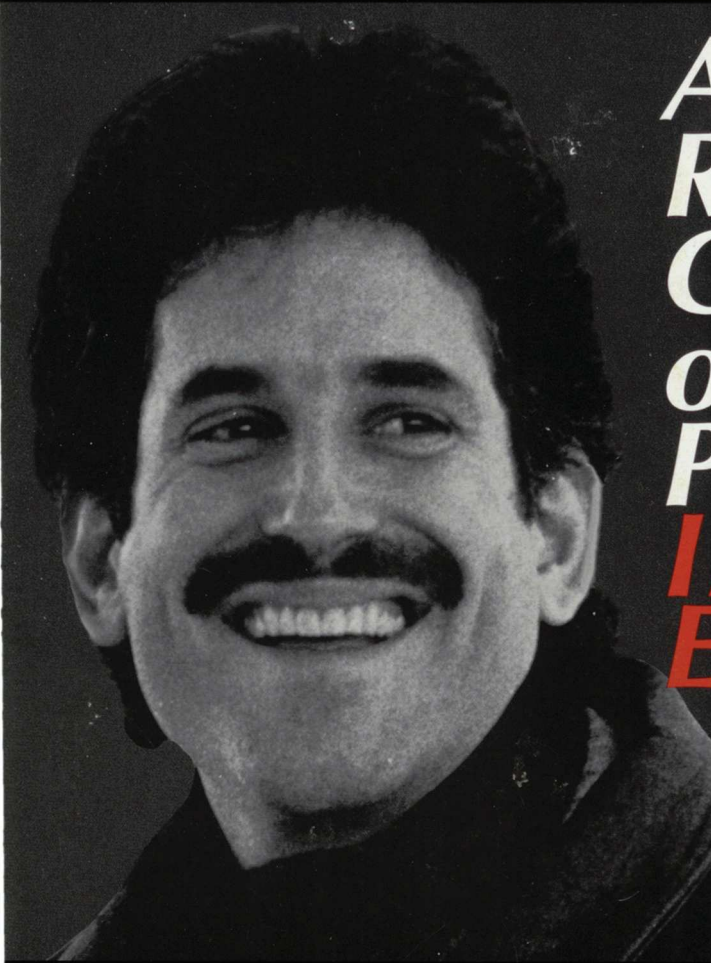


Volume 4, Number 2
Summer 1995

WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?

Dedicated to the discovery of what enlightenment is and what it really means



A Revolutionary Change of Perspective: **IMPERSONAL ENLIGHTENMENT**

ANDREW COHEN

Q: What is the difference between personal and impersonal enlightenment?

A: What is the difference between a burning match and a raging forest fire?

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**SWAMI
KRISHNANANDA**

Three inspired
talks on enlightenment
from Rishikesh,
India

**BARRY
LONG**

A bold individualist
speaks out on love,
enlightenment and
tradition

**LEE
LOZOWICK**

Interview: The
paradoxical views
of enlightenment's
divine jester

**JOHN
WREN-LEWIS**

A near-death experi-
ence opens the door
to a permanent
transformation

WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?

Dedicated to the discovery of what enlightenment is and what it really means

"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 we publish this journal 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



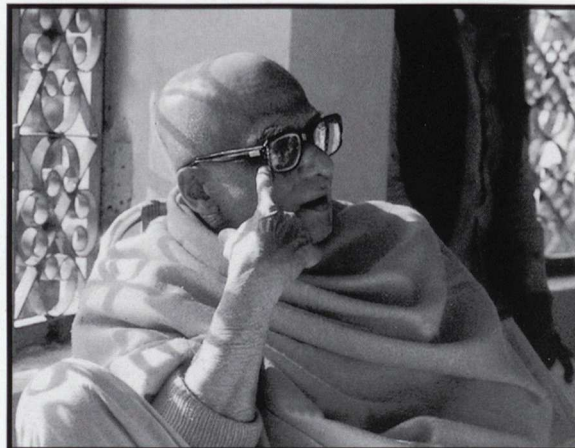
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The Call of the Absolute

Teachings of
Swami
Krishnananda

From the heart of
Rishikesh, India, a contemporary
vision of Vedanta's timeless wisdom

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Surrender Means Having No Control

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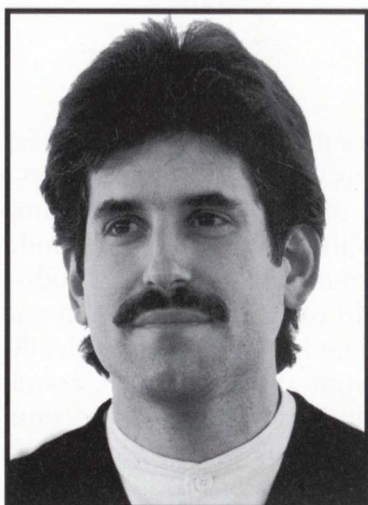
Andrew Cohen in Rishikesh:
A dialogue on the explosive
implications of true surrender

Rock & Roll, Crazy Wisdom & Slavery to the Divine

A provocative interview at the
Hohm Community ashram with
American guru Lee Lozowick

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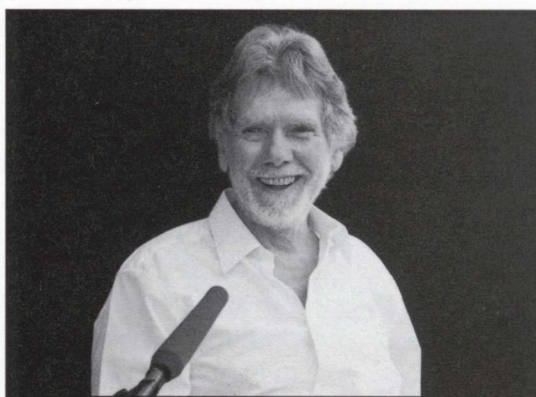




A Revolutionary Change of Perspective: Impersonal Enlightenment

The most central and revolutionary aspect of Andrew Cohen's teaching redefines the significance of the spiritual quest

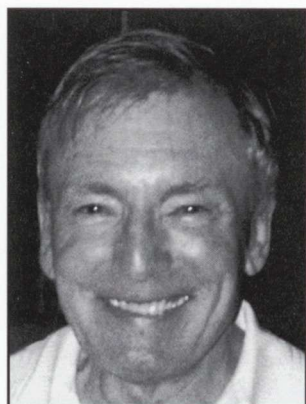
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Love Is Not a Feeling The Article / The Interview

Outspoken Australian spiritual teacher Barry Long describes his view of love and enlightenment

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The Dazzling Dark **By John Wren-Lewis**

A former leader of the "Death of God" movement is catapulted into an ongoing state of God consciousness by a near-death experience

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EDITORIAL

While looking into the brilliant vastness of a clear star-filled night, have you ever tried to see the firmament in the same way as the ancient namers of the constellations did? You might have found that you could only with great effort, luck and imagination from time to time distinguish the outlines of a few of the beings, natural and fantastic, that populated their evening sky. You may have been filled with awe at the beauty of that sparkling black infinity, but found that seeing order in the chaos of the profusion of stars does not come easily.

A similar sensation struck us as we tried to find the thread that connects the five spiritual visionaries presented in this issue of *What is Enlightenment?* The way each of them vividly describes their experience, understanding and conclusions about enlightenment contains enough congruencies to settle any doubt that they are speaking of the same thing, and that it is real. Yet each one of them—Andrew Cohen, Swami Krishnananda, John Wren-Lewis, Barry Long and Lee Lozowick—articulates a bold, exciting and very *different* vision. Without reaching for a fabricated answer, or imposing an imaginary order, how can we explain the unusual conjunction of bright and independent lights presented here?

Ultimately the ongoing odyssey of *What is Enlightenment?* is not separate from the unpredictable adventure that is the life of its founder and inspiration, Andrew Cohen. Accompanied by students, Andrew Cohen travels extensively throughout the world to teach. During these trips, he and his students continually seek out others who are sincere about enlighten-

ment. Many of the contributors to this edition were discovered in this way. Each responded to our passionate investigation of awakening with a similar passion of their own. Without exception, a warmth and generosity based on mutual interest in the truth—so rare in the spiritual world today—was found in each of our contributors. Indeed, they enthusiastically entered this unusual forum where their conclusions, their discoveries and their very lives become the focus for furthering our and all of our readers' inquiry into what enlightenment is.

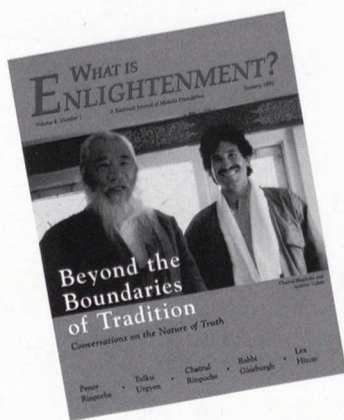
What makes this edition of *What is Enlightenment?* a fascinating constellation of spiritual luminaries rather than merely a chaotic spiritual smorgasbord is a shared love for and uncompromising commitment to discovering and living the truth. The confluence that occurs here shows that passion for the truth can inspire a profound coming together that does not need to obscure significant differences. Indeed, differences only seem to create a dynamic tension which makes the passion to discover what is really true burn even brighter. By creating a forum where this kind of dynamic tension and unity can occur, it is our intention to make possible a revolutionary brotherhood based on mutual respect and independent investigation. And at the same time we will be willing to take the risk of pointing out some of the significant shortcomings that may exist in many of the prevailing thinkers and realizers of our time that may be creating confusion and misunderstanding.

Love for and commitment to something as unlimited as enlightenment is always a risky affair. Where it may lead, we cannot say. Yet it is precisely this risky and uncertain quality that makes this investigation so thrilling. We invite you to join us in the awe and fascination that beckons us further into the infinite unknown, revealing a perspective that is vast, luminous and alive.

—The Editors

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LETTERS

What is Enlightenment? welcomes letters to the editor. Write to us at Moksha Press, P.O. Box 5265, Larkspur, CA 94977 or e-mail us at 74663.776@compuserve.com. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations on your new and expanded format for *What is Enlightenment?* I was delighted to receive the latest issue [*Beyond the Boundaries of Tradition*, Jan. 1995] and to be able to subscribe. Seeing the range of diverse spiritual teachers gathered in its pages was truly inspiring. I was tremendously impressed with the respect and even-handedness which you showed towards each of the traditions presented.

Before finding my home in the Jewish mystical tradition, I spent time in the Hohm Community and so came to know of Andrew Cohen through his meetings with Lee Lozowick over the years. I have appreciated the uncompromisingness of Andrew's spiritual vision. I know Andrew has taken some interest in the Jewish mystical tradition based on his meetings with the Amshinover Rebbe [referred to in "Vessels for the Infinite," Jan. 1995].

I'm involved with a performance group that creates "sacred theater." By that I mean theater which invokes the mood of authentic prayer: an encounter with Something much vaster than oneself, an encounter which is, even if only in a small way, transformative. I don't know if you have explored the question of using art as a vehicle for expressing the Teaching, but it seems to me that it is crucial to find ways of expressing the Teaching that are nonverbal and nonlinear.

Joshua Leavitt
Berkeley, CA

My first present this year is to have discovered your journal! I was very happy to read the interviews of the three Tibetan Dzogchen masters, those three elephants, those three jewels! ["From Light to Light: Meetings with Three Tibetan Masters," Jan. 1995] Thank you for this work, contributing to help people hurry to enlightenment! May this journal have a long life!

Marie-Neijes Lefewre
Salerans, France

Thank you for a most precious and beautiful publication!

Lynne Paterson
Shutesbury, MA

A MAN'S PATH

You are forgetting something. You are forgetting women's wisdom. Women's wisdom comes from direct experience IN THE BODY. It has mostly to do with knowing love, knowing

emotions, knowing oneself to be divine. It is different from men's way of reaching enlightenment. There are not so many words, for one thing. It is important for you to acknowledge that your way to enlightenment, while it holds certain truths for everyone, is primarily a man's path and should be recognized as such. The same goes for all of the masters and their various traditions in the conversations of your last issue.

Caitlin
Brattleboro, VT

What is Enlightenment? responds:

Your letter raises an interesting question: can wisdom be divided into "men's" and "women's," or is it a perspective that is ultimately undivided and the same for any human being? We are not convinced that genuine wisdom that comes from the source of our being has any gender. Your letter is important because indeed it brings up many popular beliefs about the expression of wisdom through male versus female/masculine versus feminine forms and expressions of the Absolute. We hope to shed light on this and related topics in future issues.

MORE DIALOGUES

I enjoy your magazine very much. I sometimes have difficulty with the terms used in various teachings. More explicit definitions would be very helpful.

I am a student of "A Course in Miracles." It would be fascinating to hear a dialogue between Andrew Cohen and a respected teacher of the Course, such as Tara Singh, since I see such a correlation between Mr. Cohen's teachings and "A Course in Miracles." And because the Course has become so popular in the United States, I feel that many people would benefit from your impartial and informed evaluation of it.

Bonnie Loerke
Lake Oswego, OR

I particularly enjoyed your last issue, "Beyond the Boundaries of Tradition."

Are you acquainted with the teachings of Da (Free John) Avabhasa? He's considered by his devotees to be a fully enlightened master, born in New York. I would be interested in seeing to what extent Andrew Cohen's and Da Avabhasa's views agree and diverge.

Peter Velliotes
Oxnard, CA



“Do you aspire for God realization? What is your aim? Do you aspire for God realization? Do you want to enter into the bosom of the creator of the cosmos? What is it that you are thinking? What are you keeping in your mind? Suppose the Absolute calls you, saying, ‘Come on, I want you.’ Will you go?”

Swami Krishnananda

The Call *of* the Absolute

Teachings from Swami Krishnananda

“**T**he next time you come to Rishikesh you must stay here at Sivananda Ashram.” So exclaimed Swami Krishnananda, the long-time General Secretary of the Divine Life Society, to Andrew Cohen when Andrew visited him earlier this year. Deciding to accept the invitation sooner rather than later, Andrew changed his travel plans for the interval between his teachings in Bodhgaya and Kathmandu, and on January 24, accompanied by about a dozen of his students, returned to Rishikesh to spend five memorable days at the ashram.

Sivananda Ashram, the world headquarters of the Divine Life Society, is huddled on a bank of the Ganges River two miles north of the “City of Saints,” Rishikesh. This area, in the foothills of the Himalayas, with its many ashrams and temples, is considered to be one of the holiest parts of India. For thousands of years, seekers after God realization have come here to do penance, austerities and deep meditation, and the very atmosphere is charged with the power of the realizations of bygone seers.

The ashram was founded in 1932 by the great saint and sage Swami Sivananda, who passed away in 1963. Since then his ashram and the Divine Life Society have continued to grow. The society has about 10,000 members and over 200 branches in India and abroad. The ashram, with its large library, teaching academy and thirty-bed hospital, has around 300 residents including about 100 monks, and feeds over 500 people a day. It is a spiritual oasis for many sincere seekers from all over the world who feel at home in an atmosphere where English is spoken and where people of all faiths are welcomed.

Swami Krishnananda was born in South India in 1922. At the age of twenty-two he joined the budding Sivananda Ashram and two years later donned the ochre-colored monastic robes. Many years of study followed as his photographic memory absorbed not only the Indian scriptures but the

*Introduction by Swami Bill Eilers of the
Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh, India*

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REALIZATIONS OF
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entire range of Western philosophy. His semireclusive life ended in 1957, and he was named General Secretary of the Divine Life Society in 1959. Since then he has performed the difficult task of balancing numerous administrative duties with lectures, spiritual discussions and writing.

Although some of his writings are in difficult philosophical language, Swami Krishnananda has a genius for giving simple and highly original answers to questions from seekers. For example, he once defined Self-realization as “where thought expires into experience.” He recently revealed an aspect of his personal philosophy when he explained to a distinguished visitor, “Swami Chidananda [President of the Divine Life Society] and I are more interested in how we live our lives than we are in teaching.” As often as not, comments such as these are interspersed with signing official papers, answering administrative queries, making casual jovial remarks, and suddenly, brilliantly, expounding a profound Vedantic truth.

Vedanta is the crown jewel of Indian spiritual thought. The word Vedanta itself means “the end of the Vedas” or “the end of all knowledge.” The Vedas, among the most ancient scriptures known to humankind, are the roots of the entire Hindu tradition. Vedanta, based upon later but still ancient Hindu scriptures (the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras of Vyasa), boldly asserts that *atman* and *Brahman*, or the individual soul and the Absolute, are one—You are That! And at the end of the eighth century A.D., the great Shankara in his exposition of Advaita Vedanta, or absolute nonduality, declared, “I will tell you within half a verse the essence of all the scriptures: Brahman alone is real. The world is unreal. The individual self is not other than Brahman.” This does not mean that the world does not exist, but that it is unreal if it is understood to be different from the sole reality, Brahman, which is both immanent and transcendent, and finally beyond any categorization whatsoever.

While Andrew was in Bodhgaya, Swami Krishnananda was asked whether there was any reason in particular that he had given Andrew the special invitation to the ashram. In the humblest way he answered simply, “I just want to give him honor.” And when Andrew approached him the first morning of his return, Swami Krishnananda welcomed him and said, “We want to do everything for you. We want nothing from you.”

Having been asked if he could make himself available if people would like to meet him, Andrew inquired if it would be all right to hold some public meetings. “Of course, you don’t even need to ask,” was Swami Krishnananda’s quick response, “You will help bring sanity into the lives of your listeners.” Someone then asked if it would be possible for Swamiji to spare a little time each day for the visiting group. “Please come at 6 P.M. just after my group meditation and I’ll be glad to see you,” Swamiji replied. Thus was initiated a double series of fascinating meetings that were an inspiration to those who were privileged to attend. For the following three afternoons, Andrew held deeply meaningful dialogues usually preceded and followed by meditation, and in the evenings the visiting group met with Swami Krishnananda for a series of passionate and illuminating encounters.

Bill Eilers (Swami Atmaswarupananda) was born in Saskatchewan, Canada in 1925 and has been a resident of Sivananda Ashram for over twenty years. He has been a disciple of Swami Chidananda, President of the Divine Life Society, since meeting him in 1960 during his first world tour.

Do you aspire for

God Realization?

A talk by Swami Krishnananda

Do you aspire for God realization? What is your aim? Do you aspire for God realization? Do you want to enter into the bosom of the creator of the cosmos? What is it that you are thinking? What are you keeping in your mind? Suppose the Absolute calls you, saying, "Come on, I want you." Will you go?

And will you leave this gentleman or this lady here who is with you? You don't care for them, hmm? Or will you take them also?

The Absolute calls every atom of the universe. This is what you call evolution, as scientists would say. Every atom is moving in some direction. This is the evolutionary process. It is a call from the almighty supreme that the world has refused.

We are restless; nobody has peace of mind. This restlessness is caused by the finitude of the personality. You feel limited. You are limited physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, politically, and finally your span of life is also limited. So there is nothing unlimited in this world.

But there is a longing from inside to break this limitation, to break the limitation of space and time itself. You do not like to be confined to a little space. You would like to conquer the whole of space. You want to go to the sun and the moon and the stars and beyond even the limits of space itself. And you would like to defy time by trying to be immortal. This is the urge for expansion in man, due to which he wrongly tries to grab things and become the emperor of the whole world. He would like to conquer everything and make it his own. Even space and time he won't leave alone. That also must be his because space and time limit him.

Spatial delimitations cause a sense of location in our personality. You locate yourself someplace because of spatial delimitation. And you don't live eternally because of temporal limitation. So the whole effort of man is to defy spatial limitation and temporal limitation. When you defy space and overcome it, you become infinite. When you defy time, you become immortal. So the whole search of the universe seems to be only to bring you over the brink of infinity and eternity, endless existence and infinite existence.

Existence should not be finite; it should be infinite. And

not just for a few minutes; endlessly. Suppose you are the king of the whole world for one second. Would that be all right? Everybody wants to be king of the world, so okay, you are king of the whole world—but for only one second! Or suppose you could live for endless years, but like a pig—would you like that?

So what do you want? You want neither short life nor long life. What do you say? I will give you the longest life, but like a pig or a tree; or a short life like a king. Do you want a long life or a short life? See, actually you have some difficulty expressing your requirements.

