

## Review by Nicole Ortega

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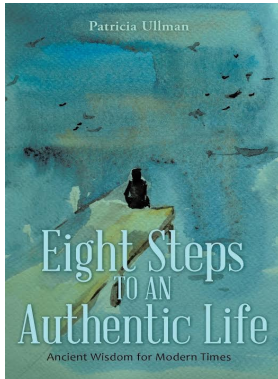
### **Eight Steps to an Authentic Life: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Times**

by Patricia Ullman

Archway Publishing

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According to King Google, dharma is a Sanskrit word and literally translates as “decree” or “custom.” I have also heard it described as *path*, *teaching*, *law*, or *sacred duty*. Most of all, however, it means *truth*. In *Eight Steps to an Authentic Life*, Patricia Ullman tackles the concept of dharma and how we might use it to understand and enhance our lives.

Apparently Buddhists figured out how to “live their truth” over 2,500 years ago. This could have saved the rest of us a lot of time and effort if we'd paid attention sooner... Lucky for us, Ullman has neatly distilled the matter down into eight steps, also known as *The Noble Eightfold Path*.

The path consists of: Right View, Right Intention, Right Communication, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Complete Integration. Ullman explains that “Buddhism is often more accurately called the *Buddhadharma* by those familiar with its teachings and practices. Rather than being an *ism* that presents a set of proscriptive tenets and beliefs, the *Buddhadharma* lays out a path for discovering your own inherent nature.”

Ullman explains the path itself is best envisioned as “concentric circles, moving from the overarching and intangible through progressively more conscious and embodied activities.” I also see it as a spiral, which is a similar concept. In either case, the eight steps aren't exactly linear, but they do build upon one another. For example, it's difficult to have Right Intention, without Right View—if you can't see your life for what it is, how can you know where you want to go?

A step, a story, a teaching, a meditation, and a “slogan” for further contemplation accompany each chapter. While the steps are certainly the meat and potatoes of the composition, I personally found the stories to be the most illustrative. You know how anecdotal stories sometimes feel sort of dropped in or even made up in a “I have a friend who has this problem,” kind of way, when you know the person talking to you is “the friend?” Well, there's none of that fabricated feeling here. These stories feel rich

and genuine, as if carefully curated over time. In fact, the whole book feels this way. It's also brief without being rushed, as if marinated over a period of many years and then slowly roasted until it reached the ideal serving temperature.

It wouldn't do the teachings justice to summarize them here so I won't bother, as Ullman has already done an excellent job of this. I'm convinced any further reduction would be overkill. I would, however, like to highlight that the term “right,” as Ullman uses it here, does not imply right vs. wrong, but is rather a derivative of the Pali word *samma*, which means “complete,” or “perfect.” This supports the Buddhist thought I am most familiar with: we each have a personal truth to live up to, and acting in accordance with who we are is what makes us feel whole (because we are in fact already whole).

*Eight Steps to an Authentic Life* is like a Cliff's Notes of Buddhist principles. It's short, but it packs a wallop of deep material for further contemplation. I wouldn't exactly call it a primer, as there are books better suited to that purpose, but this one is worth an exploration if you're in the mood for some easily digestible ancient Buddhist wisdom.

*Nicole Ortega is a professional intuitive, writer, and spiritual teacher. She runs The Sacred Odyssey, a community and resource for lightworkers on a journey to maximize their potential and impact by embodying more of who they really are. Join her at [thesacredodyssey.com](http://thesacredodyssey.com) to learn more.*