

WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?

Volume 1, Number 2

A Publication of Moksha Foundation

July 1992

"I have found and continue to find that there is so much confusion, misunderstanding and misinformation as to what Enlightenment actually is and what it really means. That is why I have encouraged my students to start this publication as a vehicle to present our ongoing investigation into this question, and to share our discoveries with those who are also interested in this vast and most subtle subject."

Andrew Cohen

Corruption, Purity and Enlightenment

A Three-Part Article by Andrew Cohen

Part 1: Who Has the Courage to Stand Alone in the Truth?

THE SEARCH for perfect understanding is always fraught with confusion because one is seeking for final answers to very difficult and challenging questions. In that search one dares to reach beyond normal boundaries, and when one endeavors to find that experience that would answer every question it is imperative sooner or later to take a big risk. What is the risk? The risk is allowing oneself to trust. This crisis of trust is unavoidable. Sooner or later on the spiritual journey one will come to a point where a leap of faith - a leap of trust - will be required. For many this leap occurs in the context of a relationship with a spiritual teacher.

These days there is a strong current of cynicism about the possibility of purity in spiritual authority. Indeed most authorities have failed to uphold or demonstrate perfection as any reliable possibility. Too many of those who have claimed Enlightenment have been found

to be corrupt to some degree or other in spite of extraordinary spiritual attainments. This has been very destructive as it has created an atmosphere of disillusionment and skepticism.

People must be allowed to believe that it is possible for a human being to go all the way. This becomes a real possibility *only* when one who claims to have arrived is able to clearly explain and practically demonstrate that attainment. It is that individual's responsibility to prove that it is indeed possible to rise up out of the mess of corruption, compromise and ensuing confusion that is the norm in our time. But the burden of responsibility for corruption equally lies on the shoulders of those who claim to aspire to spiritual emancipation in this life. Only those individuals who are incorruptible in the purity of their desire for Liberation will prevent the continuance of the mess of confusion and corruption that is the norm in the

spiritual world today. Those who would complain that hypocrisy and corruption in spiritual authorities is too easily accepted, tolerated and even condoned, must look deeply to find out what degree of compromise and confusion they are willing to hide behind in themselves.

Like attracts like. Corruption attracts itself. A seeker who is willing to settle for less than everything will seek a mentor who would need the shelter of that kind of compromise. A seeker who wants to go all the way, who cannot settle for less than everything, would never be able to bear shadows of impurity, just as a mentor who has truly gone all the way would never accept willingness to compromise in a seeker who claims, "I want to be free."

If a person wants to be truly free then there is no one in the world who will be able to stop them - but who has the courage to stand alone in the Truth? ♦

Part 2 continued on page 6

Editorial

In recent years a wave of moral relativism and even nihilism has swept across the contemporary spiritual landscape. Many spiritual seekers have become so "sophisticated" in their understanding of the Dharma, that common sense is often dismissed as irrelevant or extremist. Even the basic notion that a spiritual teacher should serve as an example to embody simple virtues is often rejected as too simplistic or idealistic.

The last decade has found the contemporary spiritual scene plagued by story after story of shocking scandals and corruption. Numerous articles, books, exposes and reports from confused and disillusioned seekers show that many spiritual teachers, even those who have been considered flawless and were greatly respected, have fallen prey to the same temptations they claimed to have transcended. This has resulted in a general mood of skepticism and cynicism about the possibility of radical transcendence.

Andrew describes what he has found in his own investigation into the spiritual crisis in *Autobiography of an Awakening*:

"I have looked and pondered often and at great length about how and why over the last twenty or thirty years almost all of the modern masters, gurus and prophets have to some degree or other failed. Many of them were and are Enlightened to an extraordinary degree - to an unusual degree. But in spite of that why have they failed?

Why do I say they have failed? Because the degree of cynicism in this day and age about the possibility of perfection, the realization of perfection, the manifesta-

tion of perfection and the expression of perfection is extraordinary to say the least. Most people who claim to be interested in Truth and Enlightenment, deeply don't really believe that it's possible to realize perfect goodness to the degree that it can be manifested and expressed consistently and without error. Why is that? It is only because those who claimed to have fully arrived simply have not come all the way home - because in spite of their unusual and extraordinary Enlightenment, the trail left by most has been less than perfect, and usually marred with some degree of confusion, hypocrisy, and in more cases than not, even deceit."

These days it is quite common for authorities on spiritual matters to express views that contribute to the general sense that it is not possible to realize perfection (which Andrew calls "a radical transcendence devoid of hypocrisy or compromise.") A strong distinction is often made between the "transcendent realization" of a spiritual teacher, and his or her "human" side. To insist in this way on a duality of transcendent realization and humanness is to implicitly deny the possibility of a radical transcendence devoid of hypocrisy or compromise as the ultimate expression of humanness. This breeds extraordinary confusion and doubt in the minds of so many about what is actually possible for a human being to attain.

It is because of this confusion and erosion of the highest spiritual ideals that we have decided to devote this issue of *What is Enlightenment?* to the topic of corruption, its roots and manifestations, and to the possibility of purity and perfection in the spiritual life. ♦
K.B.S., A.V.B.

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WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT ?

is dedicated to the continuing investigation and discovery of what Enlightenment is. It is published two times a year by the Moksha Foundation, a non-profit organization founded to support the teaching work of Andrew Cohen.

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Printed on recycled paper

3rd printing

Biography of Andrew Cohen

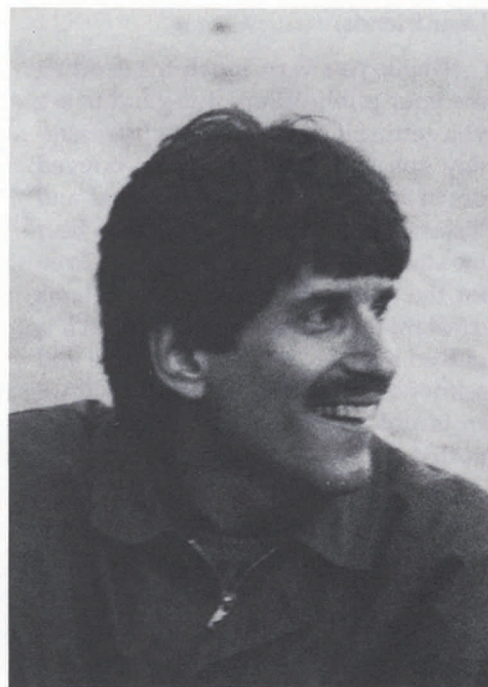
ANDREW COHEN is a teacher of Enlightenment. He was born in New York City in 1955. A spontaneous spiritual awakening at the age of sixteen inspired Andrew to abandon his worldly aspirations six years later and devote himself to a rigorous spiritual search. After years of spending time with various teachers and practicing different forms of meditation, his quest for final Liberation was still unfulfilled. Then he heard about a little-known teacher in India named H.W.L. Poonja and went to visit him.

This unexpected meeting ended his search. A profound realization immediately reawakened what he had glimpsed as a youth and in a few short weeks all of his fundamental questions were answered, leaving Andrew radically transformed and fully immersed

in a deep understanding of his own true nature. His teacher soon told him that their work together was over and that Andrew should now go out and help others. He said that Andrew was the man he had been waiting for his entire life and he wanted Andrew to "accept responsibility for the work."

It was soon apparent that Andrew had an extraordinary ability to communicate his understanding to others. In fact, he had no choice in the matter. His surrender was so deep that what he had realized was spontaneously expressing itself in his every action and word. Since his meeting with his teacher over six years ago, Andrew has been giving teachings throughout the world. At present, he lives in Northern California with his community of formal students.

