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## THE ILLUSION OF SEPARATENESS

In the 1948 film *Red River*, considered by many critics to be one of the best Westerns ever made, John Wayne gives a memorable performance as Tom Dunson, an unyielding and stubborn man driven by ruthless ambition. Early in the film, there is an iconic scene where Dunson, in the midst of a vast and desolate prairie, abruptly decides to break away from the group of settlers bound for California, and head south into Texas to seek his fortune in the cattle business. Dunson embodies the archetype of a lone and solitary figure, ready to square off against the world with an air of self-assured defiance in pursuit of personal glory.

With all due respect to the time-honored qualities of self-reliance and self-initiative—virtues commonly associated with this archetype—no one really lives a completely independent life, alone and apart from the rest of humanity. To think so is to indulge in whimsy. Each of us is interconnected in so many ways, and at so many levels, that we tend to overlook this obvious fact: our existence depends on the existence of countless others, the vast majority of whom we will never ever meet.

Consider those western style jeans you're wearing, Pilgrim, and probably take for granted. How many hands played a part in their creation? Who provided the denim? Who made the dye? Who constructed the zipper? Who made the design? How many hands were needed to gather the raw materials and deliver them to the manufacturer in time for production? And after all that, someone had to sew those jeans. Someone had to deliver them to the retailer. Someone had to create ads to draw customers. On and on it goes, Pilgrim, an endless web of connections; all of which are necessary to produce a single piece of apparel.

We *are* connected with the rest of humanity—and in more ways than we might imagine. This is a fundamental principle of the Theosophy, one that manifests in even the most mundane and ordinary aspects of our daily existence.

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