What you really want is to have the longest duration of existence, endless permission to live, together with the greatest of intelligence, not like a tree or a stone or a pig. And the greatest of intelligence implies the highest power also. The greater the knowledge, the greater the power. So omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence is what you want. Here is the essence of the whole matter. You are searching finally for that peculiar, intriguing *something* called omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence, which includes infinity and eternity. And when you get it, the mind cannot conceive what will be your destiny.

Suppose this state is at hand. Christ said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Suppose this little thing that I told you is immediately practicable; what will you do? You will burst into the substance of the cosmos and the bliss of it and the glory of it, the grandeur of it, the majesty of it, which no human mind can conceive.

Now, briefly, they say this is God. One word. It is impossible to describe what it means. It is a word connoting something which is indescribable and yet impossible to avoid. You are searching for that. In that you will never be cut off by the time process and you will not be limited to a little space. There will be all space and all time and all knowledge. This is attributed to what people generally call the Supreme Absolute. That Supreme Absolute is hearing what we are saying right now. We are not talking in a corner of which it has no knowledge. It has got all eyes. Everywhere are its eyes, everywhere its hands and feet, everywhere its legs, everywhere its everything. Our eyes are only in one place. Where the eyes

**“THERE IS A CONNECTION BETWEEN A
FLOWER IN THE GARDEN AND THE STARS
IN HEAVEN. WHERE ARE THE STARS?
WHERE IS YOUR GARDEN? OH, WHAT
A WONDER! ACTUALLY THERE IS NO
DISTANCE BETWEEN THE STARS AND
THE PLACE WHERE WE ARE SITTING.”**

are, the nose cannot be; where the nose is, the hands cannot be; where the hands are the legs cannot be; where the heart is the brain is not—and so on and so forth. This is limitation. *That* is not like that. Everywhere is its brain, everywhere its heart, everywhere its hands, everywhere its eyes, everywhere everything. It is all everywhere everything, at all times.

What do you call this condition? At all times everywhere everything. Can you contain this thought? If you can contain this you are a super-person, you are not a human being. And you will not be a human being after all. You are something different. The whole world will be reflected in you.

We can call this cosmic man, superman, divine incarnation, God-man—there are all sorts of names for this person. When he moves, when he walks on the road, he will feel the whole universe is moving with him. And it is not a joke.

There is a connection between a flower in the garden and the stars in heaven. Where are the stars? Where is your garden? Oh, what a wonder! Actually there is no distance between the stars and the place where we are sitting.

There is a universal electromagnetic force operating everywhere. An electromagnetic field has no distance. Everywhere it operates equally. The universe can be compared with an infinitely large electromagnetic field. And therefore there is no distance between the sun and us also. And it is a wonder, to think like that.

The power of the universe is vibrating through every cell of our bodies. But through egoism, self-assertiveness, pride, foolishness, idiocy—whatever you call it—we repel the entry of the cosmic force into us. We have closed the windows of our house, and therefore the breeze of the cosmos does not enter. We are very selfish. “I, I, I”—everything is “I” only. There is no “I” in this world speaking. There is only one “I”—a big, capital “I.”

In that “I” all the little “I’s” are merged. And the ocean has all the drops.

Actually, the scriptures say there’s only one man in the universe. There are not many people. Only one person exists. In the words of the Rig-Veda, that one person is *Mahapurusha*, which means “Great View.” An intelligence pervades throughout your body. There is an intelligence pervading the entire cosmos. That is what you call God, actually. Of it, your intelligence is a little drop. The Supreme Intelligence pervading all things and the whole universe can be translated into the body of one person.

We’re an organism. So there is some sense in people saying, “God only is.” Many people say, “God only is; nothing else is.” What does this mean actually? This whole universe is animated by one consciousness in which you are also included because you are not outside the universe. What exists finally? Neither I, nor you, nor anybody. But everybody still is.

Millions of cells are operating in this body and many cells put together make one human being. But when I say, “Who is coming?” you don’t say, “Many bundles of cells are coming.” You don’t say that. So likewise the multitudes of the universe, the trees and mountains and rivers, the sun, moon, stars, galaxies, whatever you can think of, are only part and parcel of the limbs of this cosmic organism which is animated by a supreme intelligence. That alone is, that’s all. And nothing else can be, because everything is a part of the universal process. You cannot stand outside the cosmos. And that whole cosmic intelligence includes your intelligence, and your destiny is in its hands. And the more you love it, the more blessed you are. Here is the whole of religion, all philosophy, all *bhakti* [devotion], all yoga, or whatever you call it. Without using words like that, in simple language I told you what the truth of the matter is.

Your heart will throb by hearing all this.

God bless you.

May the Bell Ring

Swami Krishnananda recounts a classic Indian tale

There is a story in the Mahabharata

about a great *rishi* [sage], Sukha Maharaj. He was a little boy sixteen years old. He was one with all the trees, the mountains and everything. If you spoke to him it was like speaking to a tree or a wall. He just went around naked without any consciousness of the body. Vyasa, his father, called, "Sukha my son, where are you?" The trees everywhere in the forest started vibrating, "I am here, I am here, I am here."

There was a king who was a very virtuous and charitable man. After he was crowned king, he had a desire to feed thousands and thousands of people as a gesture of his greatness as an emperor. And when he did this he wanted to know how many people were eating. He asked the great master Vyasa, "Can you contrive some method so that I may know how many have eaten?" Vyasa hung a bell with a magic spell, a *mantra*, saying, "When one thousand people eat, the bell will ring once. So you can count the number of times it rings, and know how many thousands have eaten." The king held a big feast, feeding thousands of people. While all the people ate together for the whole day, the bell rang many times. When it was evening, everybody left. The place was empty and quiet, but then the bell started ringing continuously. "Is something wrong with the bell?" the king asked. Vyasa said, "My bell cannot be wrong." The king said, "This is a tremendous mystery. Why, when everybody has gone

away, is it ringing?" "Whatever it is," Vyasa said, "my bell cannot be wrong. Go look around and see if people are eating, or what is happening." The king went out and found the little boy Sukha, looking very dirty. He was sitting with the dogs and they were licking the remains of what all the people had eaten that day. Each time Sukha ate a grain of food, the bell went "dong." The King ran to Vyasa, saying, "Some poor boy is eating and every time he eats a grain of food the bell immediately rings as if a thousand people have eaten." "Who

is the boy?" asked Vyasa. When the king described him, Vyasa said, "Oh, he is my son. He is the whole universe itself. If one grain of food goes into his stomach, millions have been fed." The king cried out, "What is the good of my feeding so many people when they have not even seen such a man as this? If he eats one grain it is as if the whole world is being fed. What good have I done with all my charity?" Ashamed, he said, "I never knew

that such a person existed, and here I am boasting that I have fed millions of people." He fell prostrate before the boy, but the boy was unaware. He just continued eating with the dogs.

This is the story of an enlightened *rishi* who has pierced through the cosmos and made it his own—not merely has he made it his own, but he himself is the cosmos. The Upanishads say, "The universe is his. Nay, he himself is the universe." What more can we say about enlightenment? It is worth thinking of this matter. And one day we shall have it and afterwards may the bell ring.



Dare to give up the Illusion

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA (to Andrew Cohen): There are many people sitting here and they want to listen to you.

ANDREW: So the message for today is: dare to give up the illusion of time. Give up the belief that there is any distance or gap between oneself and one's true Self, and between oneself and the rest of life, the rest of existence. This takes a lot of courage. It takes a willingness to die absolutely and unconditionally right now. So my message for today, and for every day, for every moment, is not to wait one second longer. That's my message.

K: So short! Please expand it with a little bit more detail.

A: Expand it? Okay. Well, many many seekers believe with fervor and with great conviction that it will take them a very long time and much hard work to bridge the gap between where they are now and where they want to be. But it is this belief and conviction that there is this gap in the first place that creates the illusion of separation. Now if we have the courage to give up the illusion of separation, then we will find that we have no place to stand. And as we look and look we will not be able to locate ourselves. Everywhere we look we'll see nothing. We'll see nothing, and we'll see everything at the same time. So to come to this point, it takes great courage. Because if we want to know that much and see that much and be that much, we have to be willing to let go of every thought, notion or idea that we have about who we are, or about what's true. In order to do this we have to be willing to die unconditionally to the Absolute, and we have to be willing to give everything—and everything and everything and everything—to that and that alone; even our *sadhana* [spiritual practice], even that which we hold most precious and most dear to us. So that we're left empty and naked, and we have nothing and nothing and nothing at all.

K: You said one sentence that was very beautiful: we should remove the idea of the distance between what we are and what we ought to be.

A: Yes, time.

K: Ah, that is called time. Is there a distance/time process between what we are and what we ought to be? There is this belief that there is a long, long time. "I would like to be an emperor," one might say, "and how long will it take for me to become one?" One doesn't believe that it is timeless, gapless. We wish to become an emperor. The wish is in the process of time itself, and therefore it appears that there is a long distance temporally from the present condition to the one we want in the future.

All that we seek in this world is like moments inside a dream. So what is the value or worth of anything in this dream world? One may be a beggar or one may be a king in a dream, but both the beggar and the king in the dream are made of the same meaningless substance, of what we call the dream stuff. Even though you are a king in a dream and another person is a beggar in a dream there is basically no distinction between them. They are made up of the same substance. I shall bring an elephant made of sugar and a rat made of sugar. Do you find any difference between them? A rat made of sugar and an elephant made of sugar: there is a great difference indeed, yet there is no difference.

So this little sentence that you said—about removing the distance between what we are and what we ought to be—is difficult to grasp. Time-bound as we are, and limited as we are by the process of thinking only in terms of time, we cannot understand what it means to say that there is no distance between what we are and what we ought to be. For example, we are mortals and we want to be immortal. How much time will it take in order for the mortal to become immortal? Endless ages of births and deaths, people generally say, in the scriptures at least. The unfortunate or fortunate thing is that what you ought to be is exactly what you are. What you ought to be already is hidden in that which you are just now.

You mentioned also the lower self and the higher self briefly. For many of us there is the higher self and the lower self. What you are is the lower self, what you ought to be is the higher self, and both are in the same place at the same time. So how much time will you take to transcend the lower self

of Time

A dialogue with Swami Krishnananda

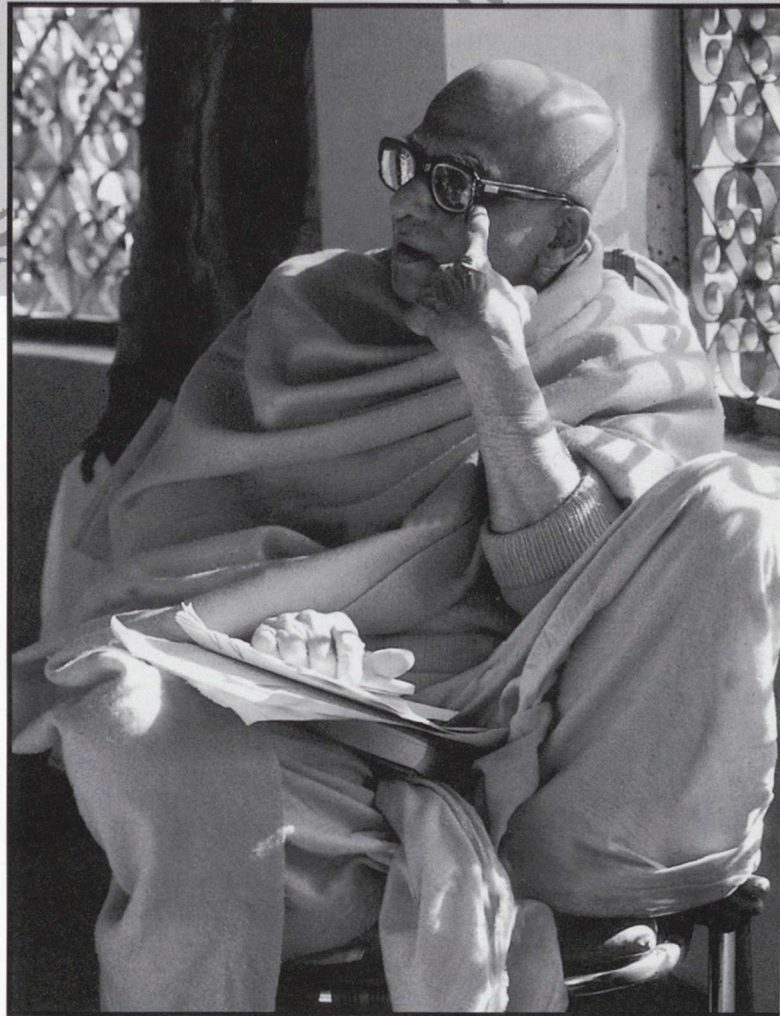
and become the higher self? It is like, to give a small humorous example, the distance between foolishness and wisdom; how far is wisdom from foolishness? How many kilometers away? There is a tremendous distance, isn't there?

It is said that "great wits are sure to madness near allied." But can you say great wit, or genius, is deeper than madness? Because of the unsurpassable quality of genius, it looks as if it is not a normal condition. Can anybody think like Albert Einstein for instance? $E=MC^2$ is his great equation. To some extent you can make sense out of this equation, but there are things about it out of which no sense can be made. For example, there is no such thing as past, present and future. In a realm far, far beyond the gravitation of the earth where time does not exist, you cannot know which was yesterday, which is today, which is tomorrow.

In the Bhagavad Gita, the great war of the Mahabharata was about to take place. It had not yet commenced at all. No one had lifted a single weapon. The battle had not begun. The great cosmic vision, which we call the "Vishvarupa," or Krishna in the form of the Absolute, was standing before Arjuna. He is supposed to have said, "I have already executed this war. It is finished. Now we are only to be an instrument, and the thing that it is necessary to do has already been done." How could Sri Krishna, the Absolute incarnate, tell us that that which has not yet begun is already over? These are transcendental issues. They look transcendental because they are above the limitation of time. What makes us look foolish, silly, finite, idiotic and anxious is the bondage of time. Has anybody seen time? Have you seen time?

STUDENT: No.

K: Does it exist? You are believing in a thing that does not exist. What makes you feel that time exists when you cannot see it anywhere? At least space you can see, there is a vast expanse. But have you seen time? Yet time conditions the whole world. "Your destiny is in the hands of time," as they say. How could you accept such a thing called time which cannot be seen with the eyes. How is it that it cannot be seen? The reason for this also must be known. An existent thing



“Who will believe
that tomorrow is
the last day
of man?”

must be seen. People say, "There is no proof that God exists, because he can't be seen with any available means of experiment or perception." But have you seen time? And yet you believe in time.

Imagine that you were going to be executed tomorrow. What will you be thinking in your mind today? Your soul will tremble and nobody knows what it will do. Tomorrow you will know.

When you are drowning and there is no hope of survival, the true self comes up and sees what can be done. When you have lost everything and nobody wants to look at your face, you will develop a great strength.

A: So the question is then—it's difficult for people to realize that they are drowning.

K: Who will believe that tomorrow is the last day of man?

A: Exactly.

K: Will anybody believe? There is a whole world of illusion, *maya*, as they call it. Is it true that tomorrow we shall realize the truth?

A: Nobody knows, nobody knows.

K: One quake on the earth, the earth shakes, and what happens to the king, the emperor and the wealthy man? What happens to them? Look at the pitiful conditions after the earthquake in Japan. And nobody will believe that tomorrow that could happen.

Today you can be a powerful minister. Tomorrow you can be walking on that little street outside of here. I have seen people like that: a minister, important with an entire country under him, and tomorrow he comes and sits here.

So the higher self is not merely inside us, it is us. But we are not allowing it to manifest itself on account of greed and negative habits and the idiocy of the lower self. The lower self is caught up in the time process, and wants to grab the world of perishability. Everything that you want to grab in this world is perishable, and the body which is trained to enjoy those perishable objects also is perishable. The perishable is asking for the perishable. Wonderful wisdom of humanity!

A: This is the greatest challenge I think for the true seeker: to give up time, to give up the future.

K: There is no such thing as the future. When time is gone, the future also goes. There is eternity. In eternity there is no yesterday and tomorrow, it is just here. And if you believe that God exists and God is eternity, it is impossible to conceive what the state of affairs is. The supreme Absolute is dancing in our hearts and we are closing our eyes to that dance.

Thank you very much. Hari Om. ■

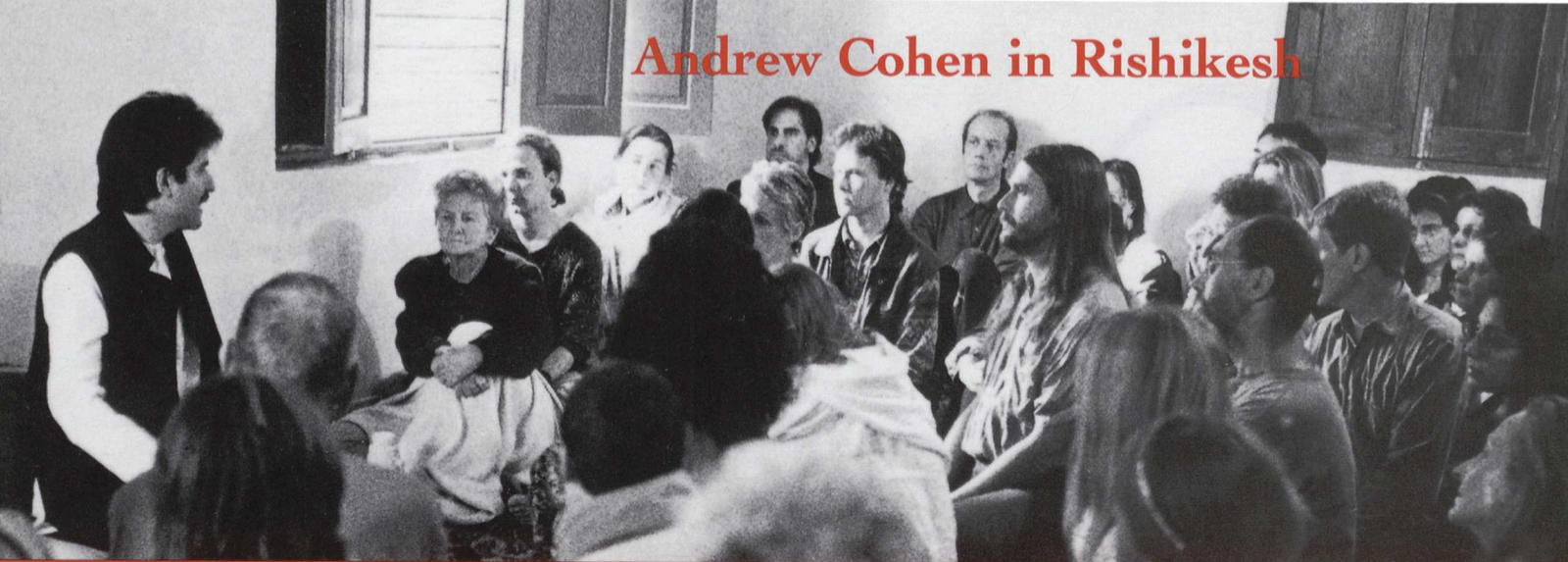
Surrender means

Having

Question:

It seems to me that there are people who have had experiences or who have an understanding of nonduality, but they're not bringing it into their day-to-day life. So I was wondering how to do that. How can one bring the understanding of nonduality into one's life moment by moment?

ANDREW: What you're speaking about is bringing God into everyday life, isn't it? How to bring God into everyday life? Well, it's a difficult thing to do because if we talk about bringing God into everyday life, then there's almost a sense of physically bringing something down here. But the great seers and the great rishis tell us that God is everywhere, and they even say that God is none other than our own self. If there's a sense of bringing something that's transcendent down, bringing it into our life, then that means that fundamentally we believe that God is not our own self. So I think what we need to be concerned with is not bringing God into our life, but trying to find out what the truth of our own nature is. And when that's discovered, then what you're talking about will happen.