Since he began teaching, Andrew's direct and radical approach has proven challenging for many. There has been much controversy about his bold claim that Enlightenment is possible here and now for anybody who truly wants to be free and that its attainment is not dependent on practice or technique. A crucial element of Andrew's teaching is that one's actions are not separate from who they are, but actually express the depth of one's understanding. His insistence that one must fully live what they have realized has been widely misunderstood. Many have been unable to grasp the depth and subtlety that his teaching has reached - even his own teacher has responded with disinterest and negativity. Also over the past two years, Andrew has been forced to face the painful fact of his teacher's dishonesty and duplicity in their relationship. His struggle to come to terms with this has compelled him to deepen his investigation of the Enlightened condition. Unwilling to compromise his bold stand that one cannot separate behavior from the depth of realization, he has been forced to stand alone in what he knows to be true. Andrew's passionate interest in sharing what he has realized and summoning others to that same understanding is thriving as the rarity of his teaching is more widely recognized. The purity and fervor of his call for true understanding and evolution is awakening the desire for Liberation in the hearts of many. ♦ K.B.S.



Letters...

Dear friends,

Thank you very much for sending me your publication - it is good to see you getting into print. So much present-day spiritual aspiration gets bogged down in the personal, emotional and historical realms, people need to hear the straight scoop now and again. Even for the most sincere Dharma students constant reminders are needed that it is indeed possible to transcend time and selfhood completely; and that what we are is and always has been that unsupported Reality.

There were a number of interesting points brought up in the various articles ...Of the comments that were made about 'Crazy Wisdom,' and the exchange with Ganga, I most heartily agreed with what was said. She (Ganga) is trying to hold a basically untenable position and has got some serious problems with the relative/absolute truth distinction. I was reminded of a (purportedly true) story of a monastery in China. There was a wild fox that used to hang around all the time and one day it was not seen - the monks searched for it and found it dead in a cave. The abbot - to everyone's amazement - said it should be given a monk's funeral, full honors, the lot. Later he explained that centuries ago this fox had been an Enlightened monk. When that monk was asked, "Is an Enlightened being free from all karmic retribution/influence?" He replied, "Yes" - meaning his actions were free from result. The consequence that followed was that he was reborn as a fox 500 times over. Another danger of the "Advaita Shuffle"! My feeling is that, similarly, Ganga is likely to get ripped off, attacked or otherwise mashed until some respect for the relative plane is developed - it's just a thought, but I don't envy her.

Also you might find the chapters of the Lotus Sutra which refer to the Buddha conferring predictions of Buddhahood on Sariputta and the arahants interesting, re: the principles of 'per-

sonal' and 'impersonal' Enlightenment.

All my good wishes to you,

Amaro Bhikkhu
Amaravati Buddhist Center
England



...I enjoyed *What Is Enlightenment?* immensely and found it very interesting. Points that stand out in the memory: I was impressed by Andrew's emphasis on "doing" and behavior, and the "Advaita Shuffle" theory, which relates to the same thing - i.e., getting hung up on some concept/idea that "There's no one to discuss anything. It's all unreal anyway." I know I've used this one in argument!, and its like arguing with Marxists or people with strong religious convictions - there is really no going forward from it. I was impressed at the way Andrew is prepared to discuss and argue and confront as in the conversation with Ganga - use language that is. (All this stuff about "Has the Buddha Landed?" really made me chuckle.) The other thing that struck me strongly from the magazine was the point that very very few people are really serious about wanting Enlightenment...

B.G.
England



Dear Editor,

I very much enjoyed reading the first issue of *What is Enlightenment?* and I am writing this letter to put a point of view which may be of interest to your readers. In talking about Enlightenment or the Truth, we are referring to a state of being beyond the mind, and as I understand it, this state of being can only be explained by the mind in a series of paradoxes. Nevertheless when looked at carefully, the logical contradictions inherent in such paradoxes can be un-

derstood for they are simply misunderstandings of *different levels of consciousness*. Beyond the mind, there is no paradox, no duality. When that state of being is brought down to this world - which is indeed an illusion - it enters the sphere of duality. It is in this environment that two truths can often appear to contradict each other.

Perhaps an analogy will help to explain. When the first American pilot, and shortly afterwards the first British pilot, broke the sound barrier, they discovered to their amazement that the controls in their planes worked in reverse on the other side. Can you imagine flying a plane and always knowing that you have to pull the joystick in one direction to go up and finding that on the other side of the sound barrier, you have to do the opposite? It is not then too unreasonable to imagine that what makes sense beyond the mind might break the laws of logic in our illusory world.

In terms of the Ultimate Truth this world as a sphere of duality is an illusion, but it *is* also very real. At face value, this last statement is completely illogical. If this sphere of duality is illusory, how can it also be real? Furthermore, it is possible to live in a state of being beyond the mind *and* to experience the oneness of the world of duality while also being aware of, and subject to, its laws. Logically, this makes even less sense, but it's true.

In the first issue of *What is Enlightenment?*, there is no doubt that the "Advaita Shuffle" argument is won by Andrew Cohen. It is absolutely correct to say that with Enlightenment, the relative "does not go away," and that there is an even greater requirement for responsible living. This is understood as *ethical living*, its source is beyond the mind, but its reality is within the confines of this dual world. As Mrs. Tweedie says in her conversation with Andrew: "The ethics is the most important thing...one has to live ethically."

There is also a direct relationship between *renunciation* and *ethical living*. The further along the path one travels, the greater becomes the realization that *renunciation* is essential. To *renounce the world* does not mean one is no longer subject to its laws. The greater the degree of *renunciation*, the more ethical will be the life. Having said that, it is important to understand that no one can *renounce the world* just like that. It is my understanding that it does not work like that.

Mrs. Tweedie tells a story of how, on the banks of the Ganges, she watched a ceremony in which a young man renounced the world to become a Sannyasi: there was incense, flowers and food offerings. The initiate took the ochre robe, his head was shaved and he was given his mala and begging bowl. Physically, he was utterly transformed. The next day, Tweedie and a friend of hers came down to the river to bathe and noticed the young Sannyasi piously sitting on a rock. "Ram, Ram, Ram," he would say, and furtively look up at the women. "Ram, Ram, Ram," and again she saw him spying upon them. "Renounce?" she would yell to us, "No, you cannot renounce anything."

The truth is that, as your desire for the Beloved grows, so you mature into different levels of consciousness. The attention is caught up by more important realizations and interest in things of this world fall away spontaneously. It is an organic process. Nothing is renounced. "Only you will know, but if you look back you will see how your past interests have simply fallen away."

The particular line of Yoga that I follow appears to be a mass of paradoxes and contradictions. There is no such thing as renunciation, yet surrender is a state of total renunciation. There is a requirement to live to the highest ethical standard, while there is also a requirement never to judge another.

Personally, having understood the sound barrier analogy, I have no prob-

lem with the apparent paradoxes. But while breaking the sound barrier may be one thing, I feel we can all agree that the real business is to travel at the speed of Light!

Yours sincerely,

Michael Eccles
England

Michael Eccles is a trustee of the Daughter of Fire Charitable Trust in England and a follower of the Naqshbandi Path of Sufism.



Beloved Andrew,

Greetings and Blessings from Lucknow.

...What prompts me to write is that i just finished reading your Publication *What is Enlightenment?*...I have not met you yet self to self. All i have is your words. I have no doubts about your realization and the fire that does burn within you. However, after reading your newsletter i strongly feel to communicate to you.

One of the first insights i had about realization is that one could realize themselves, come home to their being, but that didn't mean that the person had any clarity about reality. Nobody can see the whole picture...In fact, this is a major pitfall and I'm afraid that you are suffering from it. This is especially more difficult when one has a strong fire burning as you seem to have. How many millions have been slaughtered or deceived by fanatic righteous visionaries???

You define Enlightenment in terms of evolution. Evolution is something defined in time and is also just a concept which may or may not be true. Then you say Enlightenment is a secret because it doesn't exist in time. So how can you define it in terms of time??

