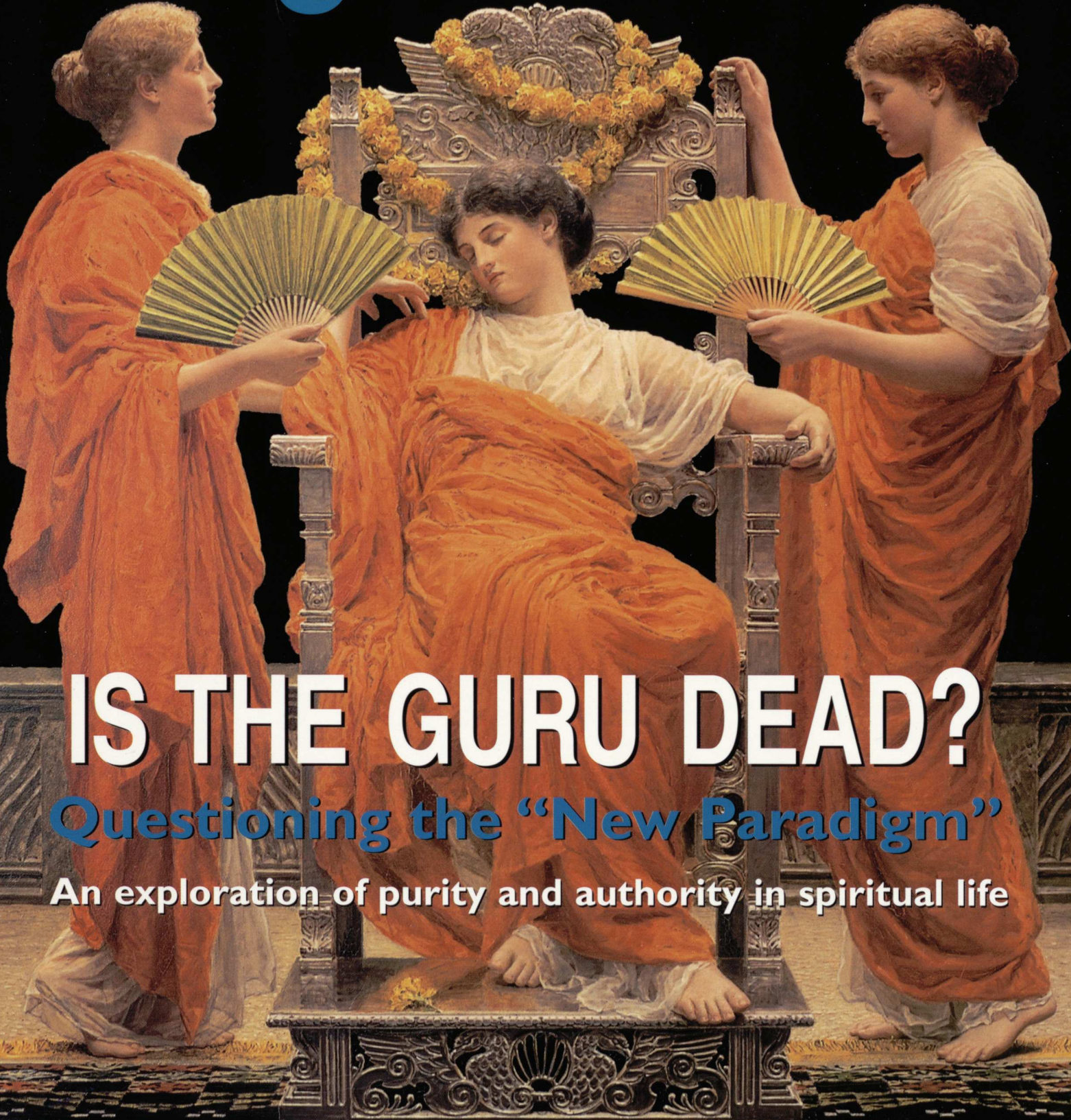


What is Enlightenment?

An inquiry into the most important spiritual questions of our time



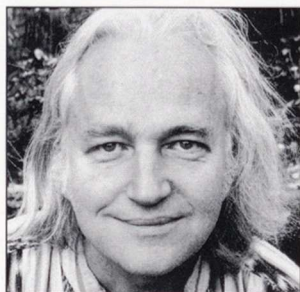
IS THE GURU DEAD?

Questioning the “New Paradigm”

An exploration of purity and authority in spiritual life

In Memoriam Lex Hixon

December 25, 1941 — November 1, 1995



What Is Enlightenment? would like to express our deep sadness at the passing of Lex Hixon—scholar, mystic, contributor and friend. As a prolific author, and the host of the influential radio show *In the Spirit* from 1971 to 1984, he inspired and deepened the spiritual understanding of countless people, and lent his support to many teachers and traditions. He held a doctorate in comparative

religion from Columbia University and was a serious practitioner of five different spiritual paths, including Tibetan Buddhism, Islamic Sufism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Zen Buddhism and the Advaita Vedanta of Sri Ramakrishna. A spiritual teacher in his own right, Lex was a Sufi sheikh of the Khalwati-Jerrahi order and head of a Sufi community in New York City. He was to be ordained a Soto Zen Buddhist priest last October. His life was an example of deep commitment to the profound truths underlying all genuine spiritual paths. He will be greatly missed.

"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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What Is Enlightenment? continues to grow and change. We've added a new full-color cover. While we may look different, you can count on the same penetrating and compelling investigation that has always been so important to us and our readers. We've also shifted our publication dates to Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter, so watch for the next edition of *What Is Enlightenment?* in September 1996.

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Write:

P.O. Box 5265
Larkspur, CA 94977, USA

Fax:

415-256-9160

E-mail:

74663.776@compuserve.com

WIE website:

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What Is Enlightenment? (ISSN 1080-3432) is published biannually by Moksha Press, a nonprofit educational organization. Send subscription inquiries and address changes to: *What Is Enlightenment?*
P.O. Box 2360, Lenox, MA 01240, USA
Tel: 800-376-3210
Fax: 413-637-6015
E-mail: wie@wie.org
www.wie.org
Annual subscription rate:
\$8.00 (\$10.00 outside USA)

To advertise in *What Is Enlightenment?* contact Daniel Piatek at Moksha Press.

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An inquiry into the most important spiritual questions of our time

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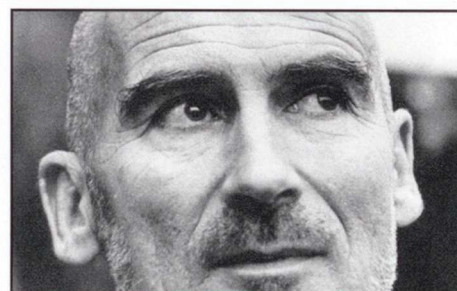
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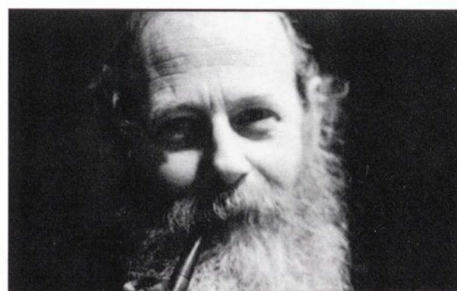
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QUESTIONING THE NEW PARADIGM

Is the Guru Dead?



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STRANGE DAYS

that we are living in. Recently, well-known Buddhist meditation teacher Jack Kornfield was interviewed on public radio in San Francisco. The interviewer, Michael Krasny, asked him, "Is it sometimes burdensome to be put in the role, as you often are, of a kind of *guru*? And I know that word is hated and loathed and despised, but notwithstanding all the negative emotions that it does generate, it seems to fit the way many people view you."

Kornfield responded, "I tend to be pretty self-revealing in the way that I teach, and talk about the things that I struggle with a lot, so there's less of that kind of idealization. When I come in and tell a story at Spirit Rock [a meditation center in northern California] on Monday night and say, 'Well, here I was being a jerk again,' and people laugh . . ."

Interrupting, Krasny said admiringly, "You lead with your humanity."

Kornfield continued, "It dispels that some. And I need to do it, because it's true, it's accurate. So, it's not too bad."

A moment later Kornfield related how Ram Dass, a popular spiritual teacher since the 1960s, says that after many years of spiritual practice he has become "a connoisseur of his neuroses."

Poet and author Andrew Harvey has become another respected leader for many spiritual seekers. Having left his guru Mother Meera, whom he had only recently proclaimed to be the avatar who would save the world, he now has this to say about spiritual teachers and the nature of enlightenment: "I think that the true spiritual guide admits that he or she is still in process, that they are always aware of their own shadow and of the limitations of their upbringing, their cultural conditioning, their particular religious views. The true spiritual guide never claims to be unified with the divine." Although the author of a trilogy of books about remarkable gurus—including Mother Meera, his deceased lama Thuksey Rinpoche and Jalaluddin Rumi—Harvey now sees himself as the bringer of a "new paradigm" that seems to reject the possibility of unqualified wholeness and purity, and therefore also the possibility of a realized teacher who can fully embody these qualities.