No Control

When the understanding of the truth of our own nature is there, then mysterious things begin to happen. Some kind of mysterious transformation begins to occur. You find that you're not doing anything, but that there's action taking place and there is a response that you don't feel any possession or ownership of. And you can see that this is very powerful, and that the power that's being expressed has nothing to do with the individual. It transcends any kind of historical relationship to life. It's something that goes beyond the normal boundaries of understanding; it's transcendental. And you begin to see that this is simply happening. You feel, "I don't have any control over it. I don't have any control over it. I don't have any control over it." You see, this is a mysterious discovery of an extraordinary, miraculous condition that your mind cannot grasp. It can't really understand it because what I'm speaking about transcends your ability to understand. You just say, "This is so. This is so. This is so." In spite of the way things appear to be, in spite of the appearance of thought, feeling and the body, and of others and the whole world, there's some mysterious cause that completely transcends individuality that is doing everything. That's the point: that *something* is doing everything. And then at that point there's no sense of the individual bringing anything from anywhere to anywhere else. There is just the pure and spontaneous expression of one's own self.

So the question is, if this is true, but it is not one's own experience, then why isn't it? If it's not one's own experience, then it means that somehow we must be interfering with it, because I'm speaking about something that is absolutely spontaneous. It has nothing to do with effort; it has nothing to do

with will. So if this absolute condition or absolute nature is not something that's being expressed as ourselves, then it means that somehow we must be in the way, somehow we must be interfering with this kind of movement within ourselves. And if that's the case, then we have to really ask ourselves how we are doing that. How are we interfering and why are we interfering?

When people begin to look inside, what usually is discovered are some very fixed ideas that one is holding on to that make the spontaneous expression of the Self nature impossible. What fixed ideas? Maybe I have a fixed idea that I am a certain person, or you have a fixed idea that you are a certain person. Any fixed idea we have about ourselves will inhibit the spontaneous and natural expression of who we really are. But it's a very scary thing for a person to be able to be fully who they are without clinging on to any fixed notion of self. A lot of people would say, "Well, if I don't know who I am, I won't know how to respond. I won't know where to go. I won't know what to do." But I say that's not true. If you don't know who you are, you may find that you know how to respond in ways that you never even imagined. So that's really the key to it.

Q: *The difficulty comes in if you want something to turn out in a certain way. Any kind of desire will interfere with that.*

A: Yes, of course. If we're speaking about getting out of the way so that something else can begin to happen, so that something mysterious can begin to overtake us and begin to come



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through us, this is a way of speaking about surrender.

Surrender means we don’t know what’s going to happen. But when we really, truly surrender, *we give up needing to be sure.*

Q: *We don’t care what happens.*

A: No, no. Hold on. That’s too much. I think saying we don’t care might be too extreme. I mean, of course we care. We want everything to turn out for the best, don’t we? But the point is, if the surrender is genuine, it means that there’s a genuine sense that we don’t know what’s going to happen. In the depths of our being, we don’t know. It’s a very extraordinary thing. When in the deepest part of ourselves we don’t know what’s going to happen, everything opens up. Life becomes very joyous and mysterious.

So not knowing what’s going to happen is also, as you’ve been saying, not insisting that things turn out a particular way. But when we don’t know what’s going to happen, and when we find our liberation in being able to truly embrace that kind of surrender, then we find out that things often work out in marvelous ways that we could never, ever have imagined and never have believed possible. Because what is truly extraordinary is beyond conception. You can’t conceive of it. You can’t imagine it. Only when we give up this need to have to know what’s going to happen can these kind of miraculous things actually begin to occur.

That doesn’t mean we don’t care. There’s nothing nihilistic about it. Of course we may care very much. But the need to find security in the future is given up. Just ask yourself what life would be like if we were no longer looking for security in the future. Can you imagine what it would be like if each and every one of us were no longer looking for any kind of security in tomorrow, or the day after, or next month, or next year, or five or ten years from now—no security whatsoever in the future, no security at all? Oh my

God, everything would become so big! It would open up. It would be unimaginable because we wouldn’t be waiting for anything and we wouldn’t be hoping for anything at all. It doesn’t mean we wouldn’t care, but in the depths of our being, everything would suddenly become possible. And when everything becomes possible, the way you respond to life gets very big—so big that in some cases it just breaks all boundaries—all fixed rules break and something unthinkable occurs.

Q: *Yes. Not caring was a bad expression to use. I think trust would be a better word.*

A: Well, trust is a good word, but I think in terms of the point I’m trying to make, it’s not really the word I would use. Because trust makes us feel safe. I want to avoid that. Trust has the sense that everything’s going to be okay. Maybe everything *won’t* be okay. The point is, if we want to be free, if liberation is something we genuinely want, then we have to dare to consider, “Oh my God, I might not make it.” Liberation is not a guarantee of this birth. Some people say, “Well, it has to happen sooner or later. This is everybody’s karmic destiny.” This is what we’re told also in the East, that it’s everybody’s karmic destiny. Whether that’s true or not, I don’t really know. But I’m not going to wait around for that. So the point is to have the courage to face the possibility that things may not work out okay.

So what does that mean? It means if we’re not willing to look very seriously into this, we may make the wrong choice. It’s possible that due to ignorance and due to fear and selfishness, we might make a wrong choice, and that wrong choice could determine our destiny. So I think that we need to become very concerned about what it is that we’re doing and what it is that we want so that our destiny becomes assured. When I say that we don’t know what’s going to happen, it’s meant to generate a certain kind of insecurity that will help wake us up and give us the strength to take big risks. Because

in taking big risks, everything begins to open up. The more big risks you take, the more the whole universe begins to open up. But if we live in a way where we're just looking for security and safety and we want to know everything's going to be okay, this kind of vast expanse of seeing and knowing doesn't come.

Q: *Then surrender is something that includes absolutely everything.*

A: Well, ideally surrender does. But it's a rare person who's that surrendered. A lot of spiritual people talk about surrender, but let's face it, very few people seem to be able to surrender to such a degree that it actually liberates them. So we have to be careful when we talk about surrender because it's really a big thing. We have to get to the point where we say, "Thy will be done. Thy will be done. Thy will be done." And surrender that is genuine and that is complete liberates. It liberates in a way that's powerful. It means that you've let go of everything to such a degree that you've found the very center of it all. You've found the very center of it all and you actually feel that that is where you abide. Even experientially you always know that that's where you are. Even physically, you feel that that's where you are: "I am at the very center." You may be in India, you could be in Europe, you could be anywhere, in the middle of the ocean, but you say, "This is where I am."

If you've really surrendered, you fall into that place which is the very center and you have no doubt about it. And that's why you're not so preoccupied about the future—because everything's so full and so rich. And this revelation is always being reaffirmed. Again and again you see, "Yes, this is true." It's not just one experience, but it's a revelation that's constantly being affirmed over and over again. Over and over—and you say, "Yes, this is so." And again, "Yes, this is so." And it continues endlessly. It's something that's dynamic. It's explosive because it's liberating. It's not some-

thing that's passive.

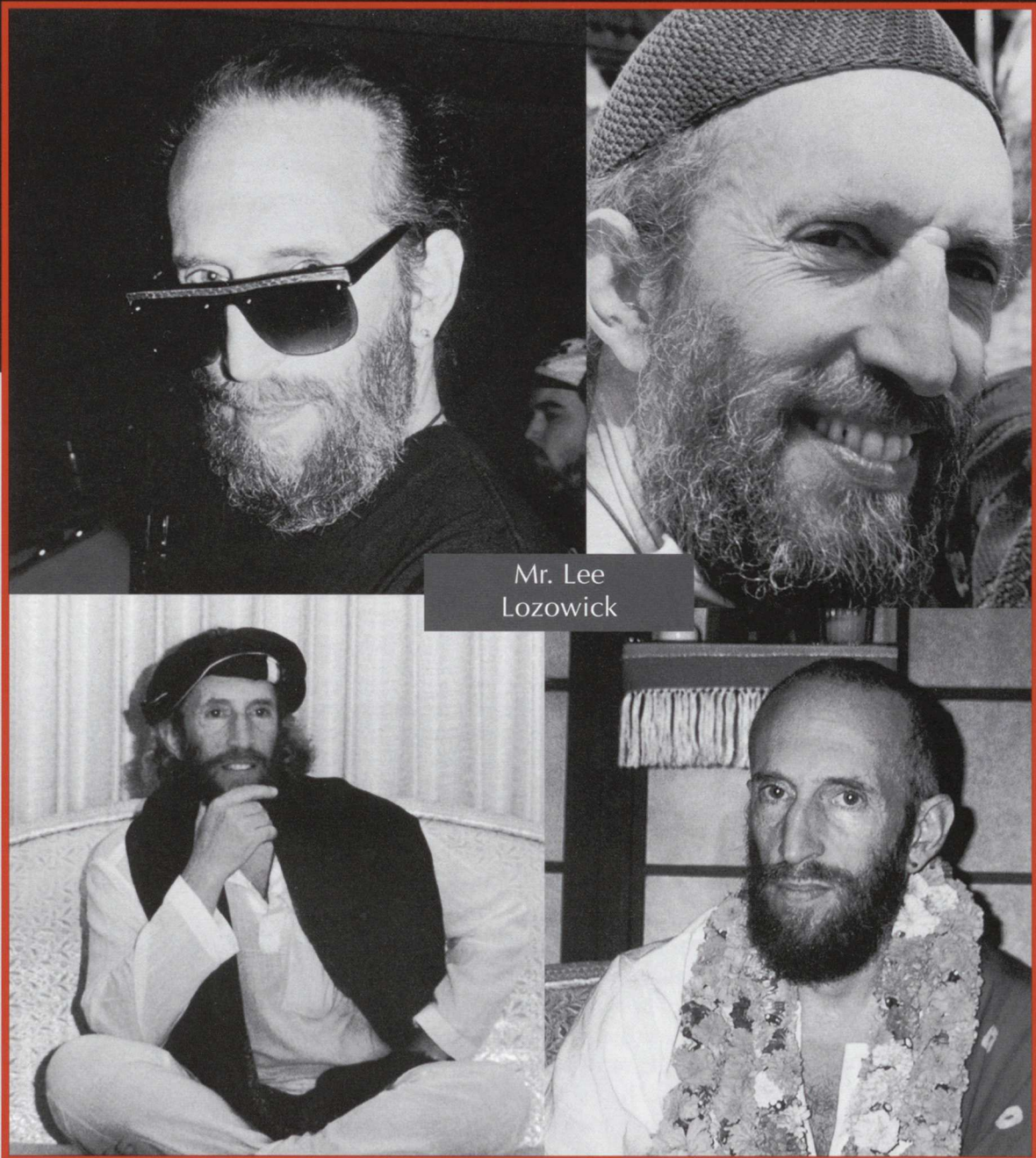
Someone recently said to me, "My teacher told me that surrender was a passive matter." Surrender is not passive. It's very dynamic. It's something that most human beings don't seem to want to do, and even out of all the ones who want to do it, very few seem to succeed. So we have to say it has nothing to do with passivity. It must be something very dynamic, even explosive. It has nothing to do with passively letting go: "Now I'm letting go of my fear. Now I'm letting go of my selfishness..."—this kind of thing. It's much bigger than that. You let go of the whole thing and something happens then. When you say, "Not my will be done, but thy will be done," then something happens. It means your life is finished. Whoever you are, the life of the personality is finished, and then what they call at this ashram the "Divine Life" begins. And if that has not occurred in an extraordinary way, a way that is deep and profound, then one hasn't surrendered. Or if one has, it has not been enough. It means that one has to let go much, much more.

A lot of people say they've surrendered. They say, "I've let go of so much." If you have let go so much that you feel your life is actually being taken away from you, if you can feel it being swept away, then that is surrender. And then something else takes over. That's the point. Something else begins to happen that's extraordinary. And then it's like you're taken up by a hurricane. Do you know what that's like? It's as if you're a twig in the middle of a hurricane: you have no control. You're swept along by this immense power, a tremendous force that you have no control over. But the reason it makes you ecstatic and it gives you so much joy is because you're not trying to hold on any longer. So surrender is not something that's passive. You haven't really surrendered unless you feel a hurricane has completely lifted you off the ground and is throwing you through the universe. I'm not exaggerating. That's surrender. It's a very powerful thing. ■

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ENLIGHTENMENT'S

DIVINE JESTER



Mr. Lee
Lozowick

ROCK & ROLL CRAZY WISDOM & SLAVERY TO THE DIVINE

AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. LEE LOZOWICK

by Hal Blacker

It's Friday night, Lizard's Lounge, Prescott, Arizona. The crowd is a loose amalgamation of working-class folks drinking long-necked beers, the men wearing baseball caps decorated with farm machinery insignias over their long hair, and college kids of both sexes pierced with rings in places and in numbers that would make your mother frown. I've been ushered here by Matt, a student of Lee Lozowick ("Mr. Lee" to his friends and disciples). He had picked me up at the Phoenix airport for my weekend as Mr. Lee's guest at the Hohm Community ashram. One of the community's

bands, an all-female blues combo called Shri, which boasts a lead singer who sounds uncannily like the early Janis Joplin, is making an appearance here tonight. (Mr. Lee's own rock band, Liars, Gods and Beggars, will play the 4H Club hall later in the weekend.) As I walk through cigarette smoke past the crowded bar and pool tables, I spy Mr. Lee and some of his students, sitting on a table in the back during an intermission, taking in the scene. It takes me a moment to acclimatize but soon I start to see that there's a way to pick out the Hohm Community residents from the other

denizens of this drinking establishment. They're the ones with the clear eyes, the gentle unassuming manners, and the bottles of nonalcoholic malt beverages in their hands. Crazy wisdom has its virtues and its parameters here, I think to myself.

Mr. Lee has been teaching for the last twenty years, a period in which many other teachers have come and gone. That he and his community are still going strong is in large part due to his sincerity and dedication to his students. As an exponent of crazy wisdom, not surprisingly, Mr. Lee and his teaching seem to abound with real and

apparent contradictions. A former Silva Mind Control teacher who spontaneously awoke and began teaching in New Jersey, he now considers himself a "Western Baul," related to the itinerant tantric Baul musicians from Bengal, India. He is also a close devotee of the eccentric South Indian beggar-saint Yogi Ramsuratkumar. His ashram's diet is strictly vegetarian, but on special occasions, like the All Fools' Celebration this weekend, barbecued meat and other indulgences are available at almost every meal. Generally self-effacing and of a gentle demeanor, Mr. Lee is capable of sudden and outrageous bursts of fiery passion and cutting clarity. This self-described "Divine Fool" discourages his students from smoking, drinking alcohol, using drugs and having sex outside of a committed relationship. A fan of controversial teachers like the late Trungpa Rinpoche, his own mores and lifestyle are comparatively conservative, except for the fact that he is known to be happily married to several wives with whom he has had many children.

During the course of my stay at the ashram, many questions about Mr. Lee's teaching and activities arose. By the time I left many of my questions were still unanswered. In spite of Mr.

Lee's and his students' patient responses to my inquiries, I inevitably seemed to come to a place where contradictions were left vague or unresolved, something which seemed to bother neither Mr. Lee nor his students. Yet one thing struck me over and over, seeping into my consciousness and finally deeply entering my heart. There seemed to be an almost total lack of pretense or aggression in the way that people related to each other here. Instead of the posturings of power, seduction or pride, found in at least subtle forms even among most spiritually interested people, both Mr. Lee and his students were strikingly gentle, humble and sincere. In their company, I found myself unwinding and softening. The power of this experience caused me to ask Hohm residents and finally Mr. Lee himself about the sweetness that unmistakably pervades the ashram. Without fail, every one of them told me, "It's the result of years and years of hard work." Whatever Mr. Lee has been doing, it seems to be having a deep effect.

Mr. Lee and Andrew Cohen met in Boulder, Colorado, approximately four years ago, and despite differences in their teachings and their styles, over time have become good friends. I was treated with tremendous kindness,



Lee Lozowick and Hal Blacker at the Hohm Community ashram

generosity and respect by both Mr. Lee and the ashram residents during the weekend I was there. I had come to the Hohm Community ashram in order to interview Mr. Lee for *What is Enlightenment?* During my visit he made the unusual suggestion that the interview be conducted at the *darshan*, the audience with the guru that is the highlight event at the end of the All Fools' Celebration. Mr. Lee, dressed in Indian garb, appeared relaxed and radiant during the conversation that follows, which occurred before approximately ninety guests and residents of the Hohm Community.

WIE: *I understand that about twenty years ago you were transformed by an experience that occurred after you woke up one morning, literally, from a night's sleep. What was that experience like and how did it occur?*

LL: It's something I never talk about. To define the experience is to lead people to expect something similar, which is very misleading. So I've really made an effort not to talk about it beyond saying it was the event that catalyzed my entering into teaching work, or that catalyzed my representing divine

influence in the world. The actual description of perceptual data is too specific and unique to mean anything to anyone else. What I do say about it is that I was doing very rigorous *sadhana* [spiritual practice]. None of that *sadhana* was itself responsible for the event that precipitated this shift in context and yet paradoxically there is an association. The person who I was in relationship with was traveling and I was living alone. So it was the first time that I had any time really to do a retreat and I took that week as a retreat week. The intensification of *sadhana* was not what pre-

cipitated the event and yet a strong field of practice and intention—real exclusive intention in the sense that there was nothing I wanted more than to serve God, realize God, commune with God, understand God—was very crucial.

WIE: *So you feel that what most prepared you for what happened to you is the cultivation of that kind of intention?*

LL: I don't think anything prepared me. I had no idea of the concomitant responsibilities involved. I mean I looked at other teachers and one of my

motives clearly was to enjoy the kind of adulation that other teachers enjoyed. My idea of awakening was that you wake up and you're free, and then you sort of do what you want. I had been teaching Silva Mind Control, a system of dream work and self-motivational practice, for several years so I was in a position of some authority. My idea of awakening and being a spiritual teacher was you just got into a position of more authority, that's all.

In Silva Mind Control I really had

WIE: *You said that before you woke up you didn't realize the responsibility involved in being a teacher. How did you become aware of that?*

LL: Before I woke up, if indeed I woke up—I know I said that in the beginning and my students continue to say that, but it's been fifteen years since I've ever claimed that personally—I thought it was all bliss. You got union with God and you were just ecstatic all the time. Exactly coincident with the event that

form than I was teaching. So the first thing I did was offer my resignation to the Silva Mind Control organization. I gave them several months to find a replacement and got everything in order. That was the first thing I did because it was very clear I couldn't compromise the form of my teaching in any way. I didn't know when I would actually begin teaching but I knew that I had to. There was no question about it. I was walking along in New York with someone who, when the school

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no responsibility. I did a training session and people went home and if they didn't practice, I didn't care. And it was a profit-making thing and I wanted to make money at it. I made up my own schedule and I would travel when I wanted. My time was my own. So I just thought that a spiritual teacher had more of all of those things and I had no idea about the absolute lack of freedom that spiritual teaching is. It's an absolute lack of freedom. You're so committed to the communication of what it is that inspires you that you can't pick and choose. You can't say, "I'll teach this weekend but I won't teach that weekend, and I'll do this and that and the other thing."

WIE: *What was it that you realized?*

LL: I suppose it could be said that I realized the nature of reality. Since that realization there's been an unfolding articulation of the nature of reality as a way of attracting others to this work and communicating its foundation, and, at least minimally, its intellectual boundaries.

precipitated this work came a tacit moment-to-moment knowledge of what this work entailed. So in every moment I know what I need to know. If what I need to know is that I am responsible in such and such a way, I know that. That's been constant in the last twenty years. Whatever I need to know having to do with my own responsibilities, with communication in a given space, whatever it might be, I know. So everything is tacitly obvious. There have continued to be catalysts in my life after that event such as a book I read or a lecture I hear, or even something random in nature. Everything was already tacitly understood but it wasn't all in language, and the different catalysts that I continue to intersect with provoke articulation.

WIE: *What motivated you to begin teaching?*

LL: There was no motivation. There was absolutely no choice. There are a couple of funny stories associated with it, one being that I knew, based on this event, that I had to teach in a different

first began, was a student and he said something I thought was really brilliant. I said, "Wow, that's deep, that's really phenomenal. Who said that?" He looked at me with surprise and said, "You did." I went, "Oh, pretty neat," and then about a month later I began teaching. I figured if I could say stuff like that, why wait?