You talk much about renunciation. Renunciation is something that can

never be imposed by another individual. It is something spontaneous and really only happens in a natural way and only by the person himself. There is no morality in regards to realization. There is no right behavior for Enlightenment. My Enlightenment just happened. I was not following any moral code or practicing any renunciation...

Your first assumption on which all your arguments and points are based is that we have choice of action. Have you really checked this out? My experience is that we have no choice about anything, even when it feels like we do.

The only proper action of a Master is to bring someone to Emptiness. This happens thru the silence of the Master. When old tendencies manifest again, the Master continues his grace upon the disciple until the disciple's own flame and wisdom is strong enough. This again only happens thru silence and grace. At the same time, the Master must make sure that attachments to him are cut. So that in the end, one is left only with realization.

...You are correct in seeing that old tendencies return, but your solution for it is not. Only thru silence and grace of the Master and the determination of the disciple will this happen. I am sorry to say that your solution will never lead somebody to Freedom. Please don't spend the next 10 to 20 years finding that out. See it now and save yourself and your followers alot of additional Samsara...

love,

Anahata
Lucknow, India



What Is Enlightenment? welcomes letters to the Editor. Write to us at Moksha Foundation, 39 Edison Avenue, Corte Madera, CA 94925, U.S.A.

Letters may be edited for space and clarity.

Part 2: Everything Must Be Questioned

by Andrew Cohen

ANY exploration of corruption in the spiritual life necessitates a rigorous and courageous investigation of oneself. This demands an unusual interest in the discovery and realization of the Truth alone.

What does this mean? This means that the individual who would aspire to claim Enlightenment must be able and willing to discriminate. Without discrimination, a clear and unconfused understanding, untainted by contradiction, will be impossible to realize.

Most human beings are so easily distracted by thoughts and feelings, and motivated mainly by fear and desire. Because of this, even those who aspire to emancipation usually lack the presence of attention and the intensity of interest necessary to cut through any and every potential obstruction to perfect clarity. Even a trace of desire or fear that remains unexamined will automatically distort perception. Only that individual who possesses the intensity of interest to fearlessly avoid nothing will be able to see things as they are to the degree necessary to realize that vision that is unobscured and perfect in its clarity.

When one dares to look deeply enough, one comes upon an unexpected discovery: that usually any perspective or view that is taken up by an individual as being "ultimate" or "Absolute" when closely scrutinized most often reveals a fixed position that has been taken up unwittingly by the individual in order to confirm or affirm unexamined assumptions and ideas. It is the fear of the unknown and the psychological and emotional need to *know* that obscures that view that is undefiled and uncorrupted by any idea rooted in fear or desire.

The highest goal of Enlightened understanding is the realization of that perspective that is truly unfettered by any fear, desire or karmic tendency that could influence or obstruct that attainment. The only way an individual will be able to realize that perspective that is always perfectly unobstructed is to without reservation courageously put all of his or her cards on the table. That means all previous assumptions and conclusions about the nature of reality, relative and absolute, must be questioned. This questioning must be undertaken with the utmost precision and care. Even hope must be abandoned in order to make room for the Truth to be able to reveal itself as it is. When there are no hiding places left and no hidden agendas whatsoever, then and only then can the mystery of creation begin to reveal itself. In that mystery the science of causation, of cause and effect, is seen in all its starkness for the first time, and then the startling and overwhelming fact of the impersonality of creation is revealed. In that revelation alone is salvation. Only in that revelation can individuality be truly founded in Truth. The root of all spiritual corruption and wrong views lies in the absence or imperfection of this attainment. To see clearly, to see things as they are, is to perceive the inherent order of all things. It is because any and every desire or motivation with any root in the personal will obscure the clear perception of that perfect order that it is imperative that any and every vestige of personal motivation be destroyed.

Without the unbroken perception of the inherent order of all things, an understanding of the nature of reality that is perfectly consistent will be an impossibility. ♦

Even one speck of dust left on the mirror that reflects the Self will hinder and influence to some degree the perfect reflection of the Source of our being. The inherent danger of one who dares to bring others to Enlightenment without having been utterly and absolutely consumed themselves, is that any traces of ignorance that remain due to undissolved pride and desire will mar and influence the reflection of the Self and will defile the transmission of perfection.

from *Autobiography of an Awakening*

...I have never stopped looking. I have always had this passion burning inside me to know what is true. For some reason that I don't know, I could never be satisfied with vague inconsistencies. I always wanted to know. There was always something very unsettling about relative confusion. The Absolute Truth itself, alone and untouched, is beyond confusion or clarity. But the world of illusion, time and space is very well within the reach and grasp of any mortal man to understand if they would dare to leave everything behind in the quest for that perfect jewel of Enlightenment. In that jewel, in its reflection all is revealed perfectly. All shades of lightness and darkness, depth, width and breadth are all seen AS THEY ARE. That is the secret! That is the mystery and that is the source of the true joy that Liberates and that is Freedom itself.

from *Autobiography of an Awakening*

Part 3: Realize Perfect Consistency

by Andrew Cohen

WHAT is the perfect expression of that inexpressible Absolute that has no opposites and recognizes only itself?

At the deepest level of realization one comes to the discovery of a perfect consistency. In this perfect consistency there are no opposites of any kind and absolutely no contradictions.

A spiritual perspective or view that lacks perfect consistency is corrupt because it casts an imperfect reflection of that Absolute that is by its nature perfectly consistent. Likewise, the perfect expression of that kind of attainment by definition would *have* to be the purest expression of consistency. How could it be otherwise?

It is the demonstration of that consistency that is itself the expression of the highest spiritual attainment because it is living proof that all karmic tendencies can in fact be destroyed. It is precisely because of the fact that the most profoundly awakened human beings have expressed and manifested that realization without contradiction that the

power of their message was so extraordinary and impact so explosive.

When that perfect clarity has been realized that is undefiled by any karmic residue and any hint of personal motive, its expression will only reflect that perfection that is undivided, and therefore, perfectly consistent.

Division of any kind always implies opposition. The perfect realization of the Absolute is the discovery of that understanding which has no opposite and in the realization of which there could be no other. The reflection of that realization in a human being when perfectly untainted always can be recognized as an expression of no opposites, because in that realization all karmic tendencies in a human being have been burned out. In such a one the very ground in which the seeds of ignorance can be sown literally no longer exists, and therefore, the seeds of division, conflict and separation, which all are expressions of opposing tendencies, have been destroyed forever. ♦

Enlightenment is Neutral

A dialogue with Andrew Cohen

The following dialogue addresses the impersonal nature of Enlightenment and explains how the Enlightened condition and ego can coexist.

Q: It seems to me that part of what you've been saying is that Enlightenment is the end of karma. Is that correct?

A: Yes, if someone is fully Enlightened.

Q: So is it possible for a fully Enlightened teacher to fail?

A: What do you mean by fail?

Q: I mean go off the track.

A: No, not if they're fully Enlightened. Then they can't. If they do, then by my definition of it, they weren't fully Enlightened.

Q: So, fully Enlightened means the end of karma and the end of personality traps that go along with that?

A: Yes.

Q: There are teachers who do things that are immoral, that are very much against what would be considered positive actions.

A: Could you be more specific?

Q: Taking advantage of students, abuse of power, sexual misconduct. This happens a lot.

A: Is that your definition of failure?

Q: Yes.

A: I want you to know that many people who are very involved in this field would disagree with you. They might not agree that what you call immoral conduct would be a sign of failure in a supposedly Enlightened being.

Q: I think I take the same stand that you do.

A: I appreciate that. But just for the sake of the argument I wanted you to know that many respected authorities on this subject would disagree. They might say, "Enlightenment does not have anything to do with morality." Many people feel that my plea for ruthless sanity is outrageous and extremely arrogant.

Q: I don't know why you say arrogant.

A: Many call me arrogant for daring to object and for having the audacity to speak out about it.

Was there anything else you wanted to ask?

Q: Yes, I'm curious about the differences between Enlightened teachers.