Kornfield, Ram Dass and Harvey are among the most influential voices of modern spirituality in the West. But what are they telling us? They appear to be casting doubt on the possibility of anyone going beyond a limited, divided and neurotic condition. Yet isn't the very aspiration to transcend these aspects of ourselves that cause so much suffering the reason we became interested in spirituality in the first place?

What exactly is going on here? Surely one would expect more from the pioneers of Eastern spirituality come West, especially from those pioneers who are teaching others the wisdom of the East. It is as if those who first set off to the top of the mountain have returned and now urge the seeker after the pure heights of the Himalayas to forsake their quest in favor of the more comfortable climes of a littered base camp, or worse, the congenial squalor of the tourist section of Kathmandu. Have these men genuinely climbed the heights, and, like Gertrude Stein after visiting Oakland, California, discovered that "There's no *there* there"? From their vantage point, can they be certain that our hopes of extraordinary spiritual achievement are a myth? Or are they merely undergoing the equivalent of a spiritual midlife crisis, having lost faith in the quest for the ultimate in light of their own failings?

Those who are aligned with the "new paradigm" of spirituality see themselves as the bringers of a revolutionary egalitarianism and antiauthoritarianism to the spiritual world. And if their conclusions are correct, perhaps we owe them the same gratitude that we feel towards the bringers of democracy in the political arena. But if they are wrong, their seeming rejection of the possibility of a pure and selfless awakening may not only

discourage countless sincere seekers, but also runs the risk of imposing a new kind of authoritarianism, one of mediocrity and compromise.

Because of the centrality of this issue to the spiritual life, and the urgency of coming to a clear understanding about it, Andrew Cohen, spiritual teacher and the founder of *What Is Enlightenment?*, responded with great passion to a recent interview of Harvey in *Yoga Journal*, in which Harvey condemns the entire concept of spiritual authority. In a published letter to the editor, Andrew Cohen wrote:

If we are to believe these antiauthoritarian authorities who imply that a state of incorruptible purity is a mythical and seemingly unattainable ideal, *then are we to rejoice in the fact that being human is a metaphor for duality?* The meaning and significance of Enlightenment in my teaching I define as coming to that point in one's own evolution when one no longer causes suffering to others through acting out of ignorance. If such a goal is unattainable, then not only does profound spiritual attainment become almost meaningless, but it would even lead us to believe that ultimately there really is no way out of the human predicament. The message of the greatest Masters throughout history to us all has been that it is possible to become the living expression of that which is truly undivided as a fully human Enlightened being. That's always been the whole point!

It is because of the potentially devastating effect of the ideas underlying the current rejection of spiritual authority that *What Is Enlightenment?* has dedicated this issue to exploring the role of purity and authority in spiritual life.

While the failures of so many modern spiritual teachers have undoubtedly contributed to the current mood of cynicism about purity and spiritual authority, we feel that the real root of this cynicism lies deeper in the human soul. Interestingly enough, Thuksey Rinpoche said it all to Andrew Harvey in *A Journey in Ladakh*:

"As long as there is Samsara, there will be an evasion of the inner perfection that is man's essence. This is perhaps the saddest of all the tragedies of Samsara, and the most painful. . . . Often when men say they are helpless, trapped, imperfect, they are really saying, 'I do not want to endure my own perfection, I do not want to bear my own reality.' Imperfection is more comforting, more human than perfection. Many men want to believe that man is imperfect because it makes it easier to live with their own imperfection, more forgiving towards themselves. And who can blame them? . . . To discover an inner power that is completely good and gentle is frightening; it robs us of every comfort, every safety in resignation or irony. Who can live naked to his own perfection? And yet who, once seeing and acknowledging his own perfection, could bear not to try to realize it in living? To see it is hard; to realize it within life is the hardest thing."



THE

A

GURU

Two-part Article

IN THE

by

POSTMODERN

Georg

WORLD

Feuerstein

The following two-part article is composed of excerpts from Georg Feuerstein's *Holy Madness*, a pioneering work about "crazy wisdom" and the role of the guru. A scholar and author of over twenty books on yoga, Eastern philosophy, spirituality and the evolution of consciousness, Georg Feuerstein is also a spiritual practitioner whose keen interest in spiritual matters is fueled by his personal practice and experience.

part one



HE *The Essential Role* WHO *of the Guru* SHOWS *in Spiritual Life* THE SACRED

In part one, Georg Feuerstein eloquently describes the centrality of the guru to the path of spiritual liberation both historically and in our own time. In sharp contrast to modern skepticism about the role of spiritual authority, Feuerstein illustrates, with great depth of vision, the essential role that the guru plays and has played in spiritual life throughout history. He also exposes the fallacies underlying the modern tendency to minimize, if not avoid altogether, the necessity of coming to terms with the importance of spiritual guidance.

“The spiritual adept’s function is to conduct the seeker from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from the nonself to the Self, from neurotic self-dividedness to wholeness.”

Several years ago a book fair was held in the vestibule of a local Christian church attached to a seminary. A friend of mine promised that I would find a fine selection of theological titles, and so I went that Saturday afternoon. By the time I arrived, thirty or forty people were milling around from shelf to shelf. I remember feeling a little awkward about participating in this shuffle for literary nuggets; after all, we were in a consecrated building.

I was about to carry an armful of musty volumes to the cashier’s desk when the door was noisily pushed open. A young man burst into the hall, shouting at us angrily. It took me a while to grasp his words, even though they were clearly audible. My mind ceased functioning for a brief moment. Later others confessed that they had experienced something similar. Curiously, not one of the people I talked to afterward had felt really threatened in that first moment of angry confrontation. The young man looked strangely harmless, although he was clearly furious. At one point he even grabbed hold of a few bibliophiles and shoved them through the door. He was not of a large build, but he seemed exceedingly strong as he pulled a large shelf down single-handedly and the books thundered to the ground. Several times he repeated for all to hear very distinctly, “This is a sacred place! Why are you defiling it? Get going and don’t come back unless you want to worship!”

There was a curious authority behind his words, which compelled everybody to listen to him. Most of the people, myself included, forgot about their book purchases. We left hurriedly in awkward silence. Those who wanted to pay for their trophies risked being manhandled. But no one actually came to any harm.

People gathered outside. Some demanded that the police be informed, which someone had already done. Others remarked on the young man’s bright face or commented that his anger was legitimate enough.

Others just stood by silently. No one laughed. Our hearts had been touched by what we had witnessed.

Then the police arrived, and the young man allowed himself to be led away without struggle. We noticed a small group of men and women who apparently belonged with the young man. They talked to the police, identifying themselves as the young man’s disciples and demanding to be arrested with him. They were, in due course, charged with disturbing the peace.

As they were all driven off in two limousines, a different mood took possession of the crowd. Some people, who had not been in the vestibule with us, started talking excitedly about the cult leader, his obvious insanity and violence, his poor, misled zombie followers, and his likely court trial and incarceration in a penitentiary or mental asylum. Some, however, dispersed quietly, perturbed by the incident and disturbed by the young man’s message, commanding behavior and deep, still eyes.

This incident never made the headlines, because it never happened. Or, more precisely, it did not happen in the way I told it. Readers of the New Testament may have recognized in my description one of the stories related about Jesus of Nazareth who, two thousand years ago, threw the moneylenders out of the temple in Jerusalem. It is not important for our purposes whether this incident has historical validity. There are hundreds of similar stories told of other adepts that I could have used here. What is significant, however, is that this particular story should be a part of our inherited image of Jesus of Nazareth.

I translated the story into modern terms in order to, I hope, elicit an emotional reaction from you, the reader. What were your feelings as you read my account? What was your impression of the young man’s personality, or your judgment about his strange, unconventional behavior? How would you have reacted had you been a victim of the young man’s verbal abuse, or perhaps even his bodily aggression?

“Often the critics forget that discipleship has been at the core of Christianity ever since Jesus of Nazareth gathered the apostles around him.”

Would your judgment have been different if you had been told from the beginning that the hero of the story was Jesus and not a contemporary?

All these questions are justified because spiritual teachers, or gurus, have fallen into dispute in our culture. Indeed, their function is no longer comprehended. Goaded by the news media and Christian fundamentalism, the public is particularly questioning the traditional teacher-disciple relationship. Often the critics forget that discipleship has been at the core of Christianity ever since Jesus of Nazareth gathered the apostles around him. When we look into the past, we find that the figure of the religious or spiritual guide was virtually omnipresent in the ancient world and still is, in traditional societies.

The phenomenon of spiritual guidance is ubiquitous in all forms of religion that involve an esoteric odyssey. In the gnostic schools, for instance, the initiate is aided by the *hierophantes* (“he who shows the sacred”), just as the Christian mystical aspirant has his or her *spiritual director*. In the Eastern branch of Christendom, the role of the spiritual guide is fulfilled by the *staretz*, in Sufism by the *shaykh* or *pir*, in Hasidism by the *zaddik*, in Zen by the *roshi*, in Tibetan Buddhism by the *lama*, in Hinduism by the *guru*. What is the role of the spiritual master?