WIE: *From your own experience, what is enlightenment?*

LL: It's an unflagging, not necessarily always willing, but an unflagging, irrevocable commitment to serve what I call the great process of divine evolution. Basically that's God, and we articulate what the process of God is in a very complex way. But enlightenment is an unflagging and irrevocable slavery to serving that which is God, the divine, in whatever way the divine deems is service.

WIE: *Are you saying that since awakening you know what kind of service God wants?*

LL: There's not an intellectual cognition of what is wanted in the moment. There is only action in response to what is wanted in the moment. Then in retrospect I can define or discuss or consider what the will of God was. But in the moment there's only an organic response. So the essence of my teaching work I call spiritual slavery. And one of the key elements of spiritual slavery is that you don't have to understand, because if you surrender to the will of God you are active, you are manifested, you are moved. And if you understand—which most of us would like to because we're curious and we're thinking creatures—that's fine. But understanding is not a requirement for functioning in an enlightened way.

WIE: *What role does discrimination play in the spiritual life, if any?*

LL: I think discrimination plays a major role, particularly for students in the sense that the more refined food one eats, the healthier the system is. And that applies on every level, including the level of what we read, what movies we see, even who we talk to. And if we're indiscriminate about the energy fields that we intersect with, then the likelihood of developing a vehicle that is strong enough and clear enough to make the breakthrough is minimal. So I think what Buddha talked about when he spoke of right livelihood, right company, right speech and so on, is important. I think discrimination is very important. I think we should be sensitive to what we put in our mouths, what we put in our minds, what we put in our physical company, and things like that, if we can help it. Sometimes we can't help it.

The discrimination of a student in some sense has to be, in the beginning, just an effort of education, and as time goes on it becomes more instinctual. In my case discrimination is itself one of the gestures of spontaneity.

WIE: *In 1976 you went to India and ultimately met Yogi Ramsuratkumar, whom*

you recognized as your guru. Most people who go to India for spiritual reasons are seeking enlightenment, but you went after your awakening already had occurred. Why did you go?

LL: A lot of the major movements that happen—the first trip to India, moving into a living situation with students, moving out here, that kind of thing—are not things that I have reasons for, although being minimally intelligent, I can always come up with reasons for any major move. The reasons I gave for the first trip to India were wanting to pay respect to the sources of what I felt was my cultural leaning, cultural resonance; to visit various teachers, including people that I felt a very powerful resonance with like Ramana Maharshi; to visit ashrams and to offer prayers and gratitude. Those were the stated reasons for going. Of course the real reason for going was a pre-awareness instinct in relationship to beginning a different level of engagement of process with Yogi Ramsuratkumar. And it took many years for that to become apparent. Again, that's only in retrospect. At the time I went to India with students, one of the things I thought was to get it over with—to go and check out my roots and pay my respects, almost like going to a funeral to pay your last respects. You go and that's the end of it. Little did I know I would find what I found.

WIE: *When you first met Yogi Ramsuratkumar did you recognize him as your teacher?*

LL: No. It took the first trip, then the second trip which was three years later, and then about a year after that I started responding to him as my teacher, and even then very lightly. It wasn't until maybe three or four years after that, in the early to mid-eighties, that I really dedicated myself to him as my teacher, of course without even knowing if he would accept me as a student or what would happen.

WIE: *You have said that Yogi Ramsurat-*

kumar was the source of the awakening which occurred to you one year previous to your meeting him. How can someone be the source of somebody else's awakening that occurred before they ever met?

LL: Well, to a spiritual master there's no such thing as the past, the present or the future. To us everything happens very linearly. In 1975 this shift of context happened for me. In 1976 I met Yogi Ramsuratkumar. In 1983 I really dedicated myself to him as my teacher. But to him when Jesus was born might be fifty years in the future. And some person that to us hasn't even been born yet, to him is like a living, breathing presence. Time is completely malleable. So for a master like Yogi Ramsuratkumar the past, the present and the future are completely interchangeable, and he can shift them around at his will. I can't describe that according to a law of physics although I'm sure that's possible. But that's how it is.

WIE: *Has he ever acknowledged to you that this is the case in terms of your awakening?*

LL: Not linearly. I mean he doesn't really just sit down and talk to you like that. First of all my relationship to him is one of 200 percent receptivity, so I never ask him for anything. I never ask questions. Occasionally I'll have some curiosity, but as a principle I will not ask him for anything, except for everything. When I'm in his presence I will not make any gesture of appeal to him, none. I won't ask him any questions. So I've never asked what his perception of all this is, although he has said things to his Indian devotees which get fed back to me. I have gotten feedback but it's never been direct. And I know that if I asked him directly he would not give a direct answer, so I wouldn't anyway.

WIE: *Most people would say that after enlightenment you don't need a guru. But you entered into a guru/disciple relationship after your awakening, at a time when you were already taking on students of your*



Liars, Gods and Beggars in concert

own. Did that mean that in some way that you felt there was something lacking in your own realization?

LL: No, I didn't feel there was anything lacking at all. My view of it is that I was in a guru/devotee relationship before my shift of context—or the shift of context, since it wasn't mine—and that's what actually led to the shift of context. My relationship to him is not one where I feel incomplete and he's somehow going to provide the missing pieces. All that's been done, that's over and done with. It's a love affair, that's all.

WIE: What is the purpose of the guru/disciple relationship? What's the role of this love affair?

LL: Well, in the real sense it's not sadhana that produces awakening. It's assimilation that produces awakening. So to assimilate something you have to be in its field, in its aura. The guru is that which is grace, living grace, and the real essence of sadhana is to assimilate that. When the disciple wakes up it's because they've assimilated the guru's grace, not because they've done sadhana. Paradoxically, one has to do sadhana to create the kind of resonance

that allows the assimilation to occur. Sadhana is like preparing the field but really it is all grace. And to get grace you have to be in relationship to grace. You don't have to be in its physical presence necessarily, although there are benefits to that. You can get it anywhere as long as you hook into it. But the guru is the hook, the source of it. A lot of people say, "Well, why can't I go directly to God?" We can't go directly to God because the human vehicle, which is the guru, is basically about all we can take. Now there are examples such as Anandamayi Ma and Ramana Maharshi who ostensibly didn't have a human guru. But neither of them are alive to talk about that, and I think that they could be cornered into acknowledging the need for a human medium through which one hooks into grace.

WIE: When I hear people talk in terms of devotion or grace it makes me wonder what role understanding plays.

LL: Devotion doesn't necessarily have to show up in the form of *bhakti* [the yoga of devotion] alone. Devotion can show up in the form of *jnana* yoga [the yoga of wisdom]. So grace itself is not this kind of romantic, soft, fuzzy thing.

One could say that Nisargadatta Maharaj, for instance, was a transmitter of grace and he was hardly devotional. He wouldn't stand for any devotion around him. So one shouldn't exclusively identify this idea of grace with the *bhakti* traditions because grace is available in many, many different traditions.

Even in any *bhakti* school, if it's a real *bhakti* school and not just some sentimental approach, love is a fire. Love is a burning, raging conflagration. It's not this weepy-eyed thing, where everybody walks around saying, "Oh my guru is so gentle and I love my guru so much." If you call up a school and the person on the phone is talking like that you have to question it.

WIE: What is it then that makes it not just a sentimental feeling but actually something that is fiery?

LL: It's absolutely transformational. A metaphor might be a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. The alteration of structure is so great and so profound that it can't take place without crisis. Often one element of the crisis will be what we call this tremendous fire, this heat, or *tapas*.

WIE: What is the nature of this *tapas* or crisis?

LL: Some of it is the standard confrontation with ego's autonomous identification with illusion as if that were reality, and having to dismantle that dictatorship. And the first thing that's required in any kind of healing is you have to first acknowledge that there's sickness. So the first order of business is getting some recognition of the illness of identification with the body as total reality. That involves an honest recognition and ownership of the neurotic aspects of behavior that ego has assumed as necessary protection for itself. That

can be shame, pride, all forms of narcissism and greed and so on. We've lived 20, 30, 40, 50 years, and to admit that in all of that time everything that we've done has been informed by self-centeredness, egoism and narcissism requires tremendous, tremendous discipline, attention and a lot of just basic hard work.

Theoretically we could come into this fire and see that we've been selfish and that could be revelatory. We could just go, "Oh wow, I don't want to live like that anymore," and go on from there. But realistically most people aren't willing to do that. The bottom line is, it's a matter of a kind of core willingness to give up fifty years of whatever we think we've accumulated. It's like taking this immense bank account and just giving it up. It's as if you were a Jew in Germany or in Russia at certain times in history and you had a vault full of gold, and you had a chance to hop on a boat with nothing but the shirt on your back and get out. What would you choose, life or your gold? Most people chose the gold and died for it under horrific circumstances. It's the same analogy. Someone could come to this work and get the fact of the illusion and then choose life, but most of us want to take the gold along with us. Really the gold is shit but it's just that it's familiar and it's served us well.

WIE: *What is it that gets a person to the point where they're willing to choose life, even though it means giving up everything that they've had and that they've known and that they've done?*

LL: Personally I think it's love. And whether that shows up in a tradition of bhakti or in a tradition of jnana, love is not some kind of weepy, sentimental, misty-eyed sighing kind of thing. Love is the life-essence of creation. I think if one wants that badly enough or is committed to serving that deeply enough, at some point you're willing to go on past your own assumed, illusory handicaps.

WIE: *I've heard you refer to yourself as a*

crazy wisdom teacher, a divine jester and a fool for God.

LL: I like to think of myself as a subtle crazy wisdom teacher.

WIE: *What do you mean by that?*

LL: I call myself a subtle crazy wisdom teacher because generally speaking my manifestations are extremely conservative. Some of my students say, "Oh but your energy is so revolutionary." That's well and good but in the early days of the school I would do a lot more things with students, like we'd go dancing or I'd do strange things. In the last ten years I'm just comfortable living on the ashram and having the same daily schedule and eating my salad. To all external purposes a crazy wisdom teacher is someone who acts in a crazy way to provoke or to shock students into a kind of shift of context. I do that so rarely anymore that I think it's very nice of my students to continue to refer to me as a crazy wisdom teacher. In effect that's what I am, but personally I think the subtleties of that are so obscure that I'm always surprised when someone sees them.

WIE: *What is crazy wisdom?*

LL: One of the primary aspects of crazy wisdom is that crazy wisdom teachers are willing to use any behavior no matter how shocking or irreverent or disturbing, if that behavior, and only if that behavior, has a very high likelihood of provoking a shift in the student, a deepening in the student. Of course in this day and age, because of the communication industry, we hear about every idiot throughout the world whose ego takes on a crazy wisdom function and then goes about using shock techniques whenever they feel like it, with complete disregard for the timing of the matter. Everything is timing. Gurdjieff was a master of timing. He didn't just produce shock like a research scientist to see what would happen. He only produced shock when the likelihood of it

being effective, in terms of deepening a student's relationship to the divine, was high. It didn't always work because it is only a likelihood, but still he wasn't random about it. And the teachers who I call charlatans today are teachers who are completely irresponsible in their use of power and crazy manifestation. I would consider a crazy wisdom teacher someone who might use anything, but is never arbitrary or never follows their own personal motives. They only use dramatic and shocking manifestations under specific circumstances at exactly the right time. Like faceting a diamond, if you don't understand the structure of the stone and you just take a chisel and hit it, what you get is diamond dust. You've got to know exactly the structure of the diamond because you've got to tap

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it along a particular fracture point. If you tap it in the middle of two fracture points then you just smash the stone instead of getting a perfectly faceted jewel. Human beings are the same way. They've got what we could call revelation lines, so to speak, or enlightenment lines. A crazy wisdom teacher is a master at faceting. A charlatan is someone who just takes the hammer and chisel and whales away and hopes that there are some beneficial results—or maybe doesn't even care, just loves the euphoria of the exercise of power and people groveling at his or her feet.

WIE: *The way you're describing crazy wisdom it sounds like it's a very precise science.*

LL: The thing is, though, the scientist is completely spontaneous and instinctual. It's not a science of mind. It's a science of function.

WIE: *I think a popular notion of crazy wisdom is that ultimately reality doesn't make sense, therefore one acts in ways that demonstrate that to kind of blow the conceptual mind.*

LL: That's one of the revelations that

can deepen a student's relationship to the divine. So one might do something under a specific circumstance to produce the revelation that reality is nonlinear. But ordinarily one wouldn't function like that all the time just to prove that point. One would do that only when the student was just on the edge of the real possibility of getting that point, beyond just knowing the party line. Another important consideration is that the kind of behavior that would demonstrate the absurdity of linearity would not tend to be violent behavior or the kind of behavior that would psychologically scar someone.

WIE: *Many of the crazy wisdom teachers that you hear about wouldn't necessarily draw any lines like that. I know that you have been known to be outrageous, provocative and unpredictable at times, so that in a sense puts you in the crazy wisdom camp. Yet I also know that among your students you have particular protocols or norms that are required. For example, people generally have to be either celibate or monogamous. You don't allow promiscuity.*

LL: I wouldn't say we don't allow promiscuity, we don't recommend it. So if someone is promiscuous that doesn't necessarily mean that they're no longer a student or they get kicked out of the school. There's very little promiscuity in the school because I'm so Victorian in my attitudes. But the rules are not the kind that exclude people who bend them.

WIE: *Similarly, I think you recommend that people don't use alcohol, at least at the ashram.*

LL: Or cigarettes or caffeine. Talk about no fun. No sex, no alcohol, no caffeine, no tobacco, no drugs. That's why we're such heavy movie-goers.

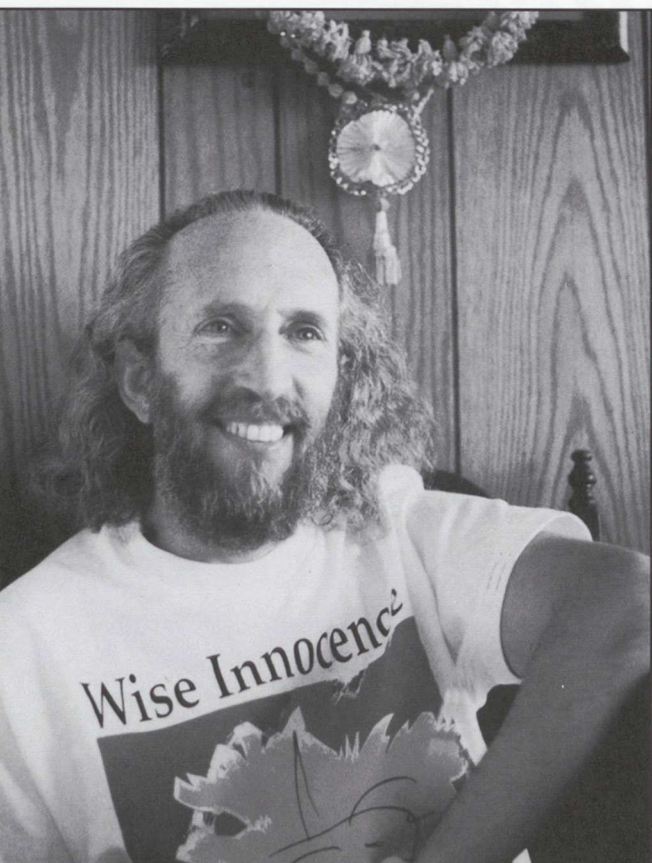
WIE: *But when you think about people like Trungpa Rinpoche or Osho it's a very different kind of scene. So it seems that to put yourself in the crazy wisdom camp, so to speak, isn't completely appropriate. You seem different than most of the people who would be identified with that.*

LL: That's part of my crazy wisdom style. It's a funny thing because I hold Trungpa in absolutely the highest, highest, highest regard. To me Trungpa can do no wrong even though he did some pretty heavy shit. There are other teachers who do far less than Trungpa that I wouldn't even consider to be teachers of any stature whatsoever, that I think are completely deluded and that I would call charlatans. So who I respect and who I don't is purely an instinctual thing. It doesn't rest on linearity because you can look at certain teachers who should be considered crazy wisdom teachers because of their behavior and I think they're just crazy, period, and not teachers at all. And yet Trungpa, whose behavior was really pretty much as wild as it gets, I hold in absolutely the highest regard.

WIE: *There's no question, at least in many people's minds, that Trungpa had a great deal of realization. He had a tremendous effect on many people and the kind of crazy wisdom that is as precise as a diamond cutter is, of course, what his students would claim for him. Yet the results of some of his behavior, it seems, haven't been so great. Look at the scandal involving AIDS and sex that occurred around his successor, Osel Tendzin. And Osel Tendzin and other students became alcoholic, for example. I think that one thing that happens is that students often tend to imitate their teacher and take on in many ways, perhaps unconsciously, the behaviors and attitudes of their guru. So, when you have someone like Trungpa carrying on the way he did, I think it was almost predictable that some of his students would do similar things.*

LL: Well, that's a danger, and there's no way around that, I think. A really good teacher will work towards discouraging

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Introduction

To introduce this selection of writings on “impersonal enlightenment” is to introduce Andrew Cohen. The challenging and revolutionary teaching of impersonal enlightenment, born from a passionate and uncompromising pursuit of truth, is inseparable from the blood that flows through its author’s veins. And to introduce Andrew Cohen is to introduce the very source of the inspiration, inquiry and perspective that is at the heart of *What is Enlightenment?*



A Revolutionary Change of Perspective: **IMPERSONAL ENLIGHTENMENT**

by
**Andrew
Cohen**

When he began teaching nine years ago, Andrew Cohen's searing, absolute teaching of liberation called others to meet him in the fact of perfect freedom, here and now, in this very life, in this very moment. For many people his passion fanned the dim embers of a fire that had once burned in their hearts but had gone out. For others, the fire of liberation was suddenly ignited for the first time. One individual after another penetrated beyond the boundaries of the self and experienced the bliss of union with the Absolute.

As a spiritual heir of a branch of the lineage of the sage Ramana Maharshi, his teaching was essentially an unusually vital form of the ancient Advaita Vedanta. As the years progressed, however, something completely different and unexpected emerged. His own experience teaching, and his observation of innumerable seekers as well as other teachers, radically changed his entire view of liberation. What Advaita Vedanta and most other spiritual teachings fail to address, he realized, is the fundamental self-concern that is the source of the misery of the human condition. Without uprooting this, he found to his surprise, even the spotless purity of liberation could be corrupted.

His new perspective was initially spurred not only by his recognition of the precarious nature of enlightenment itself, but also by the spontaneous coming together of a community of individuals around him who had seen in their own hearts the truth of absolute freedom. This community began to manifest something beyond individual liberation that he found to be revolutionary: the significance of enlightenment as a collective evolutionary force. As he writes in his latest book, *An Unconditional Relationship to Life*:

We found ourselves coming together in such a way that the experience of the individual appeared to be less important than the collective context in which that experience occurred. That context was one of perfect and unbroken unity in the realization of one Self...The simultaneous recognition of unity by so many revealed a thrilling evolutionary potential. It seemed to call each and every one of those who were aware of it to leave behind any and all obstructions to that unity so that the fact of oneness could become manifest in this world, not only as inner knowing by one but as objective fact by many. Indeed, it seemed that heaven could become manifest on earth if only a few were willing.

His understanding was pushed far beyond the emphasis on individual liberation that he had been taught. What was revealed to him was a larger perspective that seemed to challenge many commonly held beliefs that he now found to be limited. He began to call this larger perspective "impersonal enlightenment." He found that the vast perspective realized in the view of impersonal enlightenment made it possible for a human being to see their own experience in a way that could free them entirely from the drama of their own personal life and liberation. Indeed, in this impersonal view the personal experience of the individual is recognized as no longer being of central importance. What is recognized to be most important is the individual's relationship with the whole. The three selections on impersonal enlightenment that follow are drawn from Andrew Cohen's talks and writings. They span the period from the first formulation of this teaching in 1991, through Spring 1995.

In these two dialogues, first published in 1991, Andrew Cohen introduces the terms “personal” and “impersonal” enlightenment. He powerfully communicates why, from the perspective of impersonal enlightenment, the “secret” of enlightenment cannot be contained within the individual, but must manifest as an unlimited passion to realize perfect purity for the sake of something much larger than oneself.

QUESTION: What is the difference between personal enlightenment and impersonal enlightenment?