A: Generally speaking?

Q: Yes.

A: Generally, the differences between the attainments of truly Enlightened individuals can be broken down into two categories: 1) *depth* of the attainment, i.e. the depth and breadth of the Enlightened vision and understanding, and 2) the *purity* in that attainment. That means: how untainted is the expression of that attainment? Is it tainted at

all? And if so, to what degree? But the most important issue to come to terms with I think for most people when looking into this question is this: *how* is it that an individual who indeed has come into a radical and profound transformation could still be able to manifest and

express the same kind of ego tendencies as everyone else?

Q: How is that?

A: What ego means in this context is impure motive. When you have an impure motive (ego) mixed up with a very

pure motive (Enlightenment), it's very confusing because when you have an awakened individual and the power of that very pure motive is active, it's very powerful, very moving, very extraordinary and very attractive.

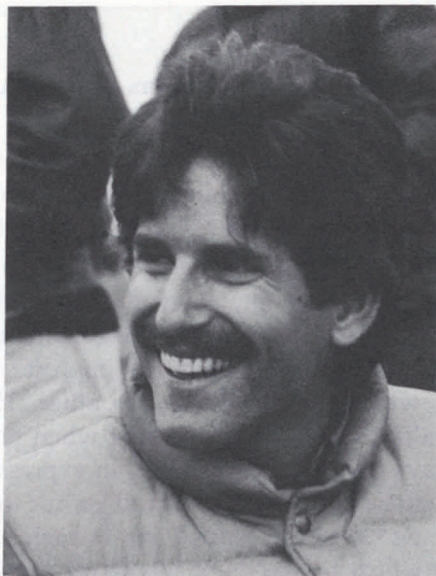
*You cannot separate the individual from their Enlightenment.
It's impossible.*

And when you have that pure motive mixed up with impure motive, the result is a confusing picture. It's because there have been so many of these confusing pictures in our era, that so many people are unclear about this matter. That's why so many are saying, "We can't judge." Many people feel that once someone has demonstrated a profound degree of Enlightenment - that because of that they are no longer held to the same laws of morality and common sense as everyone else.

Q: It's confusing.

A: The reason why it's so confusing is that in most cases of Enlightenment both qualities are simultaneously manifesting. There is pure motive manifesting because the Enlightenment *wants*. Enlightenment has its own energy. It has its own momentum. The energy of Enlightenment *wants* to be known. It's an expression of the evolutionary impulse. When there is an individual who is profoundly awakened but in whom there is still impure motive, both factors will be operating. There will be a pure desire to share a mystery, and part and parcel with that pure desire, there will still be an ego in there that wants a cut of the action.

Enlightenment itself does not care



about any individual. Enlightenment is like water rushing down a mountain. The water doesn't care about the mountain. Enlightenment is an evolutionary force that wants to spread for its *own* sake. The force of Enlightenment itself doesn't care about individuals. You see? This is why, for example, in the Buddhist tradition, so much emphasis is put on the cultivation of the vehicle. It's very important to understand that Enlightenment is an impersonal essence that has nothing to do with any individual - *then* there is the individual. And when the two come together and merge, you will have that pure essence *and* that individual. The degree of perfection or imperfection that is the karmic predicament of that individual will have everything to do with the expression of

that individual's Enlightenment. You see? You cannot separate the individual from their Enlightenment. It's impossible.

Q: So one's karma then could hold them back from reaching a complete awakening?

A: It's only karma that holds anybody back; there's nothing else there to do it. The only point I'm trying to make is that on one hand, we have a human individual with their entire karmic predicament, and then there is a pure Enlightened essence. When for some reason a big crack occurs in the ego of a particular individual, the pure Enlightened essence may begin to express itself through that individual. When this occurs you are getting both the individual

and the Enlightened essence. You see? It's very important to understand that the degree of purity with which the Enlightened essence will be able to be expressed has *everything* to do with the karmic predicament of that particular individual.

Q: If an Enlightened individual realizes that they still have flaws in their personality, if they find they still express strong ego tendencies and are still creating karma - can they still break through that in some way?

A: If they truly want to, of course they can. But that hardly ever happens. Theoretically, of course it's possible. With humility, even mountains can be moved. With humility, anything can happen. ♦

Spiritual Slavery and Prostitution of the Soul

A dialogue with Andrew Cohen

This dialogue investigates how and why students are often willing to condone, support and even participate in the unethical behavior of their teachers.

Q: I'm very confused about this matter of ethical conduct and its relationship to the Enlightened understanding that you speak so much about. Why is it that so many gurus seem to be prey to the very same weaknesses as ordinary people? I would have thought that an ego that had died would not be able to act in the same selfish way as people who did not claim to be Enlightened.

A: Maybe in the cases that you are speaking about, the ego *didn't* die. Maybe in these cases, there is a fully intact ego coexisting with a profound realization. Most people don't realize that ego and profound realization can coexist. It is for that reason that so many people have gotten in trouble.

Q: But I don't understand how even after the failings of the guru have be-

come obvious, people will still allow themselves to be taken advantage of. They often will continue to be followers in the face of unethical behavior, and in some cases even gross abuse.

A: Often when a person meets a teacher in whom the Absolute is manifesting to a powerful degree, their heart will open up unexpectedly. They may experience unusual insight and understanding just through mere association with this kind of extraordinary individual. After this kind of experience it is easy to understand how one may get very attached to that individual. The bond that is formed through experiences like these runs very deep. Slowly without even realizing it, in order to protect the love and beauty of that precious event, the person starts to be willing to overlook things. The minute that begins, they become corrupt themselves.

Q: Is that when they start to rationalize?

A: Yes, then they become corrupt, in the same way the guru is. When you try to

talk to the disciples of these gurus about simple virtues, they often are unable to make any sense. Also, they will frequently say things like, "Ethical conduct and Enlightenment have nothing to do with each other" in an attempt to justify the confusing behavior of their guru. The minute anybody allows themselves to tolerate corruption they become a part of it. These people desperately don't want to see the depth of the corruption that they themselves are immersed in. The security of their spiritual well-being *depends* on the fact that no matter what, the actions of the guru are *never* questioned. Because their hearts are so invested in the guru, they will make almost any rationalization or justification for the guru's actions. They will do almost anything in order to protect that love that the guru has revealed to them. This is spiritual slavery and prostitution of the soul. In weak-minded people the seal of Enlightenment becomes a license for abuse.

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...Looking at it from one point of view - the more people around the guru, the more powerful the guru becomes. And whatever particular qualities the guru may have in contrast to other people - sublime or diabolical - will be more obvious the larger the gathering. What the guru will be radiating depends upon who that person is, what they're teaching and exactly what it is they have realized. It could be anything. And depending on what it is, it will attract different kinds of people and have different effects. The ultimate extremes are the Buddha on one side and Hitler on the other.

Andrew Cohen

Spiritual Slavery and Prostitution of the Soul

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Q: How is it then with the matter of trust? Does one ultimately only surrender to one's own knowing of the truth?

A: Yes.

Q: Then *not* to the guru?

A: Ultimately the guru and your knowing of truth should be one and the same. There shouldn't be any difference. If there is, there's something wrong. That means there is either something wrong in your idea of what the truth is and your experience of what the truth is or there's some defect in the guru. Ideally they should be perfectly synonymous.

Q: But shouldn't surrender be to truth alone?

A: But in a sense that's all people surrender to anyway. They surrender to their own experience. If you go to a teacher and you have a powerful experience, it's that *experience* that you surrender to. What usually happens next though, is that you get involved with the personality of the teacher. Powerful experience makes you hungry for more. That's why people get more involved. They want to get to know who this guru is. They fall in love and then want to be more intimate. Then they get involved

with the personality of the teacher. At that point it's no longer just a spiritual experience; they begin to get involved with a human personality. That's when the trouble starts. If there's any trouble that could start, that's when it's going to begin.