The purpose of spiritual practice is to “deconstruct” our carefully constructed consensus reality so that we can recover the Reality that lies beneath, or beyond, all our signs and symbols. This process of deconstruction, in which all meaning is transcended, resembles madness. Psychologically immature individuals embarking on this path have been known to go literally mad, unable to face up to the fact that naked Reality, which reveals itself when our conceptual grids are removed, is an unimaginable richness of actualities and possibilities.

The task of the spiritual guide, the guru, is to facilitate this mind-shattering discovery. Every guru, however gentle and considerate, works toward exploding the disciple’s personal universe of meaning.

The spiritual adept’s function is to conduct the seeker from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from the nonself to the Self, from neurotic self-dividedness to wholeness.

Such a guide cannot be understood from within the disenchanting worldview of scientific materialism. The ego-ensconced contemporary will see the spiritual guide as a mere anomaly or even as a psychopath or charlatan. By the logic of his or her own non-participatory lifestyle, the ego-bound individual is obliged to explain away the existence of genuine spiritual authority, an attitude that is apparently vindicated by the appearance of the numerous rogue gurus of our day and their obsequious, duped followers.

At bottom, ordinary individuals do not dare to conceive of a spiritual Reality or a spiritual teacher that is genuine. They can imagine only someone like themselves—perhaps more powerful (like Superman) or more amoral (like Count Dracula)—but essentially still cast from the same mold. Of course, this is true even of many spiritual seekers, who are in love with the search, not with Reality, and who substitute all manner of consoling techniques for the hard work of self-transcendence.

One can identify at least four principal ways of avoiding confrontation with a real, flesh-and-blood guru.

As a first and common form of avoidance, seekers tend dexterously to replace the demanding external guru with the comforting and comfortable “inner guru.” In other words, they succumb to the need to preserve their ego-identity. But the entire spiritual adventure is about sloughing the ego-identity. The inner guru to which so many seekers entrust their spiritual career is frequently only a figment of their imagination, a product of self-delusion.

Trying to justify this approach, they are always quick to point out that the Eastern traditions themselves speak of the “inner ruler,” the guru or light within, and that finally even the external teacher must be transcended. This is correct, of course. Yet



El Greco, *Christ Cleansing the Temple*

what they generally fail to appreciate is that this internal guide is coessential with the transcendental Reality, or one's authentic Identity. Therefore, to be "guided" by that Identity presupposes enlightenment. Since that Identity is not separate from the ego-identity of the unenlightened state, but is its true foundation, it is quite possible that we can have strong pre-enlightenment intuitions of it. In fact, the more attuned we are to the spiritual process, the stronger and more transparent such intuitions will be. In those moments we are indeed inspired and guided, and our conduct will be correspondingly true and spontaneous. But how easy it is to deceive oneself! The ego is inherently conservative. It always seeks to maintain its position in the world. And consequently it will receive just those intuitions and "messages" from the inner guru that it likes to receive.

I am not completely debunking the concept of the inner guru. Even the external guru must be internalized at a certain point in one's spiritual maturation, and the transcendental Identity, or Self, can indeed act as a guiding force in our lives. But we must first learn to distinguish between fantasy and reality, between our childish needs and neurotic desires and the genuine impulse to transcend the ego. Otherwise our spirituality is bound to remain a sad parody.

A second way to skirt genuine discipleship is to pick a teacher who is safely dead. The New Age craze of channeling is symptomatic of this approach. Here conveniently "ascended" (hence no longer physically present) masters give all kinds of advice, which is usually quite innocuous and makes precious little demand for actual change. "Dead gurus," Da Love-Ananda once stated bluntly, "can't kick ass."

The ordinary individual in this circumstance feels understood, confirmed, and loved, and confuses these feelings with genuine spirituality. Karl Marx's castigation of religion as the opiate of the masses would seem to apply here, and this confusion is almost more tragic than a starkly materialistic denial of psychic and spiritual realities.

A third way to dodge discipleship under a spiritual guide is to hold the notion that one can find the teacher everywhere. This is not wrong in itself, because life itself is a great and patient teacher. Yet looking for the teacher in all things can easily become a "head trip," an excuse for a casual approach to spirituality.

The fourth ploy by which some spiritual seekers immunize themselves against the interference of a personal spiritual guide is to regard that guide as a generic model, a symbol to be imitated. This is certainly a favored intellectual device that has been used extensively by Christian theologians throughout the ages. Theologian Harvey Cox, who has sampled the commodities of the "spiritual marketplace," freely admits that he does not even want to imitate anyone. Instead, he has settled for "provisional" gurus, "partial exemplars, models not so much to emulate as to argue with, learn from and—eventually—discard." In other words, Cox wants a disposable guru, fashioned in his own image. He hopes for fellow wayfarers, or what in Buddhism are known as "good friends" (*kalyana-mitra*), but will have naught to do with living bud-dhas, or actual adepts. While it is true that, ultimately, the figure of the guru must be transcended, this should never be a matter of casually "discarding" the guru. The guru is, after all, not a model but a living being.

Compare Cox's attitude with the one proposed by Lex Hixon, a doctor of philosophy and religion, who studied under many different teachers: "Every seeker should receive traditional spiritual initiation and personal guidance from at least one authentic spiritual guide. Then one no longer simply *experiments* with contemplation but *lives* contemplative practice."

I am inclined to agree with Hixon on this point. My own experience, harrowing as it has been at times, has demonstrated to me the value of such

initiation and guidance. However, I am bound to modify his statement somewhat, because unless a person is ready and unless he or she has found a reliable and responsible teacher with whom he or she is in basic consonance, discipleship is meaningless and can even be counterproductive.

Once spiritual seekers have emerged from the cul-de-sac of substitute gurus and have actually found and been accepted by a flesh-and-blood teacher, they must be cautious about the ever-present temptation to make a false approach to the guru. First, they must be wary of the tendency to mythologize the teacher, to inflate him or her to the status of a superhuman being of flawless perfection, an omniscient and omnipotent entity who dwells in eternity and uses the body as a mere sounding board for communicating with devotees. This invites only neurotic self-deprecation, adulation, irrationalism, mushy devotionism, and not least, cultism.

Second, seekers must avoid deflating the teacher by regarding him or her as "just one of the guys." If the adept is genuine, and especially if truly enlightened, he or she is empowered by that which is ultimately real by virtue of his or her conscious participation in, or attunement to, that Reality. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* (XI.41), a pre-Christian Sanskrit work that is to the pious Hindu what the New Testament is to the believing Christian, there is a passage in which the God-man Krishna reveals his divine nature to Prince Arjuna, his disciple. After this revelatory vision, which fills the prince with fear and trembling, Arjuna recalls with shame how not too long ago he and his friends had addressed Krishna very casually and disrespectfully. Begging the God-man for forgiveness, he salutes Krishna with heartfelt humility and devotion. That is to say, the God-realized adept is more than just the human being standing before us.

An authentic guru, even if not yet fully enlightened, amounts to much more than the eye can see or the mind fathom. The disciple should always be sensitive to this fact without, however, abandoning his or her critical faculties. There is room for both devotion and criticism in a real dialogue between teacher and disciple. ■