ANDREW COHEN: In the first, the interest in enlightenment is for personal gain. That means: “I want to have a particular insight, a particular experience or a particular understanding—because I want relief from suffering or because it fascinates me, etc.” The second refers to the discovery of an interest in enlightenment for its *own* sake—not for *your* sake.

Q: Do you mean for the good of everyone, or just for its own sake?

A: For its own sake. For its own sake will be for the good of everyone—that will be the result, but that is not the idea in mind. When I speak about impersonal enlightenment I am speaking about a condition where one is so hopelessly enamored with the truth itself that one is completely lost in it. In that total immersion, the living fact of enlightenment itself, and all that it implies and signifies, has become the sole love of your life. It’s not for your sake anymore. It’s only for its own sake, for the sake of enlightenment itself.

Q: Does personal enlightenment eventually lead to impersonal enlightenment?

A: Not necessarily.

Q: Isn’t one liberated from duality in personal enlightenment?

A: Yes, but then the realization of nonduality occurs within the context of the personal.

Q: So then you’re saying that the enlightenment becomes limited somehow by the personal?

A: Yes. It’s delicate. It’s a very delicate matter. Listen, personal enlightenment is a secret. In personal enlightenment you are living incognito. You know the truth, but it’s a secret. It’s a secret that only you know about. But because you know,

that’s fine with you; you don’t care because you are free. That’s personal enlightenment. That is quite an extraordinary event in itself and no doubt very rare. But I’m speaking about something different. I’m speaking about something that is not a secret anymore. I’m speaking about something that cannot be a secret anymore. Because the kind of secrecy and the inherent compromise that must take place in the condition of personal enlightenment becomes an impossible possibility in the condition of impersonal enlightenment. There is an inherent compromise in living a secret even if it is an extraordinary secret, because in the realization and practice of personal enlightenment one “fits in” and tolerates the inherent compromise in and of the “world.” The world here represents the condition of accumulated ignorance that the world mind is—that he or she who is supposedly enlightened has transcended and gone beyond.

Q: What is the difference in how one knows the personal and impersonal?

A: For someone looking from the outside or from the point of view of the knower him- or herself?

Q: From the point of view of the knower.

A: In personal enlightenment compromise does not trouble the enlightened one. In the impersonal condition that kind of compromise is not a possibility.

Q: What is the compromise?

A: Fitting in.

Q: So in personal enlightenment there is no motive left to change anything?

A: Right, exactly. In personal enlightenment the person doesn’t care because they have achieved a self-satisfied condition of freedom and personal liberation. Beyond personal lib-

eration there is a profound discovery of something else. One comes upon a particular sense of urgency where one can't help but care. You have to go way beyond personal enlightenment to even begin to know what I'm talking about.

Q: Go way beyond it?

A: Yes. Destroy it even! Then and only then will the kind of caring I'm speaking about reveal itself—before that it can't.

Q: But once you get a glimpse of freedom and you see that you don't exist in the way you thought you had existed, where is the motive to change? Who do you want to change and why?

A: A glimpse of the Absolute is a glimpse of the destruction of the known and of everything that has been created. In that glimpse you realize that there is nowhere to go and nothing to do. You discover that there is no one to become and therefore nothing to change. Beyond that, beyond that point is a condition where one is overcome with a tremendous sense of urgency and purpose that has nothing at all to do with you.

Q: Would that come from the Absolute itself?

A: It couldn't come from anywhere else.

QUESTION: Could you give an example of the difference between personal enlightenment and impersonal enlightenment?

ANDREW COHEN: What is the difference between a burning match and a raging forest fire?

Q: It's difficult to understand.

A: To find this kind of understanding you have to feel deeply in your heart.

Q: It seems like the forest fire has to spread.

A: Yes, but it means and implies much more than that. It is the discovery of a choiceless and absolute commitment to the realization of perfect purity in yourself for the sake of all beings—not for you. This is something very sacred and very delicate and has to be discovered individually on a very deep level.

The effect of this discovery, this realization, is very explosive. It will affect other people by the fact of its mere existence—but in it, there is no idea whatsoever to "help" anybody else. There is only complete, choiceless, one-pointed devotion to the realization of perfection and a knowing of the urgency and necessity of that. There is an evolutionary urgency, an evolutionary necessity that some people come upon and when discovered, they will do whatever it takes to succeed perfectly.

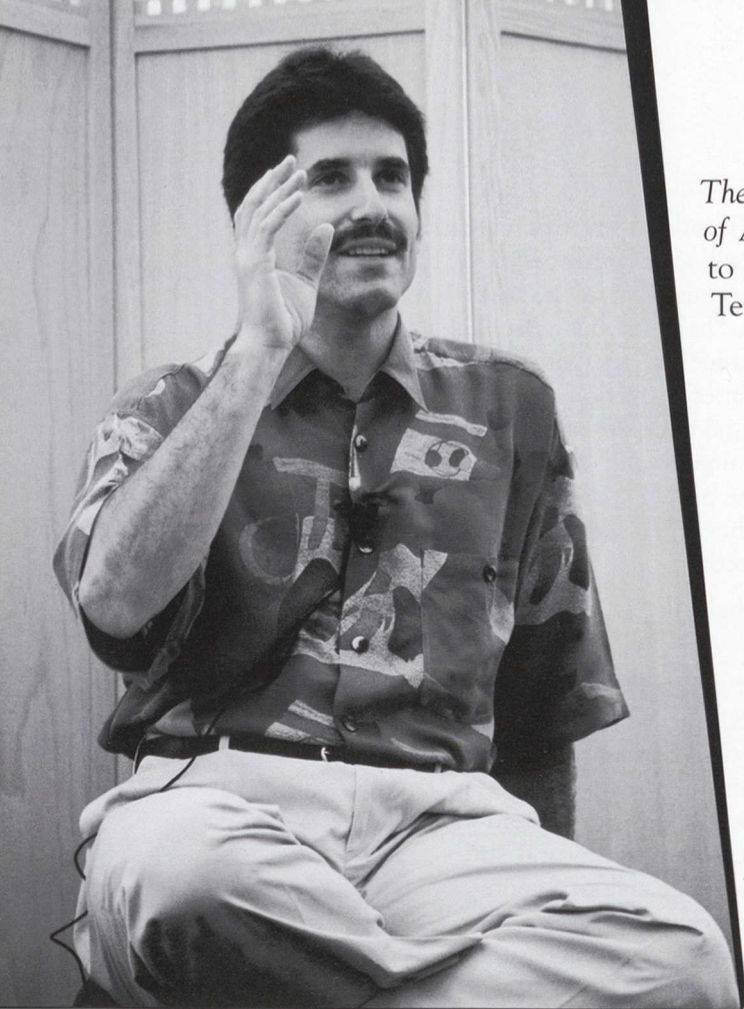
Q: Is personal enlightenment a prerequisite for this?

A: No, not necessarily. Some are able to leap directly to the perspective I'm referring to, while others will be unable to comprehend or perceive what I'm speaking about before the realization of personal enlightenment, and still others may never be able to comprehend it or perceive it. If you are lucky, eventually you will come to the point where the idea of personal freedom is no longer what allures you, no longer what interests you. What allures you will be something way beyond that, and the discovery of that evolutionary urgency will become your passion, your only love and your sole reason for existence.

What I'm speaking about cannot be contained. Because of this it frightens people. For this kind of absolute transformation, love has to be so deep—you have to have so much love in your heart, otherwise it won't be possible. In what I'm describing there are no boundaries, and the implications of that are revolutionary.

A Human Endeavor

The individual's interest in spiritual liberation must never be separated in any way from the perception of the horrific mess that the whole race is lost in. The pursuit of spiritual enlightenment is a human endeavor. It is in no way the property of any particular individual. Therefore the individual who becomes acutely aware of the human predicament *as themselves*, and feels very inspired to do something about it *with themselves*, must never forget that that endeavor should never in any way be seen as a personal matter.



The following selection is a chapter from the latest work of Andrew Cohen, *An Unconditional Relationship to Life: The Odyssey of a Young American Spiritual Teacher*, published Spring 1995.

By 1991 I had been teaching for five years and had met thousands of seekers after truth. Over those years, I discovered something that shocked me. I became aware of the fact that most individuals who were actively seeking for spiritual liberation tended to do so in a way that was profoundly self-centered. For most seekers, spiritual longing and experience was fundamentally a personal matter. It appeared, in fact, that in the end many spiritual seekers were not all that different from those who were not on a spiritual path, in the sense that they seemed for the

most part to be as self-centered as everyone else. This self-preoccupation in spiritual seekers usually took the form of a very narrow-minded and self-centered relationship with enlightenment. In general, it seemed that the path of spiritual liberation was pursued in a way that emphasized the emancipation of the individual rather than the human race as a whole.

Over time, I had come to see that the desire for enlightenment was far more than a personal matter. I began to recognize that that desire was the expression of an impersonal, evolutionary impulse in the race as a whole that manifested itself in the individual as a yearning for transcendence, a longing for the experience of deep and profound wholeness. Some individuals experienced the movement of this evolutionary impulse with great intensity, others experienced this impulse in a milder form and in some it was not experienced at all. Too many who became aware of the movement of this impulse in themselves tended to overpersonalize its significance, and in so doing often obscured the *impersonal nature* of its essence. Because of this, the larger implications of the discovery of that impulse, which always pointed to the evolution of the race as a whole, often remained unrecognized.

This had a profound impact on me as a teacher and ultimately completely transformed my message. Indeed, that the individual's desire for awakening could never exist in isolation became the very foundation of my teaching. It was at this point that I began to call all approaches to enlightenment that stressed the awakening of the individual alone "personal enlightenment" and all approaches in which the awakening of the individual could never be separated from the awakening of the race as a whole "impersonal enlightenment."

Personal Enlightenment vs. Impersonal Enlightenment

The following selection, written in 1993, conveys the teaching of impersonal enlightenment with the concise power of a classic scripture, or sutra.

AS LONG AS OUR INTEREST in spiritual liberation remains solely a personal matter, it will be impossible even to begin to perceive the deeper implications inherent in the spiritual experience. As long as the question of enlightenment remains fixed within the boundaries of the personal, the truly explosive and evolutionary revelation—that begins to reveal itself when the self-centered fixation on the Absolute begins to subside—cannot occur. Within the context of enlightened or Absolute revelation and understanding there are finally only two possibilities: absolutely subjective/personal or absolutely objective/impersonal.

In the first, absolute subjectivity, the individual finds liberation in the discovery of the revelation that no separation or distance of time or space exists between the individual and the entirety of manifest and unmanifest reality. In this revelation the individual is freed from the burden of individuality and from the fear of *being* itself. In this rare and unusual attainment, the individual, by having liberated him- or herself from the fear of being itself, finds an inexpressible joy and freedom in being itself. The normal boundaries created by the illusion of separation and personality no longer hinder or restrict the direct knowledge and perception of the individual's inherent and perfect freedom. This individual knows who they are, and the world of time and space no longer imposes upon or can restrict the expression of their attainment.

What could be the limitation inherent in this attainment? The limitation inherent in this attainment expresses itself as infatuation with Self. Any trace of self-infatuation, including even infatuation with Self, taints the possibility of the attainment of pure perception undefiled by *any* notion of Self. Infatuation with Self also indicates the likelihood of a subtle, yet profound, self-centered fixation on the Absolute, the existence of which obscures the perception of a vaster perspective of reality in which the Absolute serves as a *foundation* of perception and understanding rather than an end in itself.

In this objective or impersonal perspective, awareness itself has penetrated beyond the confines of subjectivity, leaving no location of Self to be fixated *anywhere*. Only when the individual is finally freed from the attachment to any notion of Self can that perspective, which is truly impersonal and devoid of any distortion created by preference or sense of location, reveal itself. ■



Barry Long

LOVE is not a FEELING

BARRY LONG COMMANDS ATTENTION because he is a teacher who challenges many commonly held beliefs about enlightenment and what it should look like. Many would say that teachers of enlightenment are supposed to be humble about their attainment. Barry Long proclaims without hesitation that he is "Master of the West." Most people think that enlightenment should produce an appreciation of the wisdom contained in all genuine spiritual traditions. Barry Long unreservedly tells us that all traditions are dead and useless relics of an irrelevant past. Isn't a mark of realization supposed to be a friendly avoidance of contention? Barry Long is unabashedly confrontational, expressing his views with a muscular directness. Enlightenment itself is usually associated in most people's minds with the contemplative and often ascetic traditions of the East. Australian Barry Long heatedly rejects any trace of Eastern thought, and focuses on the state of one's love life as the barometer of one's realization.

In our ongoing investigation into what enlightenment is and what it really means, we took note of this unique teacher's fiery originality and invited him to submit an article. Making a rare exception to his usual rule against "mixing his teachings with others," he generously complied. But when we read his contribution to *What is Enlightenment?* it raised many questions. The confidence of genuine realization was unmistakably present, but his teaching seemed possibly one-sided and at times unclear to us. Most troublesome was his apparent exclusion of the entire realm of human thought and feeling from the enlightened condition. Was he suggesting

that these marks of sentience are completely absent in an enlightened person? Our questions inspired us to make the unusual request for an interview to further explore issues raised by his article. Again, Barry Long did not hesitate to make time in his busy schedule and generously agreed to speak with us. If this interviewer had had any doubts about the directness of the force that is Barry Long, they were laid to rest in the course of a conversation that was demanding and at times disconcerting, but at other times revealed an unexpected sweetness and beauty. In spite of himself, this interviewer found he was deeply affected by the exchange that occurred. The interview paints a lively portrait of a modern prophet and his controversial teaching. Most importantly, it carries us further in our inquiry into the sometimes confusing but always fascinating subject we hold paramount—the nature and significance of enlightenment.

Barry Long was born in Sydney, Australia, in 1926. After having been a journalist and editor, and at one time the press secretary to the Opposition leader in the New South Wales parliament, he passionately pursued a quest for spiritual truth which led him to India. While there, the suffering caused by losing the woman he loved catalyzed a deeply transformative experience. Later, living in England, he began teaching a small group of people. In 1986 he returned to Australia after a twenty-year absence and established the Barry Long Centre on the Gold Coast of Queensland, where he currently resides. He has published numerous books and audiotapes and travels extensively, teaching in Australia, Europe and the United States.

the Article

by Barry Long

I was asked to contribute an article for this magazine. I don't usually mix my teaching with others, but in this case I wanted to respond to Andrew Cohen's personal invitation. Since the magazine title asks the question, "What is enlightenment?" I will address that. Also, as the last issue was devoted to interviews with five distinguished traditionalists, it seemed appropriate to write about religious traditions and the spiritual life. And as I always put love first, I will write first about love.

I suppose the most radical part of my teaching at present is that love is not a feeling.

Everybody suffers from love, or the fear of it, or the lack of it. Why? Why is love so universally and inevitably heartbreaking, whether it be through the end of a love affair, the death of a loved one or being locked in with the habitual casualness or grim indifference of a partner? The

answer is because we've been taught and conditioned by the world to believe that love is a feeling.

Love is not a feeling; it's a sensation. Drinking water when you're thirsty is a sensation, not a feeling.

Being in nature or swimming in the sea is a sensation, not a feeling. Lying down when you're tired is sensational, not a feeling, although you may say it feels good. Feeling is an emotional interpretation of experience and these sensations don't need interpretation; they are just good or right. Making physical love rightly is a sensation, not a feeling. So is the love of God. The same goes for joy and beauty; both are sensational.

But in our ignorance we emotionalize joy, beauty and love. We make feelings of them, personal interpretations based on our old emotions. We put our personal past on the present with the result that joy, beauty and love don't

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the Interview

by Hal Blacker

WIE: *In your article you make a distinction between feeling and sensation. But it seems to me that sensations are as ephemeral and time-bound as feelings. What's the relevance of sensations to enlightenment, which is beyond time and beyond change?*

BL: I have no feelings at this moment and I don't have feelings. But if I want to I can feel a sensation in my body within, which is the pure sensation of my sensory existence, which is the beginning of time. That sensation never changes, it's always there. But as I detach myself from existence, that is from my feelings, from the necessity to think or feel, that sensation disappears. It's not necessary. It only appears when I want it or when somebody mentions it. Otherwise I have no sensation and no feelings and I exist in knowledge.

You can't be enlightened unless you've got sensation, pure sensation. I'm choosing the word pure sensation because pure sensation doesn't have any feeling in it. I don't like to use the word experience because experience isn't direct. Pure sensation is direct being and that's the basis of your and everybody's sensory existence. Now enlightenment is the other side of that. Where sensation itself even disappears, because it's not necessary, there is enlightenment. It's the other side of pure sensation.

WIE: *What is the connection between love and enlightenment?*

BL: Love is the state of enlightenment and enlightenment is the state of love. You can't make any separation between them. Enlightenment is the state of no feelings and pure knowledge and so is love. And both are impersonal. Now to be personal is to have feelings, feelings about this, feelings about your mother, feelings about your father. Oh, everybody lives off their feelings all day, as you know I say in the article, but that's personal. The personal is what changes every couple of seconds, although we don't know it. So that's your feelings. Now the impersonal state of love is something that very few people on this earth know anything about. And to bring that impersonal love into existence—which is

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the Article

seem to last. But it's our emotional substitutes that don't last and we become bored, discontented and unhappy again. The sensation or

knowledge of joy, beauty and love is of course still there, but it's overwhelmed by these coarser feelings.

Feelings are constantly changing. None is dependable for long. You can love someone intensely today, and tomorrow or next month not feel a thing. Except perhaps for the feeling of doubt or depression that what was so beautiful could change so quickly.

Feelings, even the best of them, turn to negativity—disappointment, anger, discontent, resentment, jealousy, guilt, etc. A good feeling starts off being elevating, exciting, like taking a drug substance, alcohol or having sex. But what goes up must come down and feelings are no exception. So in a couple of hours or days the downside starts and you perhaps wonder why you feel moody, depressed, suicidal, or just plain unhappy. You're paying the piper for yesterday's music. And between the upside and the downside is the no-man's and no-woman's land of boredom, indifference, inertia, weariness and pointlessness.

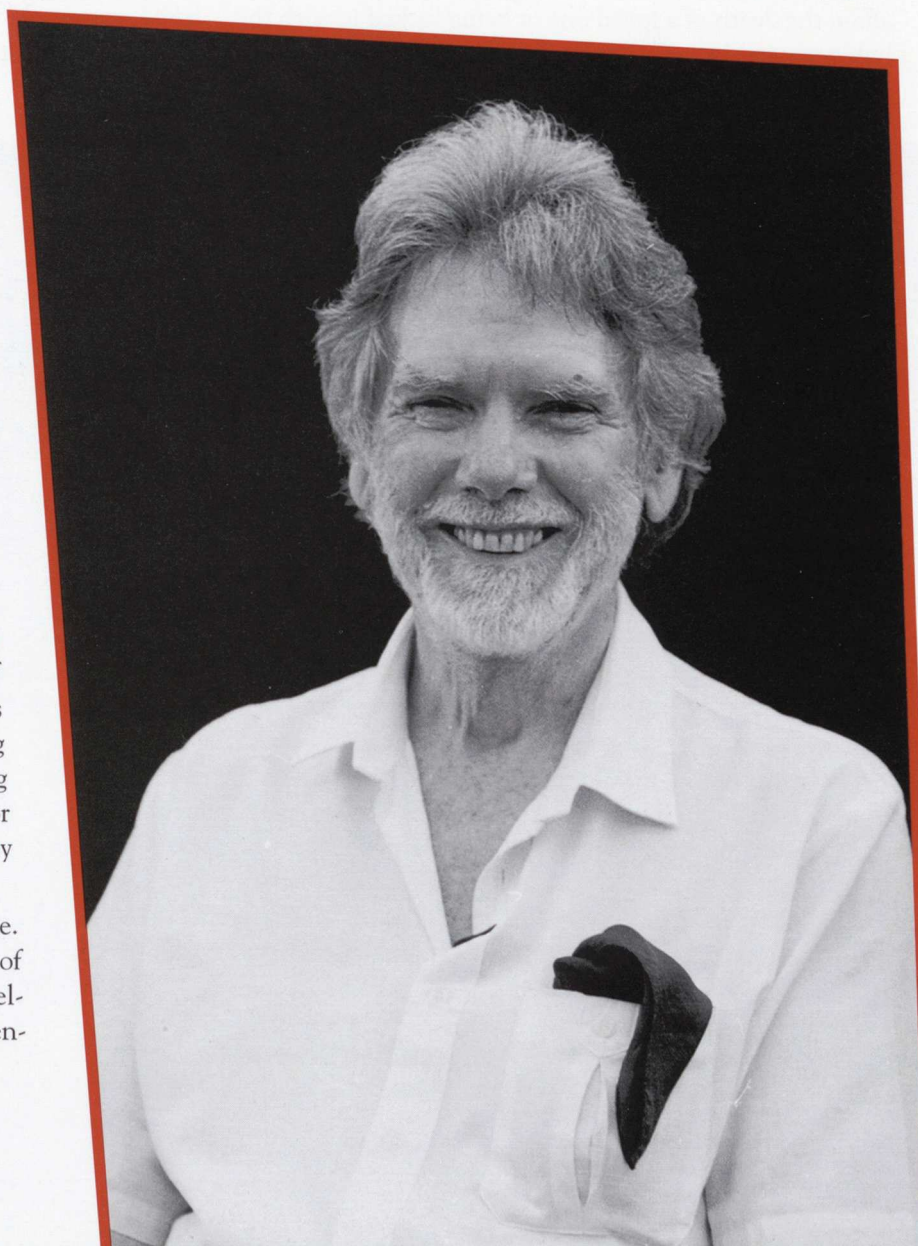
Okay, so you don't have drugs, alcohol and sex but you love someone, as a feeling. Then it won't be long before you'll be experiencing one or more of the painful feelings I've mentioned above—and thinking it's natural! Wait and see. Even in everyday living you're continually interpreting experience via your emotions instead of *being* the experience direct. "This is good, that's bad," your feelings swing subtly to and fro all day long obscuring the reality, the sensational knowledge or gnosis, that it's not bad at all; it's simply life as it is.