When the personality of the guru and the love and beauty that the guru revealed begin to conflict with each other, that means something is wrong.

gerous. This is a corrupt condition that a great deal of the spiritual world is in these days. If the guru is corrupt and you're intimately involved with the guru, you can't help but be corrupt yourself. It's unavoidable. By association it's an automatic result. It's a very delicate business.

Q: So how does one discern? To what degree do I question my own perception and trust?

The minute anybody allows themselves to tolerate corruption they become a part of it.

As I said before, people are weak, weak-minded, and if someone is truly Enlightened, they will have a very powerful mind and be very charismatic. People are easily overwhelmed by that. Because their heart has been awakened, because they have been deeply touched by something, they often don't care about anything else. And in order to protect that experience, they will often tolerate just about anything. This is dan-

A: Just go by the basics. There are some very basic, ethical laws that anybody who's not insane knows. They are not esoteric.

Q: So where do you draw the line?

A: The line is drawn where suffering is caused to other people due to selfish actions that stem from ignorance. That's where you draw the line. ♦

Confessions of a Western Buddhist

by Loring Palmer

"You may find after you've climbed to the top that your ladder is against the wrong wall." Anonymous

THE TRIPLE TREASURE (or Three Jewels) is the method employed in the Buddhist system to produce change. These Three Jewels are the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. This refers to Buddha Sakyamuni who transmitted the Dharma (Truth) to his Sangha (disciples). In general terms this is the teacher, the teachings and the students. To become a Buddhist, one commits oneself to this system by ceremonially taking refuge in the Triple Treasure. Twenty-five years ago I took refuge with Suzuki Roshi and subsequently with Trungpa Rinpoche and was given the Buddhist name, O-Nying (Embryonic Luminosity). If taken seriously, the refuge vow implies that one understands the truth of suffering to the point of feeling revulsion towards the world of illusion, is clear about one's intention to attain the goal of Enlightenment and trusts the Master to take him/her all the way to Freedom. One becomes a refugee, a pilgrim on the Path. The power of the Three Jewels depends upon the integrity of each jewel in the dynamic: an Enlightened Master, the Teachings of Liberation and a willing student.

Boulder, Colorado, in my mind, was the capital of Buddhism in America. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche was the center of the mandala that included Karma Dzong, Vajradhatu International, Naropa Institute and Shambhala Training Headquarters. The advantage of living in Boulder was the continual flow of renowned Buddhist teachers that came through there to teach. Trungpa had asked his serious students to come join him in Boulder and be part of the scene happening with his Karma Dzong Community. We came from east and west, north and south. I had been with Shunryu Suzuki Roshi at San Francisco Zen Center since 1964. I left this practice center in 1974, two years after Roshi died, to join Trungpa Rinpoche in beautiful Boulder to learn the more exotic form of Buddhism called

Vajrayana. My karmic link with Buddhism had begun with Alan Watts back in the '50s when I heard him talk in Minneapolis. I was a college student and was impressed that Buddhism was not just a religion but was a vehicle for self-transformation and evolution. This seemed like an exciting possibility. Several years later the dull conditioning I was going through at the university appeared to be leading to a dead end. I dropped out of college, let my hair grow long and joined the Beat Generation to pursue "Eastern Thought." The mind was the new frontier: "tune in, turn on, and drop out." I renounced the material values of the consumer culture that had created the war machine in Vietnam and moved to San Francisco to live a simple and sincere life, practice Zen and seek Enlightenment.

At Zen Center I applied my cooking talents to become a head cook (Tenzo). I became a member of the staff that met every morning to have tea with Roshi and plan the day's activities. Suzuki Roshi emphasized "beginner's mind" and zazen - just sit. It's said that through zazen the kleshas (passion, aggression and ignorance) fade away like colors in the sun. I sat at least twice a day, sat for lectures, sat for meals, sat in meetings, sat many many sesshins. I became calm but not Enlightened. The feeling at Zen Center was that of austerity verging on gloom. There was a strange conspiracy of silence: it was considered better not to talk too much. The doubts and fears that I had were "stuffed," and periodically I would explode in a passionate tirade.

I was invited to Boulder in the summer of 1972 to take charge of the kitchen at Rocky Mountain Dharma Center during Trungpa Rinpoche's opening program there. The contrast between the communities was stunning. Karma Dzong was a loose scene at that time: lots of alcohol, sex, music and dancing. I was both shocked and fascinated. These

people seemed to know how to have fun. And Trungpa Rinpoche was a party animal besides being a brilliant teacher. I had the feeling that he wanted to share himself with everyone, but his number one passion was for the Dharma. During the seventeen years I knew him, I watched him dazzle the world like a meteor across the sky and then fall into feebleness from the effects of alcohol. I attended the seminary program, spent three years at Karme-Chöling as part of the staff, attended Naropa Institute, graduated from the Ngedon School of Buddhist Philosophy, practiced the highest sadhanas religiously, did one-month retreats and weekend seminars. In both communities I involved myself enough to become a serious, "professional" student.

Suzuki Roshi and Trungpa Rinpoche were the guiding lights for their students when they were alive. I cannot express enough the deep love and devotion that I felt for both Suzuki Roshi and Trungpa Rinpoche. It was the strength of their friendship that made me decide to go to Boulder to join Trungpa after Suzuki Roshi died. Trungpa Rinpoche made Suzuki Roshi the "adopted grandfather of the Kagyu Lineage of Tibetan Buddhism in America," and had his picture displayed on the shrines of his many centers. Both of these Asian immigrants proved the American dream that anything is possible. In their relatively short time here they created empires within the Buddhist world. They used their insight and skillful means to inspire others to extend themselves and move mountains. Suzuki was quite a small man. Trungpa Rinpoche was paralyzed on his left side.

Each Master found a brilliant and willing disciple who was their "can-do man." They became the top disciples and thus provided a role model for the rest of us. They were known more for

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A Perfect Mirror

Q: What is the function of a spiritual Teacher?

A: The function of a spiritual Teacher is to serve as a perfect mirror for the student. A spiritual Teacher should be a mirror that is immaculate and completely unstained. There should not be even one speck of dust on that mirror, so in that mirror the student will be able to see their own reflection perfectly and absolutely clearly.

from Enlightenment is a Secret

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their popularity than for their purity. Suzuki Roshi's Dharma Heir was the spirit and energy behind the creation of Zen Center's empire. This was to be the "temple" to present Zen properly and authentically in this country.

Trungpa Rinpoche's Heir Apparent, the Vajra Regent, worked with Rinpoche to establish a powerful international organization that would both propagate and protect the Three Jewels. My experience was that when Suzuki Roshi and Trungpa Rinpoche were alive they were the source of great energy and inspiration. After their death there was a dimming of the light followed by darkness.

In both the Zen Center and Vajradhatu communities the Dharma Heirs continued to fulfill the vision of their respective guru as entrepreneurs. Both of these top students were brilliant organization men, popular, skilled fund-raisers and eloquent teachers of Buddha Dharma. Both ruled as despots and indulged in sexual misconduct. Clearly, they stood out in their respective communities and appeared to be completely committed to the Teachings. They demanded and received trust from the community although it was apparent that they were no more Enlightened than the rest of us. They fooled

us for awhile, took us for a ride and then plunged the community into a crisis of divisiveness, anger and disbelief. When push came to shove both of these honored students acted with no conscience, integrity or purity. It became clear that they had their own agenda and took a position to defend it. They both refused viable feedback from concerned community members early on and had proceeded with extreme pride to keep themselves separate from us. They proved to be no more capable of acting like sane human beings than any other deluded person.