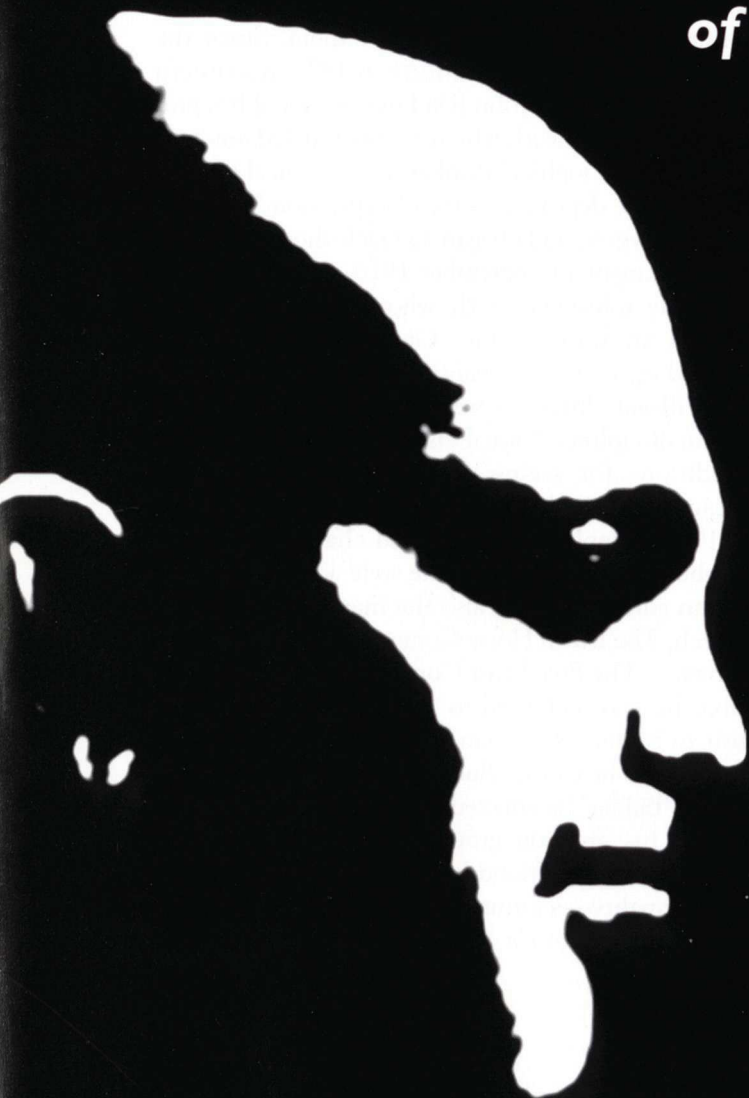
The Dangerous and

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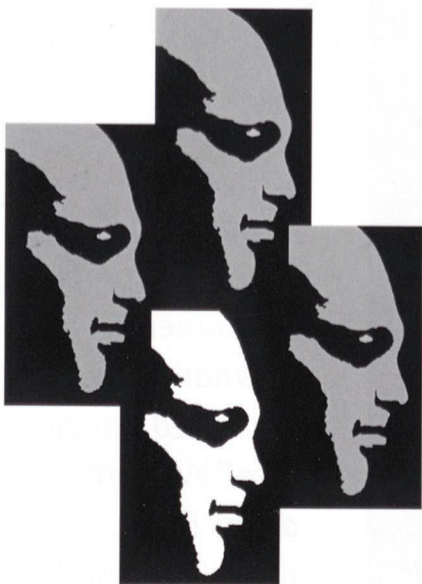
MADNESS

of Da Free John



In part two, Georg Feuerstein profiles the career of internationally renowned “crazy wise” Western adept Da Love-Ananda, formerly known as Da Free John and Da Avabhasa, among other names. When he started his teaching career in the 1970s, Da Love-Ananda appeared to show the greatest promise—not only was he profoundly enlightened, but he was also a brilliant intellectual able to synthesize the wisdom of the East and the West in a way that had never been done before.

The very fact that Da Love-Ananda was a Westerner who



seemed to have attained a high degree of realization was a source of great inspiration to many. The strength of his spiritual power combined with a truly original expression of what appeared to be a complete teaching of liberation was remarkable. In his early days he was praised by some of the greatest minds of the modern spiritual era. Ken Wilber said of him, "My opinion is that we have, in the person of Da Avabhasa, a Spiritual Master and religious genius of the ultimate degree." Alan Watts described him in glowing terms, and Georg Feuerstein was himself a disciple of Da Love-Ananda for five years.

What Is Enlightenment? has chosen this piece because Da Love-Ananda serves as a vivid illustration of how some of the greatest inspirations of recent history have failed to live up to the promise that they represented. Tragically, too many powerfully awakened teachers of the postmodern era have become sources of so much of the disillusionment and cynicism pervading the spiritual world today.

“On November 3, 1939, at 11:21 A.M. in Jamaica, New York, I was born Franklin Albert Jones.” With this prosaic sentence begins [*The Knee of Listening*], one of the most fascinating autobiographies of our time. Its author, who now goes by the name of Da Love-Ananda, is revered by his followers as an avatara, an incarnation of the Divine. They and some readers of Da Love-Ananda’s works see in him a genuinely enlightened adept—perhaps even the first fully enlightened being to appear in our Western civilization. They share Alan Watts’s sentiment, as expressed in the forward to the autobiography, that “he has simply realized that he himself as he is, like a star, like a dolphin, like an iris, is a perfect and authentic manifestation of the eternal energy of the universe, and thus is no longer disposed to be in conflict with himself.” Yet even for those who remain skeptical about Da Love-Ananda’s authenticity and stature as a spiritual teacher, he is a larger-than-life figure. David Christopher Lane, who is critical of many of Da Love-Ananda’s actions, has made this comment: “There are very few spiritual teachers in the 20th century who could be termed religious geniuses. Da Free John is one of them. Since the beginning of his formal ministry in 1972 in southern California, Da Free John [Da Love-Ananda] has produced a body of work which is unparalleled amongst Western philosophical thinkers for its radical insight, comparative depth and force of expression.”

Da Love-Ananda began to teach shortly after his enlightenment in September 1970. At first, he met relatively informally with whomever expressed an interest in spiritual life. Gradually, however, he insisted on certain formalities, including abstinence from illegal drugs, as well as certain dietary and health disciplines. Casual visitors became rarer as the conditions for seeing and meditating with him became tighter. He opened his own school (ashram) in 1972, complete with elevated chair, carpets, and an abundance of flowers—the style adopted by most Indian gurus. This was also the inaugural year of his church, The Dawn Horse Communion, which is now known as The Free Daist Communion. In the beginning, he was addressed as “Franklin,” but after his visit to Swami Muktananda in the summer of 1973, he asked to be called “Bubba Free John.”

As “Bubba” he enacted the role of spiritual friend toward his growing group of disciples. However, at that time his “friendship” was already interlaced with formality—a formality that would, in the course of time, grow into a somewhat stilted and almost

formulaic affair, making a simple, personal approach to him virtually impossible. He felt that his Western contemporaries had little or no understanding of the role of the spiritual teacher and, step by step, had to be taught the fine art of *guru-yoga*, submission to the Divine by means of surrender to the teacher.

When he first started to teach, Da Love-Ananda good-naturedly but naïvely presumed that others would attain enlightenment simply by grasping and applying his teaching argument and by occasionally being exposed to the spiritual presence of his own awakened body-mind during *sat-sanga*. Gradually he acknowledged that few people possess the necessary qualifications for this shortcut and that most are in need of a prolonged period of intense preparation in which they must learn to discipline their attention and energy. Thus, partly in consideration with his students, he developed an entire way of life, comprising physical exercises, sexual practices, meditation techniques, religious rituals and much more.

In December of 1973, Da Love-Ananda's teaching work acquired a new dimension. After demanding from his students strict adherence to a fairly ascetical lifestyle, he suddenly initiated a cycle of "celebrations." These celebrations were comparable to Tantric feasts, where a small group of initiates, always under the guidance of the guru, break major taboos of the traditional Hindu society as part of a ritual intended to bring about a change of consciousness in the participants. From my many conversations with longtime devotees, it appears that for several months Da Love-Ananda did indeed use his yogic abilities to affect the psychic lives of literally hundreds of students in often very dramatic ways. They experienced visions, spontaneous body movements known as *kriyas*, bliss states, heart openings and kundalini arousals. Several were ostensibly drawn into the mystical unitive state or even into temporary *sahaja-samadhi*. This important phase in Da Love-Ananda's teaching history is recorded in a long-out-of-print book entitled *Garbage and the Goddess*.

In March of 1974, in what has come to be known as the "Saturday Night Massacre," Da Love-Ananda initiated a "consideration" about sexuality, marriage, and emotional attachment that left his disciples reeling for months, sometimes years. Commenting that relationships like marriage are generally entered into in order to create a sense of security and immunity for the ego-personality, he called on his students to disrupt their cultic association with one another. In particular, he challenged them to break through their marriage cults and discard their sexual attach-

ment and jealousy. "One of the 'secrets' of spiritual life," he observed, "is continually to violate your own contracts."

He reminded them that the guru is, by virtue of his function, a "dangerous person." He has reiterated this caveat many times during his teaching career. The danger of the guru lies in his or her commitment to the disciple's radical psychospiritual transmutation. The guru is forever on the disciple's case. As Da Love-Ananda explained: "The Guru is a kind of irritation to his friends. You can't sleep with a dog barking in your ear . . . The Guru is a constant awakening sound. He is always annoying people with this demand to stay awake, to wake up . . . Therefore, he doesn't satisfy the seeker. Those that come to be satisfied are offended. They are not satisfied."

In 1974 he started his "sexual theater," involving the switching of partners, sexual orgies, the making of pornographic movies and intensified sexual practices—all of which led to the temporary or, in some instances, the permanent breakup of relationships. As "contracts" were voided, emotions ran high in the community. Some people were unable to handle this emotional roller coaster and left; a few still bear the wounds today. Most stayed and braved the upheaval, and subsequently learned to live with their traumas or, perhaps more rarely, truly go beyond them.

The "Garbage and the Goddess" period ended on July 7, 1974, leaving in its wake a debris of emotional confusion. This is how Da Love-Ananda explained that period of teaching theater and his participation in it: "What I do is not the way I am, but the way I teach. What I speak is not a reflection of me, but of you. People do well to be offended or even outraged by me. This is my purpose. But their reaction must turn upon themselves, for I have not shown them myself by all of this. All that I do and speak only reveals men to themselves."