All feelings are false and deceptive. And in the spiritual process the area of any person's life where they still have feelings is where the next stage of their unen-

lightenment will be addressed. So, where I come from, there's the answer to the magazine title, *What is Enlightenment?* Enlightenment is to be emptied (not empty) of feelings and thus at one with the pure sensation of divine being. And that pretty well sums up the whole spiritual process. But the spiritual process is so little understood that people don't realize their feelings are personal and false and have been misleading them all their life. If that's not true, why is humanity still unenlightened and basically unhappy after all this time—when enlightenment is the completely natural, sensational state of being every moment?

By disidentifying with your feelings you break your attachment to them. When that is done sufficiently you're back at the beginning, in pure sensation or unconditioned knowledge. You've been beating your head against the wall to get some feelings and all you've got to do is break

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where you and I are speaking now—that is even rarer than the realization of God.

Now I'm going to tell you what everybody's problem is: it is love of woman in the case of a man, and the love of man in the case of a woman. All your problems come down to love. Your love life is what your problem is, and everybody else's on earth. God in existence is man and woman. There's nothing else. And unless you have loved God in existence—your duality which is woman or man—unless you have united with that through love and devotion without going through your feelings of love, you're not going to be enlightened.

The love of man and woman is the beginning of the love of God. You can realize God within like many men have done. It's one of the rarest things on earth to realize God, but everybody seems to think that that's the end. Where I come from, realizing God was the easy part of it. That God of love which is already here anyway—who wouldn't be able to realize it? The difficult part of it is to bring that God into this world where God or love is not, into that body listening to these words and this body speaking them. That's the task.

WIE: *You write that all feelings are false and deceptive. It seems though that having feelings is part of being human. Isn't it possible to have true and appropriate emotional responses such as anger at injustice and hypocrisy?*

BL: Oh, no, no, no. That is a justification of your feelings, your negativity and your unenlightenment, and that's what everybody on earth does. They don't want to bite the bullet. Nobody wants to be utterly and completely honest and natural. So when you justify feelings, tell me, what feel-

ings are genuine? Now for instance, do you want anger? For God's sake, I don't want it, thanks very much! And I'm sure the people I live with don't want it. So what's the good of it? It's purely selfish to be angry because it satisfies me, myself, instead of being universal.

WIE: *But it seems that if you are human you're going to have an emotional response to the complex and sometimes terrible situations that do arise in life.*

"I am
Master
of the
West."

BL: Now wait a minute. In the article I say that feelings are an interpretation of events. What you're describing—these terrible things that happen in life—they are life, and terrible things happen in life. For instance I might lose an arm today. That would be, let's say, a terrible thing. But it wouldn't be a terrible thing to me. It would be that I would lose my arm and possibly suffer physical pain. That would not be a terrible thing to me. If it were terrible that would be a selfish and feeling interpretation of an

event. The fact that it hurts is not terrible, that's life; and the fact that it happened is not terrible, it's life.

WIE: *Well, it's life but I don't know that life necessarily excludes making those kinds of judgments. The way that you're describing it seems to exclude a large area of human existence.*

BL: Because humanity is not enlightened. Do you know what humanity is, what the word "human" means? The word human where I come from—which is the enlightened state—means suffering. So when you say you're a human being, you're saying you're a suffering being. And I say you have to get rid of your suffering and then be *being*. Enlightenment is the state of being which I am, this moment and every moment. So I'm not suffering. But humanity loves to suffer. People love to suffer because they love to get excited with their feelings.

All you've got to do is get rid of your feelings, which are always negative. Why not get rid of the whole lot of it, now? That means you don't know feelings and then you don't know negativity, and then you'd be in love, and then you would love everybody by not loving anybody in particular as a feeling. That's the state of enlightenment. People want to get rid of this feeling, they want to get rid of their jealousy, they want to get rid of their anger—but what you've got to get rid of is the whole lot.

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the habit and get used to living anew without pain and conflict. But that's a mighty realization, and a mighty simple one which few are going to accept—they'll be too busy defending their feelings! So, I guess I'll still be demonstrating this the day I die.

Incidentally, it seems to me that's why Andrew Cohen tells his students to be fearless and deadly serious. It takes that kind of one-pointed commitment to detach from the delusion of feelings and finally discover the blessing of the valiant; once freed of personal feelings the troublesome mind stops forever.

Now to traditions. I'm not a traditionalist and I didn't have an Eastern master. My teaching stems from my own gnosis and love and shares little common ground in practice with other teachings that invariably show an allegiance to Eastern traditions. I never deny the enlightenment of another enlightened spiritual teacher. Every enlightened teacher is doing his best in this matter, in this body of sense. But I am often critical of the hype and mystification that is inevitably associated with Eastern traditions in minds cultured in the West.

All spiritual traditions come out of the East. And the traditional Eastern way, particularly in the ancient Tibetan Buddhist and Indian Brahmic priest-ruled societies, was to seek enlightenment and to give the life, and often the lives of the children, to that pursuit.

This—the search for enlightenment—to me, is and was the beginning of spiritual ignorance. And it is the traditions and traditionalists that today unwittingly perpetuate this ignorance.

I am enlightened. No man is more enlightened than I am, and I am no more enlightened than any other enlightened man. Enlightenment is enlightenment. And that's that. It's an unalterable, unwavering state of knowledge and being beyond doubt, a completion every moment by grace of the Most High, the unspeakable one, God. That's the ultimate; the absolute being beyond any description. But the ultimate, the enlightenment of man, must translate into his living life. And to me and my teaching that means an enlightened man is liberated from unhappiness. Being and living free of unhappiness is the natural and simple state of all life on earth—except man. He has been misled away from it by spiritual lures and

glamor and the result is the conflict and pain, the fluctuating unhappiness, of his short life.

Enlightenment can't be pursued or sought after. Even mentioning the word puts people further from the state. It gives the impression enlightenment is something to get that they don't have. This creates a multitude of inimical reactions; chasing it by following paths and ways; or feelings of discontent, self-doubt, frustration and inferiority; or the defensive ridicule of this most admirable and completely natural state of consciousness.

Today the carrot of enlightenment through priestly traditions continues to promise something to be gained in the future. Whether it is the Buddhist *nirvana*, the Christian heaven, the Islamic *houri* paradise, the Judaic Eden or the Hindu *moksha*, the prize is never now. Paths take time, ways take time, and traditions are the very stuff of time. So there's always the talk of time past in the form of Buddha, Jesus, Moses, Mohammed or other past masters and what they supposedly said or did.

Truth is the reverse. Truth is here now; no past, no future. People are unenlightened only because they believe in the truth of the past and therefore must look to the rewards of the future. To be enlightened, to return to the original state of life on earth, requires action now in the present with no reference to the past. What has to be done is to kill the old priest in you, starve out the traditionalist, the follower, the believer.

If you go to think about what you should do next to become more enlightened, don't. The thought is the priest trying to get you to think of what some teacher or so-called master said instead of being responsible for yourself and the truth now. If you see yourself discussing enlightenment, stop; it's the unenlightened priest talking. If you want to run from the present difficult situation, don't; it's the priest giving you more time to suffer again. If you want to wear clothes of another culture midst the people of your own culture, don't; it's the priest wanting to dress up, impress and glamorize himself. If you are moved to shave your head for spiritual reasons, don't; it's the priest getting up to his old tonsorial tricks when your only concern is being what you are now.

In other words, to be enlightened of the acquired burden every spiritual belief and notion has to be abandoned, every reference to what any spiritual teacher or master has ever said must be set aside.

What does that leave? Your own experience. Not

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WIE: *You seem to be very much against Eastern traditions. Aren't there some teachings in those traditions that can be helpful, but the problem is that often those teachings are not really being lived?*

BL: That is so. You will find that nobody is living those teachings now because the master who wrote them was not enlightened, or the priests that copied them out were not enlightened and the master is dead. Now only while a master is here can you realize what the master says. You can't realize it in the spoken word. You can get help from that and you can realize little bits here and there, but the idea is to be with the master like you are with the master now. He's speaking to you and this is direct communication.

All Eastern teachings are partial. The teachers themselves don't live them because most of their audience is in the West and the West is a totally different place than the East. If you try to live an Eastern teaching and be in the West, you're not facing the immediate difficulty. The immediate difficulty is the Western mind that believes so many concepts and writes so many dictionaries and invents so many things. You are a Westerner and that's where God is found—in your culture. Not in trying to find some other culture to solve it for you.

I am master of the West. No one is as straight as I am because I do not have any Eastern beliefs. I do not look through any sort of film. I see things precisely as they are. The West puts

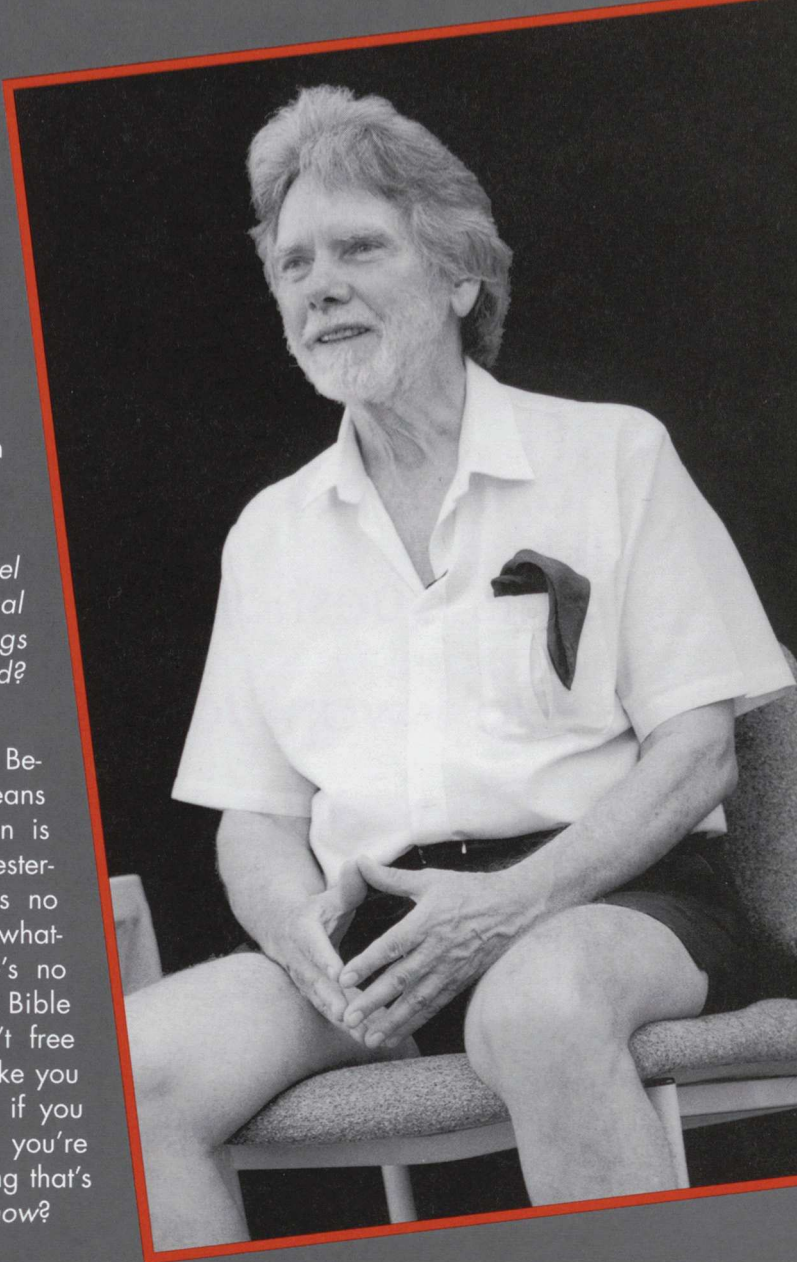
nuts and bolts together and sends space-ships to the moon. I do the same thing in connection with God. I am very, very practical and I have no Eastern thought in me.

WIE: *Do you feel that all traditional religious teachings have to be rejected?*

BL: Yes, yes, yes! Because tradition means past, and tradition is old, and that's yesterday. And there is no truth in yesterday whatsoever. Like there's no truth in the Bible because it doesn't free you. It doesn't make you a total being. So if you follow a tradition, you're following something that's old. Why not be now?

WIE: *You say in your article that you discourage people from even mentioning enlightenment on the grounds that doing so "puts people further from the state," because it implies a separation of time or distance from this natural condition. On the other hand you teach enlightenment and are very outspoken about being a master of enlightenment. It seems that a strong motivation towards enlightenment is important because of how much has to be given up and how much is demanded for there to be real transformation. Isn't it important to talk about enlightenment in order to encourage people to actually strive to attain it?*

BL: No, you must not strive for anything. It is your striving that's caused you to be unenlightened, to forget what enlightenment was. Give up your negative feelings—and that's all feelings—and then you will stop thinking. You'll have the first amazing experience of the mind stopping, of no thought. Feelings continue and then you have to give those up. That's all you've got to give up, nothing else. Just don't be unhappy, now, not tomorrow, not next week, now. What have you got to be unhappy about? There's nothing for you to be unhappy about. You're interpreting events through your feelings, your personal self. There's no need to interpret. The



the Interview

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"Forget everything I've said in this article except this question: Do I want to suffer or not suffer NOW?"

your historical or memorable experience, for that's the problem. Your own experience is your self-knowledge of life. Let's establish once and for all what this means now. Forget everything I've said in this article except this question: Do I want to suffer or not suffer NOW? That's the only truth for you. There's no tradition, no past, no discussion in it. It's all you need. Keep it with you and at the next temptation to suffer it will prevent you suffering.

But only if you've learned in your own experience what causes you to suffer. If you haven't learned that, you're still attached to suffering and will unwittingly embrace it. In that case you have to read on, take more time and ask yourself more questions.

Have you learned yet that you only suffer when you think about events or feel about them, that you don't suffer from events themselves?

Have you learned yet that every thought about yourself is a thought of the past, that worry is thinking and that all thinking eventually leads to worry, fear and insecurity? If so, each time you

go to think, or catch the thinker thinking even about "good" things like last night's movie, don't; stop. Not because Barry Long says so but because you've realized the truth of thinking in your own experience. It's what you've learned from life, not from someone else's experience. Therefore it is the truth for you now and every moment. Otherwise you must go on thinking and go on suffering. One day, when you've had enough of the pain, you'll come to your senses.

Have you learned yet that every feeling is a feeling of the past and that every "good" feeling soon changes and eventually becomes the feeling of doubt, confusion, boredom or sorrow? If so, stop believing your feelings; don't act on them; wait.

Action will happen in its own time. Action taken on the strength of feelings inevitably leads to more feelings to correct the action previously taken—and so the feelings of discontent and conflict, and corrective actions, go on and on repeating themselves. If in your own experience you haven't yet learned the truth of the deception of feelings, then you just have to go on believing and thinking, having faith in the past and hope in the future, being happy today and unhappy tomorrow, but never being in command of your own life for long.

What about compassion? Compassion is another word like enlightenment that Eastern-based teachings have ritualized, taken out of context. This influences followers to try to be compassionate. But compassion is natural. Any concept or thought of it is phony. You can't try to be or do anything that's natural; it's already there. What has to be done is to stop indulging what's not natural in you—such as suffering. Trying is trying to get something for yourself, the sufferer. And compassion is the absence of self or personal suffering. Only then, in the absence of motive, can the one and only compassionate God be compassionate as God sees fit, and not as selfish man imagines. No self means no selfish intent, no personal satisfaction, no personal feeling of achievement, no personal decisions or choices. Compassion then is simply an activity of divine being and not of any person.

Is suffering humanity (suffering under its own self-delusion) really served by the hoary old story of the *bodhisattva* who supposedly out of compassion refrains from entering nirvana and chooses to save others instead? Where is he? If he's not here now he's a phantom of the imagination distracting people from the truth of being now. And anyway, in the enlightened state life unfolds without the burden of choice or alternatives. You just do as you do. ■

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problem is that you have feelings of negativity, of failure, of jealousy, of guilt. These are your problems. All you've got to do, and I will tell you how to do it, is to get rid of those and then you'll say, "Hallelujah, I'm free." And you won't even have to mention enlightenment.

WIE: *In your article you seem to advise people to stop thinking, just as you advise people to stop feeling. Again, it doesn't seem to me that thought and feeling are necessarily the problem. What is important is one's relationship to them. Are they obscuring objectivity, are they obscuring your ability to see what's real and respond to it, or not?*

BL: Every thought you have is an obscuration of reality because thoughts are always partial. You have to know nothing. I know nothing and in knowing nothing I know everything I need to know. You can ask me a question and I will be able to answer it.

We are talking about a thing called enlightenment. Enlightenment is not gained and regained without enormous giving up of everything. You can't hold on to anything. Now that doesn't mean giving up your wealth, giving up your car. Giving up all those things are conceptual ways of sacrifice. The greatest sacrifice of all is to give up your feelings, which are the powerhouse of your thought process. So when you get rid of your feelings, no more thought. You've got to give up what counts, but people give up what doesn't count, their cars, their money. They shave their heads, they do something else, but that's not what it's about. It's about the supreme sacrifice, which is to sacrifice my humanness, my suffering, which are my feelings. And that leads to the giving up of my thoughts. It's as

simple as that because all I have is my feelings. That's my only corruption, my only unenlightenment.

WIE: *Without thinking and feeling, how does one function when it comes to acting in the world, which inevitably involves making judgments and decisions and choosing between this and that? How do you function?*

BL: Well, I don't make decisions. Somebody says to me, "Would it be okay to go to England?" and I say, "What are the dates and how does that fit in with everything? How's my health? Well, I'm all right, I think I can stand that sort of thing." So they put things to me and I can or I can't. In other words, I always go for the biggest "yes." I don't make decisions. Really, you don't need to make decisions. It's a conceptual thing and the more enlightened you are the less decisions there are. That's why I say you do as you do. You don't have alternatives and you don't have choices to make because that's the state.

I like to suggest that people don't use the word decision because that introduces a selfish aspect, the idea that you are controlling your life. "I decided." You know it is a very staccato, sharp-angled, suffering thing. Better to just look at the situation and do what you do. Now when you do what you do, it gets rid of the chooser, the winner and the loser. You'd be surprised how all day, most of the time, you're not making any decisions and you're doing all sorts of things. It's only a mental concept. It's selfish to think that you're making

decisions. If you want a better word, where I come from—this is how everybody runs their life anyway—you go for the biggest "yes." There's no certainty in life so you look at a situation and there's six points for, and there's eight points against, and so you say, "Well, I'll go for the biggest 'yes' which in this case is no—so no I don't think that's a good idea." You just want to get rid of these big decision-makings. It's too harsh, it's willful.