In the Karma Dzong Community in Boulder this was the culmination of a series of mishaps that wreaked havoc upon Trungpa's mandala. Trungpa Rinpoche had died a long, sad and painful death in 1987 caused by alcoholism. There was a scandal regarding the misuse of funds by a respected member of the hierarchy who had moved to Nova Scotia. There was disharmony between Trungpa's family and his Dharma heir, the Vajra Regent. And then came the explosive revelation that blew all trust to pieces: the Vajra Regent had AIDS and had knowingly slept with his male students. In particular one young man of eighteen, who had been a rising star of decorum and responsibility in the youth group of the community, had been infected. The sangha split into opposing camps: those in the Regent's hierarchy who defended him and those that were critical and wanted him removed. I felt betrayed and cynical regarding the organization. The trust had become trashed.

When Andrew Cohen came to Boulder in the Spring of 1990 I had given up on the possibility of ever attaining Enlightenment in this lifetime. A friend of mine was part of the team preparing for Andrew's visit. "He teaches Enlightenment," she said. I was irritated that

anyone could be so presumptuous! She told me that she had met Andrew the previous year, had a profound experience while in his presence and was now a member of his sangha. I respected her and was shocked to hear that she had broken with Buddhism. Here was a Trungpa student who had even gone all the way to Kathmandu, the heart of Tibetan Buddhism, to practice the advanced Vajrayana practices - and then had thrown it all away. She was serious. I was skeptical. Hadn't Trungpa Rinpoche given us all we needed to know to find Liberation? Andrew wasn't a Buddhist and had no lineage. How was it possible that he could be Enlightened without years of endless practice? I was determined to see for myself. I was fifty-three years old and time was running out. A dear friend of mine had died recently of lung cancer causing me to reflect on how quickly life can end.

When I saw Andrew for the first time I saw him through the filter of skepticism. During a dialogue with him, he asked me how long I'd been practicing, was this practice working, had I achieved the goal of Enlightenment? I said that "I had had glimpses." I felt embarrassed: I was practicing the advanced Vajrayana sadhanas, studying esoteric Buddhist philosophy and was an active member in the Buddhist community but hadn't tasted victory. Andrew was awakening me from a deep slumber. I suddenly realized that I had become a spiritual yuppie and had devolved into a square. I knew I was stuck. I blushed and looked around the room thinking everyone else *must* be getting IT *except* me. In that instant, something was released. Years of uncertainty seemed to disappear. I spent the rest of the evening immersed in a deep and profound bliss.

Soon I became infected with Andrew's passion for Truth, and through his inspiration I was able to gain insight into why I was stuck in my pursuit of Enlightenment: there was no Enlightened Guru as guide (Trungpa was dead), practice rather than Liberation was being taught, and there was no Sangha that I could trust. I had developed

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What is Right View?

“...IN ORDER that this embryo of correct understanding might come to proper growth it is necessary at the outset to clear away the host of wrong views, false beliefs and dogmatic convictions that threaten its development at every turn. Therefore, as the forerunner of the path, the first task of right view, which must be accomplished before it can even begin its more demanding chores, is to discriminate between right and wrong views. As the Buddha explains: “Right view, bhikkhus is the forerunner (*pubbangama*). And how is right view the forerunner? If one understands wrong view as wrong view and understands right view as right view, that is right view.” Right view and wrong view each operate on two levels, one regarding the nature of actuality and the other regarding doctrines about the nature of actuality. Right view is able both to understand the nature of actuality and to discriminate between right and wrong doctrines about the nature of actuality. Wrong view both confuses the nature of actuality and cannot distinguish between right and wrong doctrines about the nature of actuality. Only when right view prevails will the correct discrimination between right and wrong view be made. So long as wrong view prevails, their distinction will remain unseen, the higher functions of right view will be impossible and the development of the remaining path-factors will be impaired.”

from the Introduction of
The All-Embracing Net of Views:
The Brahmajala Sutta and its Commentaries
Translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Bodhi

“WRONG VIEWS with fixed consequences are doctrines which tend to undermine the basic principles of morality by denying the framework which gives meaning and validity to ethical notions. They include kinds of ethical nihilism which reject the law of kamma, the reality of moral qualities, or the efficacy of effort. Their consequences are said to be “fixed” because the firm adherence to these views is an unwholesome course of kamma obstructing the paths to both the heavenly worlds and to liberation; in some cases, where such adherence is especially rabid and dogmatic, the kamma generated is sufficient to bring a fall from the human world down to the planes of misery.”

from the Introduction of
The All-Embracing Net of Views

“Shuffle” Update

The Nirvana-Samsara Shuffle

This brief dialogue with Andrew further illustrates the “Advaita Shuffle” explained and demonstrated in our last issue. The use of the “Shuffle” is not limited to practitioners of the Advaita teachings but is often freely used by many spiritual practitioners and teachers as a way to avoid or compromise. The following excerpt is a demonstration of the same “Shuffle Technique” using, in this case, Buddhist terminology.

Q: I have read, I have been told many times and for a brief instant even realized myself that samsara and nirvana are the same thing. Therefore, what is there to attain? What is there to give up? And who is it that wants to become Enlightened anyway?

A: You’re getting into dangerous territory. If you would allow yourself at this stage to assume that samsara and nirvana are the same thing, you’re falling into exactly the same trap as the “Advaita Shuffle.” That means you will be in danger of being lost in the Absolute view. That means by allowing yourself to falsely assume the deepest realization of the highest understanding you will be giving your ego enormous license. Because samsara and nirvana are not separate, many people say, “Well, it’s all the same anyway, so it doesn’t really matter.” In this way conscience becomes obscured. The realization that samsara and nirvana are ultimately the same is correct - but that realization is very precious and delicate, and is not to be used by the practitioner in any way to compromise or avoid the necessity for a full and absolute transformation. All too easily these days the fact of the ultimate non-difference between samsara and nirvana is used as a license for abuse and as an excuse for avoiding the absolute Truth about one’s own condition in the present moment. The misuse of the Absolute view in this way serves to relieve the individual from the burden of conscience. This kind of abuse and misuse of the highest and most subtle teachings is very dangerous and will make any genuine attainment of Enlightened understanding that is untainted impossible.

Death of a Devotee

by Roberta Anderson

I FIRST MET Andrew Cohen in late October of 1989. At that time I had been a student of the renowned spiritual teacher, Da Free John, for six and a half years and was still very actively involved in his community. When a friend urged me to read Andrew's book entitled *My Master is My Self* about his meeting with his Guru and his subsequent awakening, I felt a curious excitement which surprised me as I had long since lost interest in other teachers. I had been seeking for many years and felt convinced that Da Free John was the greatest living teacher and that I had no need for any other teacher. Even though at times I was confused by his wild and erratic behavior, I felt sure that he was deeply Enlightened and that his teachings were unparalleled. I was even somewhat scornful of friends who went from one Guru to another and who in my view "didn't have what it takes" to stick it out and be fully committed to one teacher and who always seemed to be looking for an "easier way." Despite these ideas I was drawn to find Andrew's book which I read immediately in one sitting. When I finished the book I burst into tears. I was amazed and awestruck and knew only that I had to see him as soon as possible. I called the bookstore where I'd purchased his book and discovered that Andrew was teaching that very night quite close by.

When Andrew entered the room and sat down I knew that my intuition about this man's purity and perfect surrender was correct. When he spoke I felt a deep and immediate trust. I knew right away that this was the voice of Truth and that he was an extremely rare human being. I felt simultaneously that I'd been looking for him forever and had also always known him. I was drawn to him like a magnet despite my confusion over the fact that I already had a Guru who I had thought I was deeply committed to. Every time we spoke I felt him clearing

away the cobwebs in my mind. I saw quickly something that I had been unwilling to acknowledge even to myself - that I had been despairing about the possibility of my own awakening in this lifetime. Despite the fact that I had thought myself to be a "serious" student and felt deeply connected to Da Free John, it was obvious to me that no real change was happening. I had always attributed the fact that I wasn't changing to my own unworthiness.