Da Love-Ananda then charged his devotees with using the lessons learned during the preceding years and assuming responsibility for themselves individually and collectively. He declared his intention of retiring from his teaching work; he said he hoped that his disciples had the maturity to make use of each other and the cultural disciplines he had given them and to resort to his spiritual presence rather than crave his physical company.

Da Love-Ananda has apparently from the beginning felt some ambivalence about teaching. He has explained that the "guru function" came alive in him of its own accord, and he has made many attempts since then to withdraw from his responsibilities and

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obligations as a teacher, longing to be simply present as a spiritual beacon or transmitter. However, again and again, what he has perceived to be the needs of his disciples have pulled him back into his teaching mode. In practice, this has often meant entering into what he called “emotional-sexual considerations” with his disciples. Thus, the sexual theater enacted during the “Garbage and the Goddess” period was repeated on many other occasions, though never again on such a large scale nor with the flashy demonstration of yogic powers. For the most part, these sexual considerations, which were never merely theoretical, were confined to the inner circle of practitioners. But occasionally some relative newcomers were included. This happened to one couple; the husband provided the following extensive account of a fascinating incident that occurred in 1982:

I had been a formal student for only a few months when, one night, my wife and I were invited over to Da Love-Ananda’s home. Both of us felt an inner need to make personal contact with him, since we had only seen him in quite formal situations. So we were understandably very excited about the invitation but also a bit terrified, because we knew that our teacher was a “difficult man” and we could expect to be tested by him.

I found my spiritual hero sitting on his big bed, holding a glass of beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other. He was enveloped by a cloud of cigarette smoke. My heart sank. In that moment a cherished image in me was destroyed: my ideal of the guru as a gentle, Jesus-like helper.

We all bowed, and I awkwardly placed a small blossom near him on the bed. No sooner had we sat down before him than I was handed a can of beer. I politely refused. I had done without alcohol for years, and I figured I wouldn’t start drinking beer now. Da Love-Ananda playfully teased me about it. I noticed myself getting uptight and in an instant saw that my refusal was simply an egoic program. So, I chucked my resistance and had a beer. And another. And another.

Meanwhile Da Love-Ananda was talking to us, puffing cigarette after cigarette, and downing one drink after another. His conversation got increasingly animated, amusing, but also barbed. He had his talons in me. I knew this was to be “my” evening. I answered his various questions respectfully but guardedly, listened to his barrage of good-natured criticism, told my story in as humorous a way as possible, laughed with him and at myself, and even risked quibbling with him a few times, but all the while stayed carefully defended. Despite large amounts of beer, I remained relatively sober.

As the evening progressed, and everybody got more inebriated—except myself—Da Love-Ananda heated things up a little. Perhaps he had done whatever “damage” he wanted to do in his conversation with me, and so he had someone put pop music on. Then we all started to dance, with him rhythmically swaying to the blaring sounds. The psychic energy in the room was phenomenal. It seemed to increase whenever he raised his arms. I began to feel an incredible wildness inside me, which was scary. There was a strange inner drama unfolding between him and me. He wanted to break down my walls, and I badly wanted them up. Yet, there was something deep within me, a still observer perhaps, that wanted to see them crumble as well.

I found myself in a real crisis. The music and movement kept on hammering in on me, while strange waves of energy welled up inside my body, threatening to explode my mind. I was feeling manipulated and feared that I had become involved in a terrible cult. Yet, the voice of reason in the back of my mind always convinced me just in time that these feelings were all nonsense, products of my paranoia. Each time I talked myself into hanging in just a bit longer.

In our earlier conversation, he had asked me many times what it was I was after, and I had repeatedly told him I wanted to attain enlightenment. His response had been to call me a benighted individual and to remind me of the rareness of such an eventuality. But I had persisted. Now that I had made my choice, he felt free to really teach me a lesson.

In front of me, my wife was being sexually prepared for the guru. I coped with my violently irrational feelings by

going into emotional numbness. Happily, I did not have to witness my teacher bedding my wife. We were all asked to leave the room. I was sent to a different building where I sat for several hours in the dark, dealing with the emotional hurricane that had been unleashed in me. Finally, I got a handle on my feelings. I realized that one of my greatest attachments was to my wife, and that the guru was doing radical surgery on me for that. I had asked him, indirectly but loudly and clearly, to help me in my struggle for enlightenment. That night he was doing just that.

The day after my personal massacre, Da Love-Ananda got into my wife's case for a while and then returned to me, presumably because I was the more defended. This traumatic episode left both of us raw for several months, but it also proved a valuable initiation. We both had been skinned to our bones and were allowed to look into niches of our respective characters that we previously had chosen to leave in the dark. We were also very clear on another point, namely that our guru meant business. He was no mere cosmetic surgeon; his knife cut deep.

I have often wondered whether that crazy-wisdom episode was really necessary, or whether I could have learned the same lessons in another way. There is one thing that has persistently bothered me about the incident, and that was the pressure on me to drink alcohol in an attempt to get me drunk. I still feel I was being manipulated on this count. I also never quite understood why we were asked to keep the whole incident quiet. In the aftermath of the experience both my wife and I would clearly have benefited from talking to our close friends about it. Also, this secrecy smacked of elitism and hypocrisy, because while we were busy partying, the rest of the community was living a fairly strict daily discipline of diet, exercise, meditation and service.

For many years, members of The Free Daist Communion have suffered from feelings of guilt and shame about their experiments and excesses during the "Garbage and the Goddess" period. Many have felt especially embarrassed by their guru, as Da Love-Ananda himself has noted on many occasions. This became apparent when, in 1985, a lawsuit was brought against The Free Daist Communion by a group of disaffected members, which caused sensationalistic and disruptive media attention. Members were at a loss about how to deal with the situation emotionally and politically, and many stepped back or left.

For years, community representatives did their best to clean up Da Love-Ananda's talks before printing them, and in general they tried to tone down the crazy aspect of his behavior and teaching. Da Love-Ananda, on the other hand, constantly criticized

them for presenting a distorted public image of him; he wanted to be portrayed as the wild man he is, despite the possible dangers resulting from such a public image. He wanted to be free to teach in crazy-wise fashion and he felt that people approaching his community were entitled to know that he is no mild-mannered teacher but, as he once put it, a "conflagration," in which the ego inevitably gets scorched and consumed. He likes to compare his work to the crazy-wise teachings of some of the great adepts of the East. In particular, he once remarked, "I am Drukpa Kunley [a 15th century Tibetan adept]. This is exactly what I am in your time and place."

It is difficult and superfluous to determine what might have happened if his followers had chosen to represent him more faithfully over the years. It certainly would have been fairer at least to give newcomers more of a sense of the crazy-wise ways of their chosen guru. Instead, there were and presumably still are many marginal friends of the community and even formal disciples of Da Love-Ananda who have no concrete idea of the precise nature of his past crazy-wisdom exploits. Many students do not really want to think about them, preferring to remain ignorant of the details, lest they should prove too upsetting.

The current policy of the community's representatives is to affirm that Da Love-Ananda has definitely retired as a crazy-wisdom teacher and that he is now engaged only in "universal blessing work." But this asseveration may be founded in the same kind of deep denial that has proven so destructive to the community in the past. Regardless of his own explanations, which are known to be less than final, Da Love-Ananda continues to interact with disciples. So long as this is the case and so long as men and women relate to him as devotees, they must expect him to interfere with their lives, and this is bound to cause real tempests and problems on occasion.

It is positively naïve to assume that Da Love-Ananda's crazy-wisdom days are over. For instance, his continuing production of an ornate spiritual literature of gothic proportions can be seen as the elaborate play of a crazy adept. In fact, to assume anything else would leave us with only one alternative explanation, which is quite unsavory and tragic in its implications: that he has lost his sense of humor and is beginning to mistake his own mythology for reality. Why should his present role-playing be the last word? If there is any certainty in his work with disciples it is that nothing around him stays the same for very long. ■

