeping (mostly eating and drinking since trance largely replaces sleeping). As human beings, we naturally hesitate: It is distasteful or worse to detach ourselves from all that we know. To use Aldous Huxley's metaphor, it is like staring at the surface of the sea, watching its gleaming radiance and wanting to explore the bottom, the divine truth "as it is eternally in itself," yet being afraid of its dark "depths," hidden "to the analytic mind," and refusing to take "the final, necessary plunge."

There are several techniques available to help us anesthetize the conscious mind, and thus end its power to hold us back from attaining salvation, here and now, through the unlocking of our inner powers of intuition. One technique is simply to repeat, over and over: "What am I? Am I my mind? Am I my body? Am I my senses?" This is the self-questioning of the great Indian mystic Ramana Maharshi. It is meant to baffle, to stupefy, and finally to force the mind into submission, into a readiness to abrogate itself, to seek out the truth of deep trance, to fold itself into God. Another similar technique is to reflect on paradoxical statements—for example, the paradox of the Tamil mystic, Manikkar Vasagar: "You are everything that is and you are nothing that is." Or to engage in Mondo, a rapid-fire exchange of questions and answers between two people, so fast that the conscious mind cannot keep up and abdicates. Or to try to answer a koan, a non-