In the teaching that I had been following there was a very strong emphasis on loving, serving and praising our teacher. We were encouraged to spend time making gifts for him and to find ever-new ways to express our appreciation. We studied the devotional tradition, and the basic premise seemed convincing to me: if you focused your love and attention steadily and constantly on your Guru rather than on

I began to understand that no matter how much you love your Guru, you are still in chains unless you truly face yourself.

your own self-preoccupation, his Enlightened state, which was in fact your true condition, would somehow eventually become your own. You would literally "become what you were meditating on." Although for many years I had been dutifully going through the motions of devotional practices, study, parish meetings, service and groups in which we explored our emotional conditioning and ideas about ourselves, all that was fundamentally happening was that I was becoming more and more convinced of my own inadequacies. Inwardly, without even realizing it, I had been compromising my deep desire for freedom and had been settling for ac-

cepting a life of "loving and serving my Guru." I felt a deep sadness when I acknowledged that I had really come to believe that awakening would not occur for me in this lifetime and that the discrepancy between my teacher and me seemed to be growing instead of diminishing.

My meeting with Andrew reawakened in me an excitement, interest and a new conviction that realization could actually be possible. When I began to meet his students I was amazed and delighted with the level of integrity, interest, spontaneity and genuine happiness I observed. I was also very impressed with Andrew's availability to his students and the fact that he somehow managed to be in intimate contact with anyone who showed a sincere interest in awakening. I had seen that a number of the teachers I had investigated over the years (including my own teacher) actually did not have much contact with their students. I knew that what was occurring around Andrew was extremely rare. After three days of sitting with him I began to experience a very deep awakening unlike anything I'd ever known before. I'd had many profound experiences with my prior teacher which were extraordinarily blissful

and moving, albeit short-lived. Suddenly now I found myself catapulted into a limitless space and place of infinite timelessness and perfection with absolutely no sense of separation. I felt a deep gratitude I could never express. I knew with absolutely no doubt that despite the agenda I'd set up for myself in this life, I had to follow what my heart was telling me. It was time to leave.

I returned to my community and began to tell my friends about my plans. I also wanted to share my excitement about what was occurring within me. I was surprised to find that with few exceptions almost no one was able to appreciate the ecstasy, awe and deep

abiding happiness which was bubbling out of me. Nearly everyone seemed threatened, suspicious and doubtful. This was very disappointing to me as I finally felt that I knew directly from my own experience so many of the things we had all studied and spoken about conceptually for so many years. Even though nobody had ever heard me speak with such confidence and excitement, very few expressed any real curiosity. Even more than that, many seemed to be convinced that I had lost my mind.

The community leader's wife and her assistant were sent over with a list of questions to "interview" me. The assumption from them, as well as from everyone else I spoke with, was that I was "settling for a lesser teacher" because of the belief (which I had shared as well) that there were simply no other living teachers who were "seventh stage realizers" (the highest stage of realization based on a paradigm created by Da Free John). They stressed that I had not spent enough time in the "preparatory stages" and that I was simply lost in an "experience." They suggested also that I was possibly still upset over my marriage breaking up the previous year. It was painful and embarrassing to me that these women were so focused on their official duty that they were unable to perceive or recognize my ecstatic condition and what it was I was trying to share with them. When it finally became clear that my confidence was unshakable they asked me their final question, "Roberta, are you having sex with this man?" Almost everyone I spoke with seemed desperate to find some explanation which would effectively dismiss or at least categorize and minimize this explosion that I knew could never be explained or limited.

I soon moved to be with Andrew and his community. I was relieved to see that Andrew's life was an open book. There was no murky secrecy about his private life, no confusing behavior dubbed as "crazy wisdom" to try to understand and accept, and no unanswered questions about financial matters. All this was very important to me. Several years earlier in my former com-

munity a number of lawsuits had been filed stemming from allegations about my teacher's questionable behavior which had been confusing and damaging to numerous people. This was frightening and upsetting to many of us. The community handled the situation primarily by giving us a steady dose of study courses on "crazy wisdom" as well as numerous talks emphasizing the necessity of trusting the Guru implicitly. It was explained to us many times that because of our own unenlightened state, we would never be able to understand or judge our teacher's behavior. Because we were discouraged from using our own discrimination, I was always troubled by an ongoing sense of dissonance between what I really thought and what I was told to think.

After a month and a half I became a formal student. Everything was radically different from any spiritual community I had known before. Rather than feeling jealous and competitive with each other, Andrew's students actually seemed to celebrate and support each other's growth. Although it was true that some students spent more time with him than others, I could see that this was based on a real maturity which was obvious to all rather than the usual hierarchical struggle and competitiveness to be in the "inner circle." Just as Andrew's life was open for all to see, there was no hiding place for his students as well. In having a teacher who

was a perfect mirror and who required his students to be mirrors for each other, it soon became clear to me that I would have to face all the parts of myself that so far I had successfully avoided seeing. I realized that for a long time I had only been playing at spiritual life, and I began to understand that no matter how much you love your Guru, you are still in chains unless you truly face yourself. I felt simultaneous terror and relief as I began to understand that in the true "holy life" nothing can be hidden or held onto, and that in the intimacy and intensity of our lives together all of my private spaces, games, projections and attempts to maintain any of my many self-images were all being brought to light. I began to learn about a kind of intimacy I had never imagined possible which was based on the deep trust which the students had in their teacher and which was reflected in the trust the students had in each other.

I began to learn about the absolute importance of being impeccable in my behavior and speech and to understand that this is the only way that karma can truly come to an end. Having a teacher whose life fiercely demonstrates integrity leaves no space to accept or excuse my own imperfections. Because my former teacher's behavior was confusing and often questionable, I had never fully understood the critical importance of right action. I began to see that the true Dharma must be lived and made manifest, and that I was actually in a

A Perfect Relationship to Life

Q: I'm confused about the difference between surrendering to myself and surrendering to a Teacher.

A: Surrendering to yourself and surrendering to the Teacher should be the same thing. The relationship with the Teacher should be synonymous with the perfect relationship to life, to reality, and to yourself. This relationship implies far more than being involved with another personality. Very few people understand this.

from Enlightenment is a Secret

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situation where this was occurring.

The relationship with an authentic teacher is a profound and sacred matter. It is far more intimate than any conventional relationship, as a real teacher is a doorway through which you walk to meet your true Self. The teacher reveals to the student their own true nature as well as demonstrating the awakened condition in his or her own life. Rather than simply being an object of devotion, the teacher must reflect the ego, encourage self-investigation and constantly challenge the student's understanding.

I saw again and again how much of my "understanding" had previously been only conceptual knowledge and unexamined jargon which I had been casually spouting for years. Suddenly I

Devotion Cannot be Practiced

Q: Can devotion be practiced?

A: Devotion is not something that can be practiced. Devotion is a choiceless response to Self-recognition that is imposed from within. Devotion is imposed from the unknown upon the ego and this cannot be practiced. It can only be experienced. The practice of devotion is an attempt by the ego through effort to impose itself upon the unknown. This cannot be done.

Devotion is an imposition from the unknown upon the ego that is an agonizingly ecstatic and excruciatingly vulnerable spiritual experience.

from Enlightenment is a Secret

didn't have any volumes of written teaching to rely on or hide behind. There were no pujas or rituals. I was left only with my own experience and understanding without any "props." I saw that for true discrimination to develop every individual must be called to stand alone in the starkness of his or her own understanding. Only then is it possible to develop a strength, confidence and independence that comes from being Self-reliant rather than teacher-reliant. I was and am constantly thrilled by the challenge of living from a place that has nothing to do with my old ideas. Gradually I have come to understand what Andrew means when he speaks about "living in the unknown" and "standing alone." Finally I see that true awakening means becoming deeply rooted in the Real and manifesting *that* as an expression of my own life. I see how this essential understanding is possible only with a teacher who refuses to com-

promise on any level and thus allows no room for his students to accept compromise in themselves.