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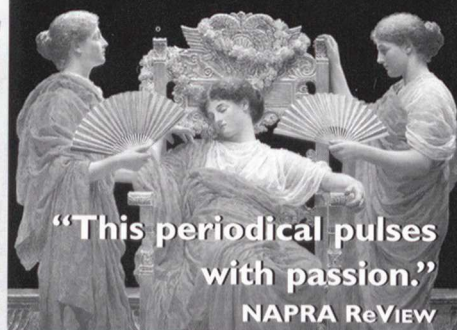
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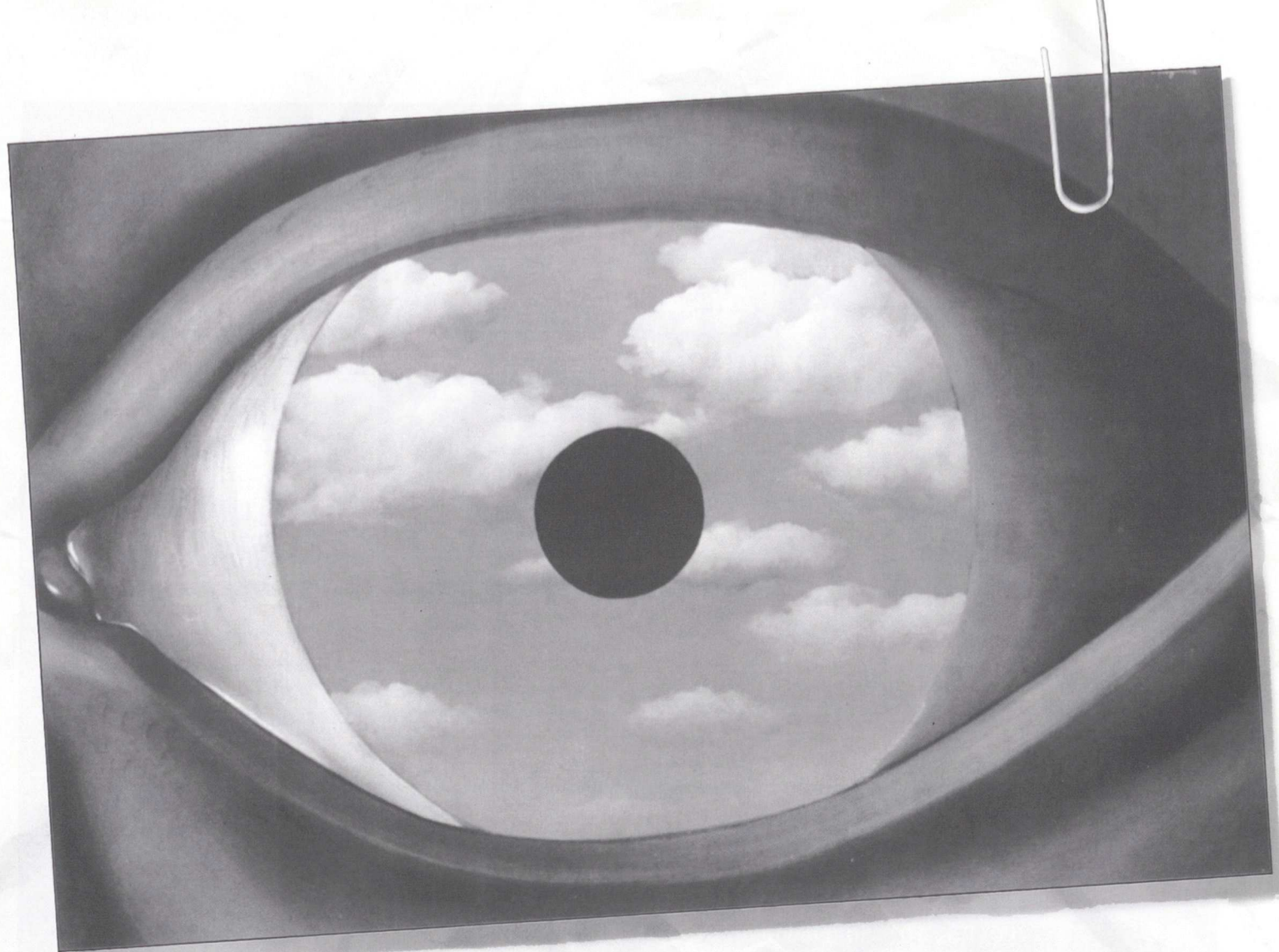
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NAPRA ReVIEW



The Kramer Papers

A Look Behind the Mask
of Antiauthoritarianism

a personal account of a meeting with the authors
of *The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power*

by Hal Blacker

For many of us today the very word authority sounds strangely incomplete without its common prefix "anti."

If you've lived through Watergate, through Contragate, or through any number of the other abuses of the trust reposed in our leaders, it is difficult to prevent the reflexive arising of a deeply negative response when authority rears its head. A long history of suffering and disappointment has caused the concepts of authority and authoritarianism—the misuse of authority for its own selfish ends—to become synonymous in many people's minds. In the arena of spirituality, the scandals of the past twenty years or so surrounding numerous gurus and spiritual leaders make the response of antiauthoritarianism to the concept of spiritual authority almost inevitable. So it is not surprising that of late there has been a rising tide of voices suggesting that the entire idea of authority in the spiritual world would best be resigned to the junk heap of history, to join other concepts which most modern educated people agree have outlived their usefulness, such as the divine right of kings and papal infallibility.

But none of the critics of the guru go as far as Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad, authors of *The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power*. Their book is said to have had a profound influence on, among others, the vocal anti-guru convert Andrew Harvey during his time of spiritual crisis, when he broke away from Mother Meera, whom he had only recently declared the avatar who would save the world. Because of their influence on some of those who are most vocal in articulating the anti-guru "new paradigm," I knew I had to speak to Kramer and Alstad for this issue of *What Is Enlightenment?*, which examines the role of purity and authority in the spiritual life.

Joel Kramer is a trained philosopher, having completed most of his studies towards a Ph.D. in Western philosophy before dropping out to pursue Eastern philosophy and yoga. When we met, Diana Alstad told me, "He studied Western philosophy and got it. Then he studied Eastern thought and got it, too." He taught at Esalen in the 1960s and is a self-proclaimed hatha yoga adept. Diana Alstad's credentials are impressive as well. She received a doctorate from Yale University and taught the first women's studies courses at Yale

and Duke universities. *The Guru Papers* is the only published portion of a far larger and more ambitious work called *Control*. It is perhaps the most articulated attempt to deconstruct the entire concept of spiritual authority and the philosophies underlying its uses and abuses.

When I called Joel Kramer, he readily agreed to an interview. At his request I reread the last chapters of his book. I also sent him the last two editions of *What Is Enlightenment?* A few days before our interview, however, he telephoned me and said that he had decided to call it off. We were too far apart, he told me. He had no respect for my point of view, or that of our magazine. He did not wish to grant us an interview, he said. I told him that an interview would give him a chance to reach the very people he was trying to help, seekers interested in the philosophies he saw as so dangerous and damaging. I reminded him that I was even willing to take the journalistically unorthodox step of granting him the right to review all of his statements for accuracy and completeness to ensure a fair treatment of his views. But he told me that this did not matter. He was not interested in trying to reach our readers, he said. Then he said something that sent off shock waves of the sort I imagine might occur in the far reaches of outer space when matter and antimatter collide. He told me that what bothered him was that our publication's point of view is that of a morality based on selflessness. He said that moralities based upon selflessness

are a major source of the problems and dysfunctionality of the world.

prologue

He went on to say that the major themes presented by the people included in our forum—themes he identified as those of impersonal love, detachment and egolessness—are the ideas responsible for the horrible mess that our planet is in. While listening to him, for no apparent reason an incongruous memory of walking down a desert highway in the heat of the midday sun entered my consciousness. I remembered the eerie sense of dislocation caused by the shimmering heat waves that surrounded me, how the colors of the landscape around me began to sickeningly undulate, shift and dissolve.

Somehow, reading *The Guru Papers* had not prepared me for the vehemence with which Kramer attributed the world's troubles to the influence of such ideas as selflessness, impersonal love, nonattachment and self-sacrifice. I found his position fascinating—and utterly incomprehensible. I had to go back and read his book again. And there it was in black and white. Why hadn't I seen it before?

In *The Guru Papers*, Kramer and Alstad do not only attack the institution of the guru due to its recent record of scandal and abuse. They go further and reject as inherently abusive and authoritarian the entire morality which they say underlies spiritual authority. The heart of their work is their critique of this morality, what they call "renunciate morality," which they see as dangerously flawed because it teaches the possibility and desirability of attaining selflessness. They say that renunciate morality, by teaching that selflessness and self-sacrifice are possible and are superior to self-centeredness, causes people to doubt themselves, and thus become susceptible to authoritarian manipulation. It is simply impossible to have selflessness without also having its opposite, self-centeredness, they say, and to teach otherwise is just a way of confusing and controlling people. According to Kramer and Alstad, moralities that teach selflessness as the highest goal are responsible for the mess that the world is in today, a mess that threatens humanity's very survival. When it really hit me that this was their underlying premise for rejecting what they call "the guru system," it shook me up, unsettled and even scared me, in part because I could see the alluring attraction of the idea that selfishness is natural, inevitable and OK.

During our telephone conversation, Kramer went on to say that although he would not do an interview, he was very interested in speaking to me personally about our views. Who knows? he said, he might change his mind about the interview after we spoke.

When we finally met, it became clear that Joel Kramer had never been serious about the possibility of changing his mind. But we did engage in a discussion, a debate and an encounter that lasted over four and a half hours. This encounter revealed more than a simple interview would ever have been likely to do. It left me feeling, both as a journalist and a human being, that I would be remiss in my duty to anyone serious about spirituality and its difficult challenges if I failed to recount at least a portion of what I saw of the psyche behind the mask of antiauthoritarianism that *The Guru Papers's* author presented.