WIE: *You write, "Enlightenment is to be emptied (not empty) of feelings and thus at one with the purest sensation of divine being." What's the distinction here between being "emptied" and being "empty" of feelings?*

BL: Yes, well I noticed that in your last issue's interviews with those Eastern teachers ["From Light to Light," Jan. 1995], emptiness was mentioned a lot. I find that a wrong word. Because in God realization and being one with God the Most High, the unspeakable one, there's no sense whatsoever of ever having done anything yourself. It is all done for you. It's by grace. And so it's not being empty, it's being *emptied*. There's a different emphasis or a different connotation to that. Nobody, it doesn't matter who he is, is ever going to be the most high. He might think he is and start calling himself Bhagwan or The Bright and all that b.s., but it's not true. It is by grace that I live, it is by grace that I am speaking now, it is by grace and grace alone. And that grace empties the vehicle of what it needs to be emptied of. And then there is the state of enlightenment, of wonder, which has no knowing in it. So the void that Buddha is supposed to have spoken of, and which I am in and which I *am*, is not empty. It's pregnant. It's utterly potent but it's nothing. ■

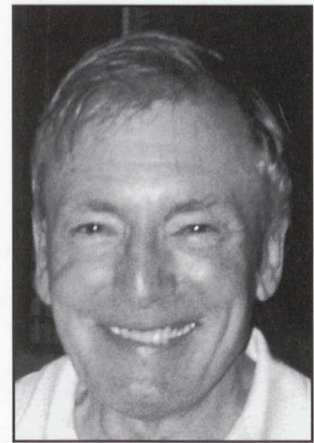
A black and white photograph of a man from the chest up, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie. His head is replaced by a bright, glowing white sphere, creating a stark contrast with the dark background.

The Dazzling Dark

A Near-Death Experience
Opens the Door to a
PERMANENT TRANSFORMATION

by John Wren-Lewis

In our last feature of this issue of *What is Enlightenment?*, we are pleased to present the vivid and thoughtful account of a former spiritual cynic's experience of being suddenly and unexpectedly catapulted into an altered state of consciousness. Fascinating as a unique expression of transcendent realization, John Wren-Lewis' description of his powerful spiritual experience is deeply moving and profoundly inspiring. His perspective is unique, he claims, not only because his awakening was thrust upon him without him seeking for it, but also because, for that very reason, he questions many commonly held beliefs about the nature of spiritual awakening.



While his experience is undoubtedly genuine, as his description of it makes very clear, many of his conclusions about the nature and meaning of the whole event of spiritual transformation express the familiar view that beyond the ultimate *fact of being* itself, it is dangerous to draw conclusions about the *meaning of being* itself. We look forward to future dialogue with him to question some of his conclusions in the hope of bringing light to this most challenging area of religious thought, i.e., is there meaning and significance to life itself and to consciousness being aware of itself, or is the fact of life and consciousness meaningless beyond the fact that it simply *is*?

John Wren-Lewis is a man whose fearless and refreshingly irreverent stance makes him willing to question many ideas that for too long many would not dare to question. Andrew Cohen first heard of John Wren-Lewis when he received a letter from him in 1991 describing his experience and asking advice. In response, Andrew called him and they had a lively exchange. In March 1995 when Andrew Cohen was visiting Sydney, Australia, where John Wren-Lewis lives, they had several public and private meetings together. John Wren-Lewis is an awakened man who is unusual because, in spite of having many strong opinions based on a lifetime of intelligent exploration, he remains open-minded and ever-curious.

Before his experience occurred, John Wren-Lewis, mathematical physicist and humanist psychologist, was a primary exponent of the "Death of God" movement of the 1960s. He has published extensively and held several professorial appointments in the United States and the United Kingdom. He is currently hard at work finishing *The 9:15 to Nirvana*, a book that further elaborates on the subject of this article.

Some, if we believe what they tell us, are born with God consciousness. Some struggle to achieve it by strenuous spiritual practice, though by all accounts the success rate isn't (and never has been) encouraging. I had God consciousness thrust upon me in 1983, my sixtieth year, without working for it, desiring it, or even believing in it, and this has understandably given me a somewhat unusual perspective on the whole matter. In particular, I wonder if discipline isn't altogether counterproductive in this context and the idea of spiritual growth totally mistaken.

Before I had my experience, I was a Freud-style skeptic about all things mystical. I wouldn't have called myself an atheist or materialist; in fact I'd published extensively on the

need for a religious world view appropriate to a humanity that has "come of age" in the scientific and technological area.¹ But I emphasized that such a faith would have to be essentially positivistic, focused on the human potential for creative change, which I believed could become as effective in the social realm as it has been in the physical realm. I even believed it possible that the creative human personality might eventually discover technologies for transcending mortality, but I saw mysticism as a neurotic escape into fantasy, due to failure of nerve in the creative struggle.²

What happened in 1983 could be classified technically as a near-death experience (NDE), though it lacked any of the dramatic visionary features that tend to dominate both

“It was as if I’d emerged
freshly made from a vast blackness
that was somehow *radiant*, a kind of
infinitely concentrated aliveness
or ‘pure consciousness’ that
had no separation within it, and
therefore no space or time.”

journalistic and scholarly NDE accounts.³ As I lay in a hospital bed in Thailand, after eating a poisoned candy given me by a would-be thief on a long-distance bus, there were some hours when the medical staff thought I’d gone beyond recall. But I had no out-of-body vision of what was going on, no review of my life, no passage down a dark tunnel to a heavenly light or landscape, and no encounter with celestial beings or deceased relatives telling me to go back because my work on earth was not yet done. And although I’d lost all fear of death when eventually resuscitated, this had (and has) nothing to do with believing I have an immortal soul that will survive death.

On the contrary, it has everything to do with a dimension of aliveness here and now which makes the notion of separate survival a very secondary matter, in this world or any other. In fact it makes each present instant so utterly satisfying that even the success or failure of creative activity becomes relatively unimportant. In other words, I’ve been liberated from what William Blake called obsession with “futurity,” which, until it happened, I used to consider a psychological impossibility. And to my continual astonishment, for ten years now this liberation has made the conduct of practical life more rather than less efficient, precisely *because* time consciousness isn’t overshadowed by “anxious thought for the morrow.”

I didn’t even notice the change straightaway. My mind was too busy catching up on why I was in a hospital at night, with a policeman sitting at the foot of the bed, when the last thing I could remember was feeling drowsy on the bus in the early morning and settling down for a comfortable snooze on what was scheduled to be a seven-hour journey across the jungle-covered mountains. I’d suspected nothing, because the donor of the candy—a charming and well-dressed young man who’d been very helpful with our luggage—had left the bus some miles back. With hindsight, I guess he decided that retreat was the order of the day when he saw that my partner, dream psychologist Dr. Ann Faraday,⁴ wasn’t eating the candy

he’d given her. (Ann’s heroic rescue, when I started turning blue and the bus driver insisted I was just drunk, is quite a story in its own right, but not the point here.)⁵

The fact that I’d undergone a radical consciousness shift began to become apparent only after everyone had settled down for the night and I was left awake, feeling as if I’d had enough sleep to last a lifetime. By stages I became aware that when I’d awakened a few hours earlier, it hadn’t been from a state of ordinary unconsciousness at all. It was as if I’d emerged *freshly made* (complete with all the memories that constitute my personal identity) from a vast blackness that was somehow *radiant*, a kind of infinitely concentrated aliveness or “pure consciousness” that had no separation within it, and therefore no space or time.

There was absolutely no sense of personal continuity. In fact the sense of a “stop in time” was so absolute that I’m now convinced I really did die, if only for a few seconds or fractions of a second, and was literally “resurrected” by the medical team, though there were no brain-wave monitors to provide objective confirmation. And if my conviction is correct, it actually counts against rather than for the claim so often made by near-death researchers that personal consciousness can exist apart from the brain. My impression is that my personal consciousness was actually “snuffed out” (the root meaning, according to some scholars, of the word “nirvana”) and then *recreated* by a kind of focusing-down from the infinite eternity of that radiant dark pure consciousness. An old nursery rhyme conveys it better than any high philosophy:

Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of Everywhere into here.

Moreover that wonderful “eternal life of everywhere” was still *there*, right behind my eyes—or more accurately, at the back of

my head—continually recreating my whole personal body-mind consciousness afresh, instant by instant, now! and now! and now! That's no mere metaphor for a vague sensation; it was so palpably real that I put my hand up to probe the back of my skull, half wondering if the doctors had sawn part of it away to open my head to infinity. Yet it wasn't in the least a feeling of being damaged; it was more like having had a cataract taken off my brain, letting me experience the world and myself properly for the first time—for that lovely dark radiance seemed to reveal the essence of everything as holy.

I felt like exclaiming, "Of course! That's absolutely right!" and applauding every single thing with tears of gratitude—not just the now sleeping Ann and the small jar of flowers the nurse had placed by the bedside, but also the ominous stains on the bed sheets, the ancient paint peeling off the walls, the far from hygienic smell of the toilet, the coughs and groans of other patients, and even the traumatized condition of my body. From the recesses of my memory emerged that statement at the beginning of the book of Genesis

about God observing *everything* "he" had made and finding it very good. In the

past I'd treated these words as mere romantic poetry, referring only to conventionally grand things like sunsets and conveniently ignoring what ordinary

human consciousness calls illness or ugliness. Now all the judgments of goodness or badness which the human mind necessarily has to make in its activities along the line of time were contextualized in the perspective of that other dimension I can only call eternity, which loves *all* the productions of time regardless.

It was mind-blowing even then, when I was taking for granted that this had to be a jumbo-sized "mystical experience" visited on me, of all people, as a kind of cosmic joke, from which I must quite soon "return to normal." I envisaged making public recantation of my antimystical views and joining the formerly despised ranks of spiritual seekers. Because my skeptical bias had been recreated along with the rest of my memories, I toyed with the possibility that I might simply be suffering some aftereffect of the poison, which the doctors had diagnosed as probably being a heavy dose of morphine laced with cocaine. I didn't really believe this, however, because there was no trace of the "trippy" feeling that was always present when I took part in a long series of officially sponsored experiments with high-

dosage psychedelics back in the late 1960s.

Later, when the eternity consciousness continued into the following days, weeks, months, and years, any ordinary kind of drug explanation was obviously ruled out. Moreover my bewilderment was intensified as I discovered how all kinds of "negative" human experiences became marvels of creation when experienced by the Dazzling Dark. To convey even a fraction of what life is like with eternity consciousness would take a whole book and I'm currently in the last stages of writing one. It must suffice here to illustrate two features that have most impressed me and others who know me, notably Ann.

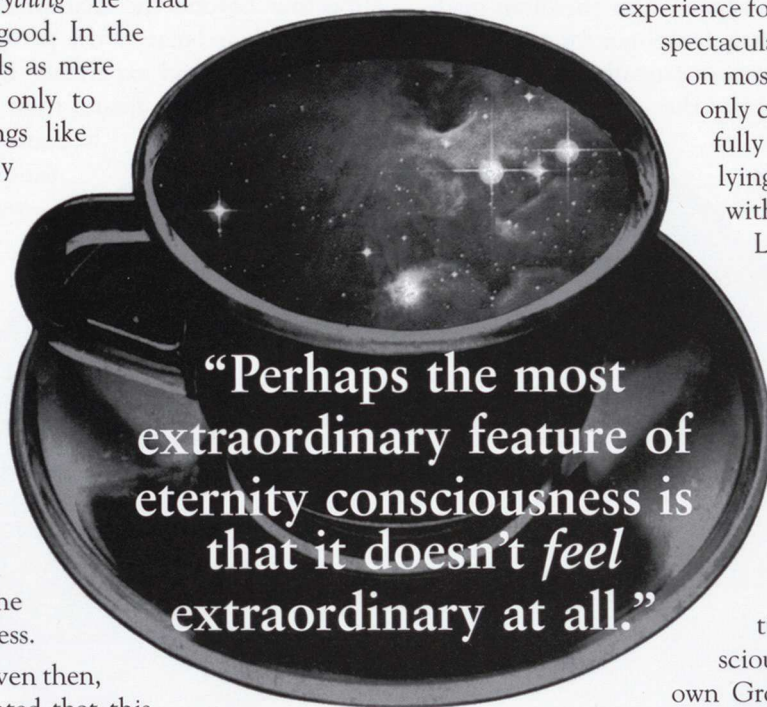
First, if there were a section in the *Guinness Book of Records* for cowardice about physical pain, I would be sure of a place there. But with eternity consciousness, pain becomes simply a warning signal which, once heeded (irrespective of whether a physical remedy is available), becomes simply an interesting sensation, another of nature's wonders. The Buddha's distinction between pain and suffering, which I used

to think was equivocation, is now a common experience for me. And second, my erstwhile spectacular dream life has been replaced, on most nights, by a state which I can only call "conscious sleep," where I'm fully asleep yet distantly aware of lying in bed. It is as if the Dark has withdrawn its game of "John Wren-Lewis-ing" to a nonactive level where the satisfaction of simply being is totally unrelated to doing.⁶

The main point I want to make here, however, is that perhaps the most extraordinary feature of eternity consciousness is that it doesn't *feel* extraordinary at all. It feels quintessentially *natural* that personal consciousness should be aware of its own Ground, while my first fifty-nine years of so-called "normal" consciousness, in

ignorance of that Ground, now seem like a kind of waking dream. It was as if I'd been entranced from birth into a collective nightmare of separate individuals struggling in an alien universe for survival, satisfaction and significance.

Even so, there have been plenty of problems in adjusting to awakened life, because the rest of the world is still taking the separation state for granted, and my own "resurrected" mind still contains programs based on the assumptions of that state. So in the early days I made every effort to assume the role of spiritual seeker in the hope of finding help. It came as a real disappointment to find that no one I consulted, either



"Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of eternity consciousness is that it doesn't feel extraordinary at all."

in person or through books, had a clue, because ancient traditions and modern movements alike take for granted that the kind of eternity consciousness I'm living in is the preserve of spiritual Olympians, the mystical equivalent of Nobel laureates.

Fortunately the mystical state seems to have a growth pattern of its own which is gradually enabling me to deal with the adjustment problems—and a fascinating process it is. In the meantime, however, I'm very concerned that all the seekers I come across accept as a law of the spiritual universe that they have to be content with years—perhaps many reincarnational lifetimes—of hopeful traveling, rewarded at best with what T.S. Eliot called “hints and guesses”⁷ of the eternity-conscious state, whereas I see that state as the natural human birthright.

My intensive investigations in this area over the past decade have left me in no doubt that proponents of the so-called Perennial Philosophy are correct in identifying a common “deep structure” of experience underlying the widely different cultural expressions of mystics in all traditions. Nonetheless I find no evidence whatever for the often-made claim that these traditions contain disciplines for *attaining* God consciousness that have been empirically tested and verified.⁸ On the contrary, the assumption that God consciousness is a high and special state seems like the perfect defense mechanism for not asking whether spiritual paths are really leading there at all. Yet this is a very pertinent question, since many mystics whose utterances most clearly resonate as coming from life in the eternity-state have asserted that their awakening was “an act of grace” (or words to that effect) rather than a reward for effort on their part.

Indeed the more I investigate, the more convinced I become that iconoclastic mystics like Blake and Jiddu Krishnamurti⁹ were right in asserting that the very idea of a spiritual path is necessarily self-defeating, because it does the one thing that has to be undone if there is to be awakening to eternity: it concentrates attention firmly on “futuraity.” Paths and disciplines make gnosis a goal, when in fact it is already the ground of all knowing, including “sinful” time-bound knowing. To

me now, systems of spirituality seem like analogues of those dreams which prevent waking up (for example, to wet a thirsty throat or relieve the bladder) by creating a never-ending nocturnal drama of moving towards the desired goal, encountering and overcoming obstacle after obstacle along the way, but never actually arriving.

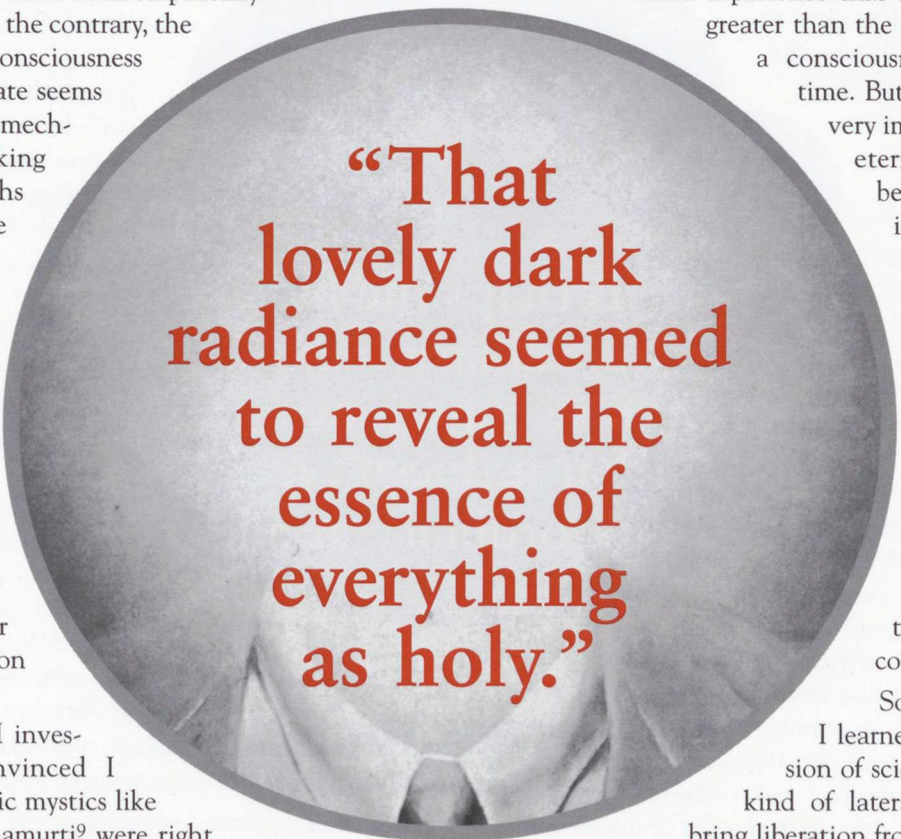
In other words, I've begun to realize that my former skepticism wasn't all bad. I think now that I was like the ignorant peasant boy in Hans Christian Andersen's famous story who simply wouldn't go along with the courtiers' wishful thinking about the emperor's glory in his new clothes. My mistake was to put down the impulse that causes spiritual seekers to want a greater glory than ordinary life affords and makes them hope it's there in the great traditions, even when they have no experiential evidence of it. Or to switch to an even older fable, I decided that heavenly grapes must be delusory when I could see that none of the ladders people were climbing in pursuit of them ever reached the goal.

Now I not only understand the urge to find something altogether beyond the shallow satisfactions and the blood, sweat, toil, and tears of this petty pace, but I know from first-

hand experience that the “joy beyond joy” is greater than the wildest imaginations of

a consciousness bogged down in time. But I can also see that the very impulse to seek the joy of eternity is a Catch-22, because seeking itself implies a preoccupation with time, which is precisely what drives eternity out of awareness. Even disciplines designed to prize attention away from doing are simply another form of doing, which is why they at best yield only occasional glimpses of the eternal Ground of consciousness in Being.

So what to do? One thing I learned in my former profession of science was that the right kind of lateral thinking can often bring liberation from Catch-22 situations, *provided the Catch-22 is faced in its full starkness, without evasions in the form of metaphysical speculations beyond experience.* This is the exploration to which my life is now dedicated. It's a research project in which anyone who's interested can join, because the very fact of being interested means that somewhere at the back of your head you are already as



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aware of the Ground of consciousness as I am. So rather than take up my little remaining space with any of my own tentative conclusions, I'll end with a couple of cautionary hints.