The mystery of why I did not fundamentally change after six and a half years of apparently intense involvement and interest in spiritual practice is now very clear to me. Real growth cannot happen as long as you are passively waiting for the Guru to do it for you. True awakening requires both a teacher of absolute purity who could never be satisfied with mere adulation, as well as a student who is passionately interested in fully and actively participating in his or her own liberation. The death of my "devotee mentality" has revealed a reality which is far more vast than anything I could have imagined. I now know that true devotion cannot be practiced, but is alive and real only when both the teacher and student are an expression of standing alone, dependent on and devoted only to Truth. ♦

Confessions of a Western Buddhist

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an exotic hobby called "Buddhist practice" that made me feel comfortable and secure with no one to challenge my delusion.

I'm now fifty-five years old and have been with Andrew for two years. Leaving organized Buddhism has put me in a strange position: during this time I have gained more insight into what the Buddha taught than in all my twenty-five years of being a Buddhist. I now experience the Triple Treasure as a living dynamic rather than an archaic symbol.

Recently I returned to Boulder and visited my old Buddhist friends. Many are jaded as a result of the corruption and scandals they've seen in the Karma Dzong community and in the spiritual

world in general. I could not help but notice how little they trusted one another and I was shocked at their lack of interest in the possibility of Enlightenment. Most were more concerned that I had left Buddhism than with whether or not I had woken up. "I just want to get on with my life," is what I heard.

The heart of the Triple Treasure is the Enlightened Master. It's only since meeting Andrew with his simple and direct teachings of Liberation that I've understood the power of this dynamic between Master and disciple that can produce the kind of change necessary for the realization of Freedom. He passionately proclaims the Lion's Roar of Enlightenment. ♦

What is Sangha?: Out of the Swamp

This dialogue is a continuation of the article, "What is Sangha?" presented in our first issue. Here Andrew further addresses the purpose of spiritual community, particularly in relationship to human evolution.

*A dialogue with
Andrew Cohen*

Q: Will the world only be saved when everybody is Enlightened?

A: When an individual becomes fully Enlightened then the world *has* been saved.

Most human beings have not evolved to the point where they are ready to be interested in the need for evolution and its urgency. This is very important to understand. The idea that one day all of humanity will be Enlightened and therefore perfect unity and harmony would be realized and practiced by all is a fallacy and an expression of immature and unexamined ideas. You must understand that the world in its entirety will never be saved. The Buddha couldn't do it and Jesus couldn't do it. You can't do it and I can't do it. The messiah is not going to come. The mess of ignorance and conditioning that is generated by the mind of the world is so overwhelming in its sheer mass that no Enlightened being could ever destroy it. Even a hundred fully Enlightened beings couldn't destroy it. And even if there were a hundred fully Enlightened beings, they wouldn't be recognized anyway. Why is that? Fundamentally most people simply don't want to know. Because of this most people are never going to rise up out of the swamp of delusion, ignorance and confusion. What is extraordinary is that in spite of this, evolution can and does occur. The fact that some are able to rise out of the swamp and by their own strength and purity not only survive, but grow and evolve undefiled by the mess of the swamp is the salvation of the world.

Q: Is that evolution the point of a Sangha?



A: The point of a Sangha is to create an environment where an unusual and extraordinary degree of evolution can take place. A Sangha is just like a laboratory where there are special conditions. Special conditions are needed in order to create an environment where a human being will be able to evolve in an extraordinary way. For this kind of evolution to occur there needs to be an exceptional degree of one-pointed interest. It's a similar situation as when you want a delicate plant to grow. If you take that plant out of the greenhouse, it won't be able to grow because the forces outside the greenhouse are simply too harsh. Outside of the greenhouse, for most individuals who want to evolve, it takes all of their energy just to keep the mere *desire* to evolve intact. The precarious and delicate nature of forces aroused when the individual would dare to take up the evolutionary incentive as their own desire is formidable and the delicate alchemy necessary to nurture that kind of

extraordinary transformation demands undivided attention and unusual commitment.

That individual who would surrender themselves utterly to the evolutionary impulse gives up their own life as an offering to a great experiment that is the evolution of life itself. They remove themselves from the mundane world of personal gain and loss and give themselves up wholly as a vehicle so that the evolutionary process can occur.

Q: How does this evolution benefit the whole race?

A: When a few people have actually succeeded in rising up out of the swamp of ignorance, delusion and confusion - when the weight of karma has truly been thrown off - then evolution *has* indeed occurred. Most of the individuals in the race may never know about this, but that doesn't matter. What's important is that out of the swamp, evolution *does* occur. ♦

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London, England June 5-24

contact: Tom Feldberg
25 Hylda Court, St. Albans Rd.
London NW5 1RE
Tel: 44-71-267-2577
Fax: 44-71-485-5005

Totnes, England June 26-29

contact: Dan Findlay
Woolston Green Farm
Landscape, Newton Abbot
Devon TQ13 7LZ
Tel: 44-804-26-434
Fax: 44-804-26-321

Amsterdam, Holland July 2-19

contact: Koos Palmboom
Rozenstraat 79C
1016 NN, Amsterdam
Tel. and Fax: 31-20-622-9631

Geneva, Switzerland July 23-24

contact: Thomas Strubel
Tagertschister 54
CH-3110 Munsingen
Tel: 41-317-212-642

Bern, Switzerland July 25-Aug.5

contact: Thomas Strubel (see above)

Corte Madera/ Berkeley, CA Aug. 14-Sept. 6

Boulder, CO Sept. 11-14

contact: Lea Morgan
4742 Edison Lane
Boulder CO 80301
Tel: 303-444-0524

New York, N.Y. Sept. 17-30

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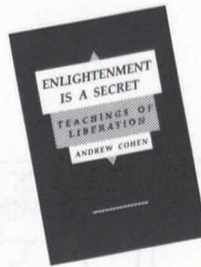
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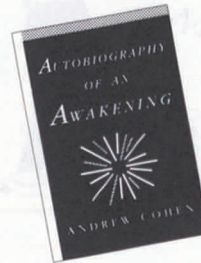
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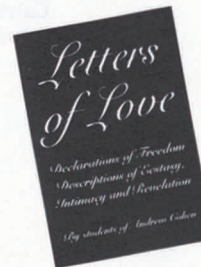
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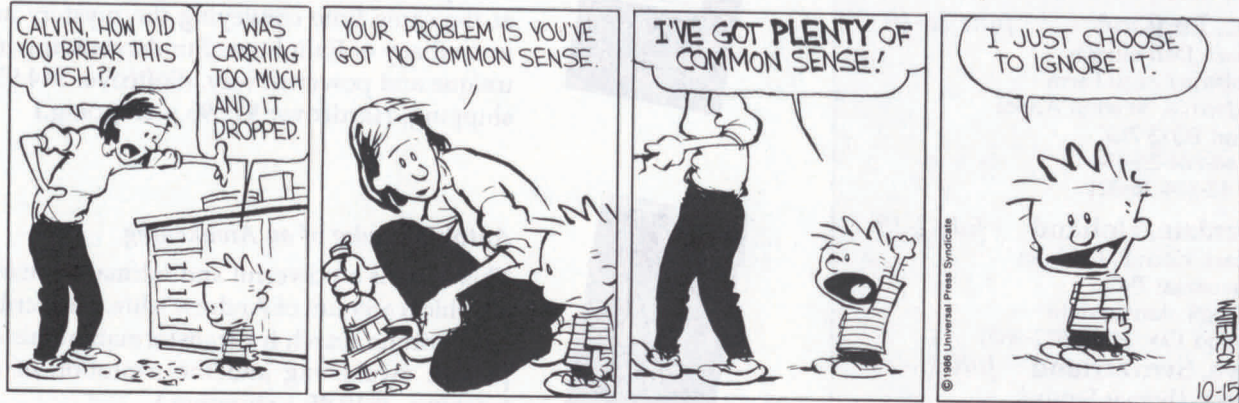
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by Bill Watterson



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