It was a sunny day last summer when I went to meet Joel Kramer. I drove my car up an unmarked winding road to the top of the seaside mesa where he and Diana Alstad live. Diana Alstad met me at the door and invited me inside. Soon Kramer joined us and asked me if I would like to sit with him on their deck outside. As we sat there high above the Pacific Ocean's endlessly rolling and crashing waves dotted with foam, sea gulls and an occasional surfer, it seemed somehow fitting to me that my meeting with two of the sources of the widely proclaimed anti-guru new paradigm was taking place in the town of Bolinas, California. Bolinas is a coastal town off Highway 1, at the West's furthest limits.

from

The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power

"One of the longest experiments in history, the approximately 3,000-year-old Eastern ideology of Oneness, was first developed in the Upanishads. . . . The failure of its renunciate morality to diminish self-centeredness is a powerful statement that something is amiss. . . . It is our contention that this morality has failed not because there is something wrong with people, but because the framework constructs ideals that are impossible to achieve, thus setting people up for failure and self-mistrust."

"The ideal of enlightenment at first blush seems completely innocent of human corruption because it is defined as being totally selfless. Yet it is this sacrosanct concept of perfection that allows authoritarianism to manifest, and indeed flourish."

A bastion of anarcho-libertarianism, its residents have driven the authorities to despair by repeatedly tearing down every sign announcing its existence that the California Department of Transportation has ever posted.

Enjoying the dramatic beauty of our surroundings, I thanked Kramer for meeting with me, and I told him that I had found his book fascinating. Then I brought up the subject of its reputed influence on Andrew Harvey. Yes, he said, the book had influenced Harvey. But he was critical of Harvey for not going far enough. Although Harvey criticizes the guru system, he still believes in the virtues of self-sacrifice and impersonal love, Kramer said.

Then, obviously not a man to waste time getting to the point, he let me know in a passionate tone that he had me and the magazine I write for pegged as perpetrators of what he calls the "renunciate morality" based on selflessness and self-sacrifice, which he claims is wreaking havoc upon this planet. He told me that he would never grant an interview to a magazine that promulgates such views, because he

would not want to appear to endorse them. Taken aback, I was not sure how to proceed, but I did not have to think about it for long.

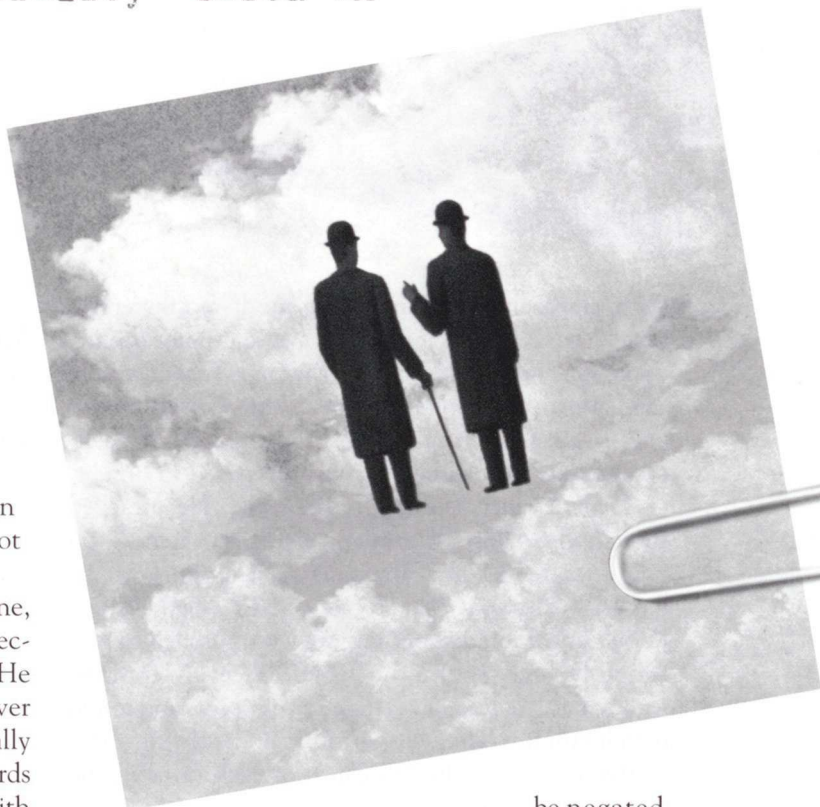
In a still forceful yet more philosophical tone, Kramer immediately went on to say that what is necessary is understanding—never renunciation. He asked me to explain how renunciation could ever lead to any good. I told him that I have personally struggled with a tendency towards anger, towards lashing out at people when I am crossed. I agreed with him that understanding is essential, and I told him that I am interested in anger's causes and effects. But being doubtless about its destructiveness, when I feel anger arising I think I should renounce acting out of it. By doing this, breaking the chain of action and reaction that anger creates, I have a better chance of

coming to an understanding that will uproot it, I explained. But Joel Kramer was clearly unconvinced.

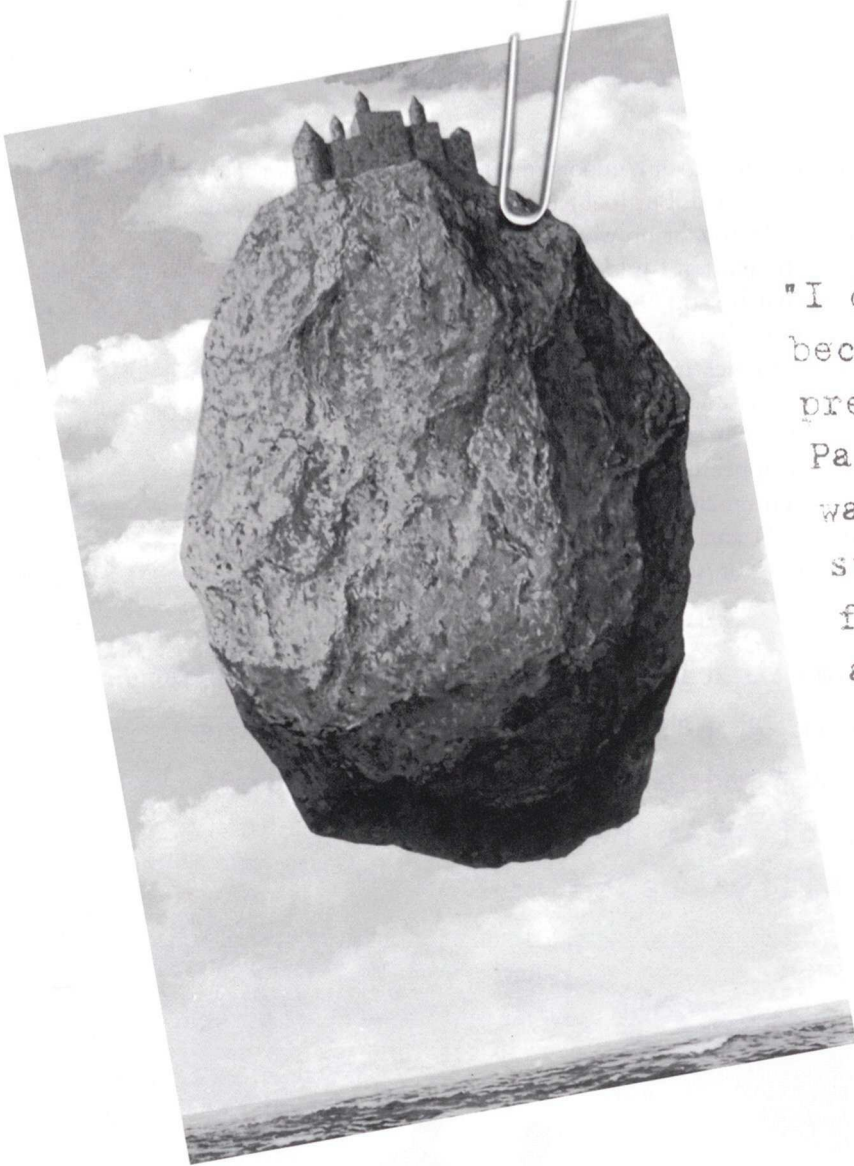
I brought up what I considered to be the heart of the matter. I told him that I found it hard to believe that he and Diana Alstad were serious in their assertion that selflessness or self-sacrifice does not have a higher moral status than self-centeredness. But I proposed to Joel Kramer that if we defined our terms it might turn out that we were not so far apart as it appeared. Perhaps they were using the term self-centeredness in a way that is different than usual.