First, beware of philosophies that put spiritual concerns into a framework of growth or evolution, which I believe are the great modern idols. Both are important *phenomena* of eternity's time theater, but as paradigms they're old hat, hangovers from the age of empire-building and the work ethic. We should know better today, when astronomers have shown that the kind of planetary destruction that was once imagined as a possible divine judgment could in fact be brought about at any time by the perfectly natural wanderings of a stray asteroid.

The "I want it now" attitude, so often deplored by spiritual pundits as a twentieth-century sin, is in my view a very healthy sign that we are beginning to be disillusioned with time-entrapment. A truly mystical paradigm has to be *post-evolutionary*, a paradigm of *lila*, divine play for its own sake, where any purposes along the line of time, great or small, are subordinate to the divine satisfaction that is always present in each eternal instant. Mystical gnosis is knowing the instant-by-instant delight of Infinite Aliveness in *all* manifestation, irrespective of whether, from the purely human standpoint, the manifestation is creative or destructive, growing or withering, evolving towards some noetic Omega or fading out.

My second warning is to mind your language, for the words we use are often hooks that catch us into time entrapment. For example, when we use the term "self" with a small "s" to describe individual personhood, and "Self" with a capital "S" for the fullness of God consciousness, the notion of the one gradually expanding into the other becomes almost inescapable, again concentrating attention along the time line. Mystical liberation, by contrast, is the sudden discovery that even the meanest self is already a focus of the Infinite Aliveness that is beyond any kind of selfhood.

Again, when the word "home" is used to describe eternity, there is an almost irresistible temptation to think of life as a journey of return, whereas mystical awakening for me has been like Dorothy's in *The Wizard of Oz*: the realization that I never really left home and never could. Here too T.S. Eliot has the word for it: "Home is where one starts from."¹⁰ Finite life is a continual instant-by-instant voyaging out from the "eternal Home" into the time process to discover new "productions of time" for eternity to love as they arise and pass away.

Against this background, the main positive advice I would give to spiritual seekers is to experiment with any practice or idea that seems interesting—which is what the Buddha urged a long time ago, though not too many of his followers have ever taken that part of his teaching seriously. Ancient traditions and modern movements alike may be very valuable as databases for new adventures, but to treat them as authorities to be obeyed is not only "unscientific"—it seems actually to go against the grain of the divine *lila* itself, since novelty is apparently the name of the time game.

I suspect gnosis comes as "grace" because there are as many different forms of it as there are people. Yet because we're all in this together, sharing experience is integral to its fullness. Whatever experiments you make, share your "failures," your hints and guesses, and your awakening too if it happens, with warts-and-all honesty, because "everything that lives is holy." ■

NOTES

1. See for example my book *What Shall We Tell the Children?* (London: Constable, 1971) and the quotations from my earlier writings in J.A.T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM Press, 1963), the foundation work of the "Death of God" movement in the mid-1960s.
2. See especially my article "Love's Coming-of-Age" in C. Rycroft, ed., *Psychoanalysis Observed* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin, 1968).
3. The best overview of this subject is still C. Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys: The Near-Death Experience in Mediaeval and Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). There is now also a *Journal of Near-Death Studies* published quarterly by the Human Sciences Press in New York.
4. See Ann Faraday, *Dream Power* (New York: Berkeley, 1973) and *The Dream Game* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976/1990).
5. A fuller version of the story is told in my article "The Darkness of God: A Personal Report on Consciousness Transformation through Close Encounter with Death" in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, vol. 28, no. 2 (1988), pp. 105-121, and in my forthcoming book *The 9:15 to Nirvana*. At the time of this incident, we were on holiday from fieldwork in the Malaysian jungle which led to exposure of the "Senoi Dream Tribe" legend as a fraud. See Ann Faraday and John Wren-Lewis, "The Selling of the Senoi," in *Lucidity Letter*, vol. 3, no. 1, (1984), pp. 1-2.
6. For further details, see my article "Dream Lucidity and Near-Death Experience: A Personal Report" in *Lucidity Letter*, vol. 4, no. 2, (1986), pp. 4-12.
7. See T.S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," 5, in *Four Quartets* (London: Faber & Faber, 1944/1959). As an example, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* (London: Sheldon Press, 1974) relates Merton's discussion with a very high Tibetan meditation master in which they both admitted to each other that breakthrough into "direct realization" still eluded them after thirty years of assiduous practice. A high Tibetan lama once told me he expected to spend many more reincarnations before reaching a state of continuing "eternity consciousness."
8. See for example Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1944) and Ken Wilber, *The Atman Project* (Wheaton, Ill.: Quest Books, 1980).
9. For notes on Krishnamurti in this respect, with particular reference to recent reports of his alleged affair with a married woman disciple, see my article "Death Knell of the Guru System?: Perfectionism vs. Enlightenment" in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, vol. 34, no. 2 (1994), pp. 46-61.
10. T.S. Eliot, "East Coker," 5, in *Four Quartets*.

that in students, but there's no way around it. Students are going to copy the teacher and in some cases, they'll bring integrity to it, and in most cases they won't. So what you see are the most cases in which there's no integrity brought to it. The fact that students copy the teacher and the teacher can't stop it is not necessarily a mark against the teacher, the way I view it. Every new student coming into my school is supposed to really get sat down and get a lecture, "Do as I say, not as I do." So, I highly discourage students from copying my behavior.

WIE: *Don't you hold yourself to the kinds of standards that you would like to see your students live by?*

LL: Absolutely not.

WIE: *Why is that?*

LL: I don't know. I'm free. That was a joke! I could give you a good justification for it but it might not be exactly the reason. The way I teach is instinctually designed to optimize the possibility of my student's duplicating my state of consciousness, and behavior has nothing to do with it. So I highly discourage students from mimicking my behavior. Some do to varying degrees anyway. The function of the teacher is designed to optimize the duplication of the state of consciousness of the teacher, not necessarily to produce a carbon copy of the teacher.

WIE: *But it would seem that behavior would be relevant to showing the condition you described earlier as your spontaneous slavery to the will of God. And that's the kind of behavior that you'd want to see in your students.*

LL: Well, no, because my function is different from my students' function. My function is to bring my students into alignment with the will of God. What their function is after that is up to the will of God. It has nothing to do with me or them. I'm not training teachers. If any one or more of my students woke up,

they might become teachers, but they also might not. That's up to the will of God. It has nothing to do with my wish or their wish. I don't think that everybody who wakes up teaches.

WIE: *Even so, it seems like there must be some core, as indefinable or subject to many different manifestations as that may be, of how awakening functions in the world.*

LL: I have integrity in my work. And so, regardless of the manifestations of my activity, if people can see that I have integrity in my work, that's something that they can learn. That is a model for people. So there are, I suppose one could say, subtle aspects or internal aspects of my work that do act as a modeling mechanism, but not my activity. The integrity of my commitment to my work, the integrity of my commitment to my teacher, those kinds of things—yes.

WIE: *You identify yourself as a Western Baul. Could you say something about the Indian Baul tradition and what your connection to it is?*

LL: Well, essentially my connection to it is realizing after the fact that the spontaneous sadhana that has been generated in my school is identical to Baul sadhana. I had never heard of the Bauls until after my teaching work began. One of my quirks is that I enjoy studying and reading. In the process of my own consumption of spiritual literature, I came across some literature on the Bauls and I started saying, "This is exactly what we're doing and it's a 500-year-old tradition!"

One of the primary aspects of Baul tradition is that communication of the teaching is optimally effective when it's experiential. The Bauls are known as itinerant musicians. They encode the esoteric teachings of transformation, including the teachings of their yoga, into song and choreographed dance and music. Their lyrics are cryptic representations of the teaching itself. People listen to the music and watch the dance and get into a very receptive state where the teaching is kind of organically communicated.

WIE: *One of the major things you do is lead a rock 'n roll band. As far as I know, you're the only spiritual teacher who is doing that.*

LL: I hope so. I wouldn't want it to become common.

WIE: *Do you see your rock band, Liars, Gods and Beggars, as a way to communicate your teachings?*

LL: I think that Liars, Gods and Beggars has the potential to communicate some essence of the teaching, even if subtly, on a very large scale. I would never presume to think that the real work and yoga of the teaching could possibly be communicated on a large scale under any circumstances. But I see Liars, Gods and Beggars as kind of a subtle spiritual virus that can touch a vast environment. I see its real effects as being over lifetimes. You know, if Liars, Gods and Beggars actually got popular, every journalist would ferret out the spiritual thing, and I think that a lot of people listening to the music would presume they were doing some sort of Baul sadhana. But that would be ridiculous because vast quantities of people just aren't drawn to the kind of practice that produces the effects designed by this kind of work.

WIE: *What do you think is generally happening in the spiritual scene today?*

LL: Well, I think there's a false premise in many people's minds, which is that as we approach the millennium and the *satya-yuga*, the age of truth and light and goodness and beauty, that more and more people are going to enter into serious spiritual practice. And I don't think that's so. I think there are no more serious practitioners now than there ever were. Maybe number-wise, because of the population, but not percentage-wise. It feels like the spiritual scene is in another great expansion, like in the sixties. We had a couple of decades where it went out of fashion and even now gurus are very out of fashion. But there are all these movie stars who are Buddhists, and movies that have ostensibly spiritual

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ideas in them are becoming very commonplace. Ten years ago, every movie had Hare Krishnas and it was almost like the joke of the movie. Now there are actually big name, major studio movies in which people are seriously discussing and mentioning the name of a Tibetan lama. There's a tremendous resurrection of spiritual interest but I think that that has to do with people's fear of death. I don't think that most of the people flocking to the Dalai Lama and wonderful people like that are ever going to become serious practitioners. I think it's just a kind of fear of the apocalypse or something.

WIE: *What is it that makes someone a really serious practitioner?*

LL: Being willing to sacrifice anything and everything that is required for the realization of the divine.

WIE: *You've been teaching now for about twenty years. Has your teaching changed since the early days?*

LL: Well, I think my style has changed dramatically, but the essence, the shift of context was the recognition of reality, and that can never change. Reality doesn't change. It is what it is. Although the forms of reality may change, the essence of reality can never change. In the beginning, I was sort of mimicking Da Free John. I was criticizing every other teacher, like I was the only teacher on the face of the planet who was real. That's such a ridiculous posture. As time has gone on, I've become much more willing to just relax and acknowledge other people's strengths. I still have a bottom line because I think there are a lot of false teachers out there who I'm more than willing to criticize, but at the same time I think my style has become much more grounded and less cosmic, more here and now. But the essence of the communication can't change. It can never be any different.

WIE: *After twenty years of teaching, are you happy with the results?*

LL: I'm relatively happy with the results, but I can't be entirely happy with the results because the results are relative. So, I suppose what would make me really objectively happy is if my function were duplicated in one or more students. So far, that hasn't happened. I've had students who have even spent months in awakened states at one time, but somehow have taken on qualities that are not yet completely 100 percent finished. I'm happy with the results in terms of a comparison with any other community, and in terms of the embodiment of the teaching in my students and their ability to transmit it, but it's a relative happiness. There is so much work to be done. And you know, even if an individual student's work is complete, then there's always more people needing what this is. So I think that happiness or satisfaction is not an issue. I'm as busy as I can be, there's no lack of work. That's all that is necessary, really.

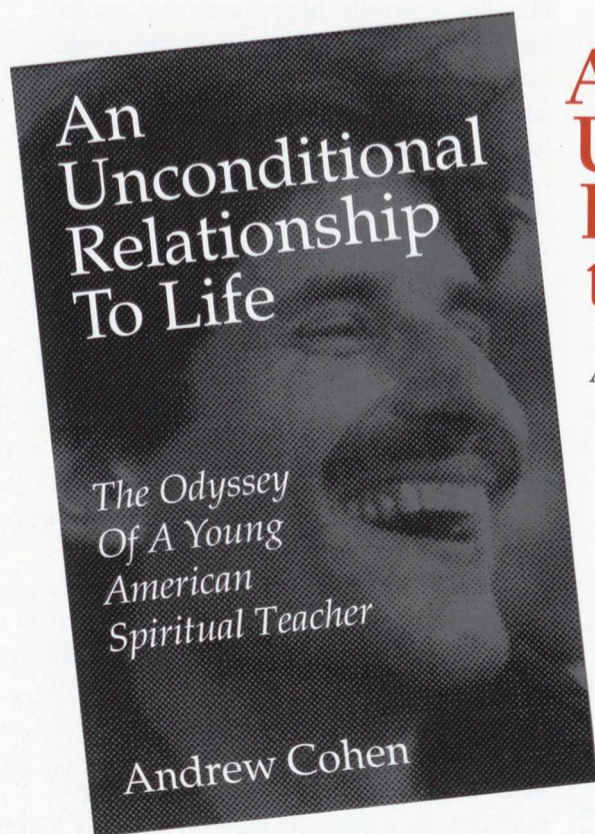
WIE: *What do you see as the ultimate achievement that you'd like to see in this community?*

LL: I'd like to see everybody in a happy working relationship. You know, loving one another, completely free of violence and competitiveness. That would be enough.

WIE: *Sounds great.*

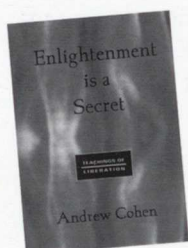
LL: Yeah, it does sound great. Or not in relationship, but by choice. So in a relationship by choice or not in a relationship by choice, but living a life that is completely nurturing and free of violence and manipulation.

One of the primary things that has changed in twenty years is the way I use language. In the beginning, everything was "wake up, wake up, wake up!" And now, it's like the gracefulness required to wake up is such that it's almost like that happens in the process of our lives together. We don't need to focus on that except as a kind of obvious reason to be together. We wouldn't be together if that weren't the reason for being together, so we don't have to dwell on it. What we dwell on is being kind to one another in general and developing intimacy that's free of promiscuity and flirtation and gaminess and so on. That's plenty. ■



An Unconditional Relationship to Life

An Unconditional Relationship to Life, Andrew Cohen's fourth book, is a strikingly original and powerfully experiential journey through the modern spiritual world both East and West. Describing the evolution of his own understanding through his meetings with teachers from various traditions and through questioning many of the current spiritual paradigms, Andrew Cohen opens a door to a deeper understanding revealing what the goal of liberation actually is, unencumbered by the usual myths and superstitions which are so rampant in the spiritual world today. The author's bold call to think independently challenges the reader to look beyond that which may have become all too familiar, in a way that both inspires and liberates. * \$10.95 / £7.95 + shipping (\$3.00 / £1.50)

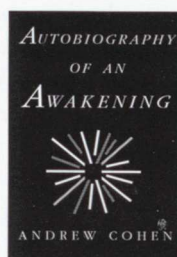


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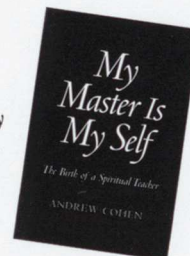
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Clarity of Intention: The Foundation of Enlightenment

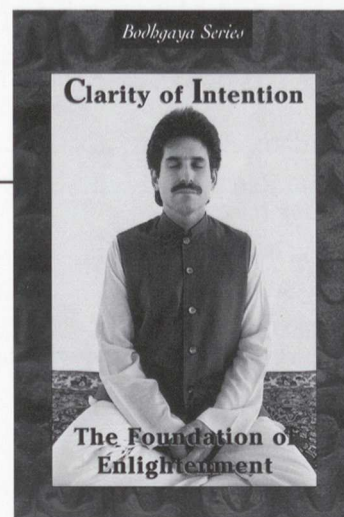
IN THIS INSPIRING AUDIOTAPE SERIES, Andrew Cohen lays the foundation for the pursuit and attainment of a profound and lasting transformation. Recorded during a two-week retreat held in January 1995 in Bodhgaya, India, these tapes present the essence of his extraordinary enlightenment teaching in a clear and systematic way. Always burning with a fire for true revolution of the human spirit, Andrew Cohen calls for a transformation that is unconditional. These powerful talks reveal the way to the awakened perspective simply and directly. Refreshingly free of ambiguity, they describe what spiritual practice focused on the attainment of liberation in this lifetime is all about.

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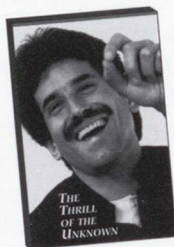
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The Quality of Attention
Everything Is Impersonal

The Thrill of the Unknown

This audio features a powerfully engaging interview with Andrew Cohen in which he explodes many of the reigning myths about enlightenment and challenges us to consider the thrilling possibility of actually becoming an expression of a profoundly awakened condition ourselves.

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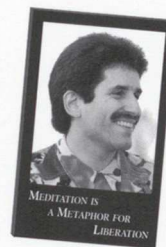
Special Audio Release

The Modern Spiritual Predicament

Harvard Divinity School
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Amsterdam, Holland
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a one-day retreat	
Tel Aviv, Israel	July 22 - 25
Zurich, Switzerland	July 29
SWITZERLAND RETREAT	July 31 - August 8
a seven-day retreat in Schweibenalp	
Victoria, Canada	Sept. 8 - 10
Sydney, Australia	Sept. 29 - Oct. 8
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA RETREAT	October 6 - 8
a weekend retreat	
Toronto, Canada	October 27 - 28
Cambridge, MA	November 1
New York City	November 3 - 4
NEW YORK CITY RETREAT	November 5
a one-day retreat	
England	December
Holland	December
Germany	December
France	December
BODHGAYA, INDIA RETREAT	January 1996
a fourteen-day retreat	

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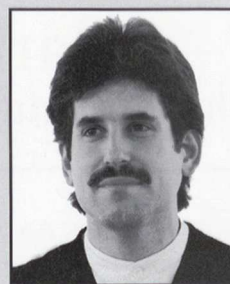
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ANDREW COHEN is a spiritual teacher and author of *An Unconditional Relationship to Life, Enlightenment Is a Secret, Autobiography of an Awakening* and other books. He was born in New York City

in 1955. He spent his teenage years living in Europe, where at the age of sixteen he experienced an explosive and overwhelming revelation of the inherent oneness of life. The impact of this experience in time propelled him on a passionate and relentless search, which culminated fifteen years later in a deep spiritual realization that transformed his life beyond all recognition.

Since that time, the fire of Andrew's awakening has sparked a revolution in the consciousness of many, many people. Most importantly, it has led to the discovery of a profound and all-encompassing spiritual teaching that clearly reveals the vast and subtle nature of the enlightened condition and the challenge of what it means to live this rare attainment. Andrew now travels around the world extensively every year, giving public talks and intensive retreats. A growing worldwide community of students who have come together to live these teachings in a committed way has led to the establishment of a network of centers throughout North America, Europe and Israel.

Anyone who has seriously considered Andrew Cohen's teaching can attest to the fact that it is extremely difficult to distance oneself from its challenging and revolutionary implications. This is because Andrew dares us to question our own priorities and the extent of our commitment to the rare and extraordinary possibility of liberating ourselves in this birth. For Andrew, to awaken to the truth means to discover that perspective of reality which illuminates the way things actually are beyond personal preferences and preconceptions. Through the realization of this profound perspective, Andrew encourages the serious seeker to pursue an ongoing and independent investigation of what it means to truly live an undivided and fully human life. "It is only by becoming an expression of this undivided view ourselves that we can find a way to live together that makes perfect sense. Only then can that extraordinary evolutionary potential inherent in the race as a whole become a living reality."

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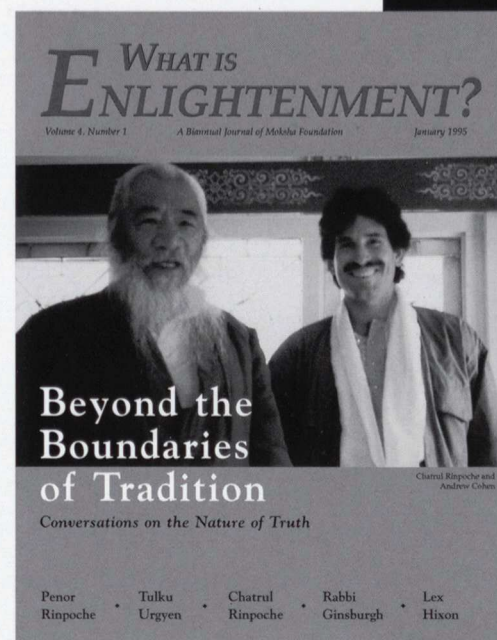
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