"I can see aspects of what you might call selfishness or self-centeredness that arguably should not

"Not a man to waste time getting to the point, he let me know in a passionate tone that he had me and the magazine I write for pegged as perpetrators of what he calls the 'renunciate morality' based on selflessness and self-sacrifice, which he claims is wreaking havoc upon this planet."



be negated, such as creativity, individual discrimination, personal responsibility and so on," I suggested, attempting to find some meeting ground. "Perhaps this is what you mean by self-centeredness, and why you say it is necessary and should not be renounced?" But he dashed my hopes



"I don't know if it was because we were perched so precariously high above the Pacific Ocean's crashing waves, but I was deeply struck by his point, and found myself sinking like a stone into the depths of a still contemplation of the aloneness of each of us in the face of the ultimate."

for a rapprochement, informing me in no uncertain terms that our viewpoints were diametrically opposed. This despite the fact that in his book, and in our ensuing conversation, he cited over and over again similar positive aspects of "self-centeredness" to those I had just proposed to him.

Then Kramer retook the offensive. He attacked the emphasis Eastern thought places on oneness, on our ultimate identity. For example, he pointed out to me that everyone has to face their death alone. I don't know if it was because we were perched so precariously high above the Pacific Ocean's crashing waves, but I was deeply struck by his point, and found myself sinking like a stone into the depths of a still contemplation of the aloneness of each of us in the face of the ultimate.

"That is a very profound paradox," I heard myself say, staring at him dumbly while vaguely recalling that paradox was one of those things Joel Kramer found especially pernicious, a sure sign of authoritarian thought. Joel Kramer looked at me, waiting. I repeated, "That is a mystery, and a profound paradox."

Then the answer came to me, like a silver fish leaping unexpectedly out of the blue ocean. "We are alone in the face of death, that is true," I said, "but that aloneness itself is a universal experience, pointing to our oneness as well as our individuality."

He remained silent. For a moment I could not tell if it was because he was struck by what I had said or flabbergasted at my obtuseness. Then, as if I had said nothing at all he stated, "No one else can feel my pain."

Our conversation continued in a similar vein. I wasn't surprised by the fact that our views were different. But what disturbed me was that we were *never* able to meet, even when it seemed at times that we agreed. Every time I posited a higher "one," he acknowledged it, but then countered with a "many." Every connecting universal I proposed was greeted with a nod, followed by the assertion of a unique and separating individual.

Kramer told me that he does not discount the idea of oneness, or the religious experience of it. "I've had oneness experiences," he said. But he and Alstad

argue that from the oneness experience, religions abstract *philosophies* of oneness, drawing conclusions about human nature and the nature of existence from the experience of oneness, and this is where the trouble begins. Kramer and Alstad call these philosophies "oneness ideologies." In such ideologies, oneness and selflessness are given precedence over separateness and individuality, and thereby authoritarianism is born. Why is this? Because oneness is only one side of the picture, they say, and giving it higher priority than separateness makes human beings feel bad about themselves, and consequently susceptible to authoritarian manipulation.

We went over these points in various ways, again and again. Much was said, often with great passion, but very little actually happened. We seemed to be continually stuck at the same barrier, despite exploring it from every different angle. I would try to leap it, but would be pulled back. Sometimes I would barrel on, almost feeling lush green spaces beneath my feet, only to find I had been corralled back into the same narrow pen. At some point I noticed that several hours had passed.

Diana Alstad eventually joined us. I hoped her feminine grace would cause the jagged sharpness of our ideological battle to soften a little. I was growing a little tired of all this energy without motion. We were still sparring over individuality and uniqueness versus oneness and connectedness, and had not progressed at all. Diana solicitously took out a handkerchief and gently wiped some moisture from her husband's face. She began to say something to me that I did not catch, but Joel interrupted her, waving her off and saying, "He's more sophisticated than that." Holding up the last edition of *What Is Enlightenment?* and pointing to the words "impersonal enlightenment" on its cover, she criticized all teachings that emphasize the impersonal. Turning the conversation to the topic of love, I suggested that there is nothing uniquely personal or special about romantic love. This elicited a strong and immediate emotional response.

"But everyone wants to feel special!" cried Diana.

"No one loves Diana the way that I do," Joel asserted.

"Yes, perhaps," I responded, "but then everyone feels that way about their romantic involvement."

Joel Kramer changed the subject. He asked me if I thought that God or the Absolute was identical with the universe, and if so, wasn't Adolf Hitler God?

"No, Adolf Hitler isn't God," I said.

"Well then, is God separate from the universe?" Joel wanted to know.

"No," I said, "God isn't separate from the universe, but He or She or It is not identical to the universe."

"But that's dualistic. That's *monotheism*," exclaimed Alstad. (Kramer and Alstad believe that monotheism is patently authoritarian, whereas the authoritarianism of Eastern "oneness ideologies" is more subtle and hidden, although equally pernicious.)

I replied that saying that God is identical even with the entire universe still limits God, and God is unlimited.

A moment of stunned silence. Then I pointed out that we were enmeshed in the old debate of transcendence versus immanence of the Absolute, a philosophical issue of great profundity that theologians have been wrestling with for centuries. "I don't have the answer either," I said. "The closest I can come up with at the moment is that God is both transcendent and immanent."

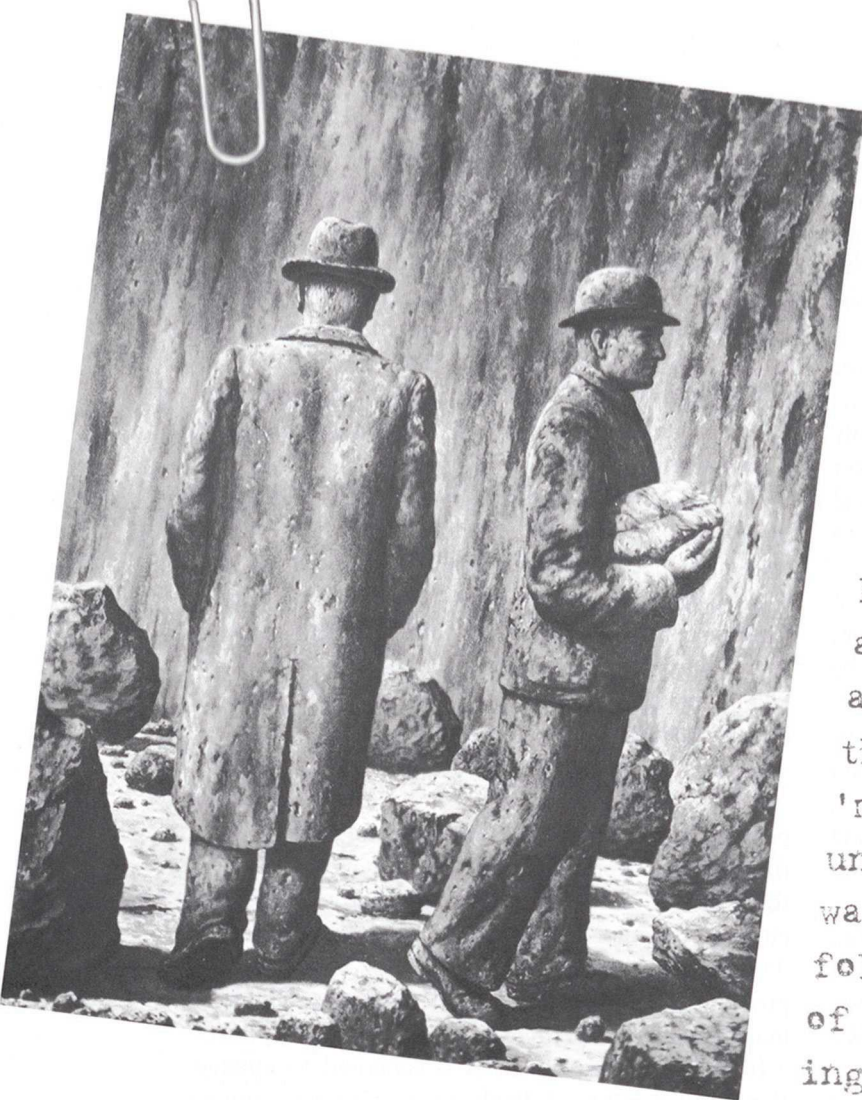
"Well, you can't have it both ways," Joel protested.

I have to admit that even at this late stage in the proceedings this response surprised me a bit. One of the more interesting aspects of Kramer's and Alstad's thought is their insistence that we need to go beyond either/or "bipolar" thinking and become proficient at dialectics if we are to have any hope of solving the problems of our weary and burdened globe. The hallmark of dialectics is that out of the clash of opposites, a higher inclusive synthesis is supposed to emerge. But despite hours of lively tête-à-tête no glimmer of a synthesis of our opposing views was in sight. I decided to give it one last try.

from *The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power*

"Monotheism with one God on top is obviously authoritarian. The authoritarianism embedded within the Eastern ideology of Oneness is less obvious. . . . Whereas monotheism makes the revealed Word of God sacred, Eastern religions make presumed enlightened beings sacred. Thus the concept of enlightenment brings authoritarianism at the personal, charismatic level (gurus, masters, avatars, and buddhas)."

"Accepting selflessness as the highest value is where the insidious authoritarianism of the old order unwittingly seeps into many modern paradigms that attempt to be new."



"I wasn't surprised by the fact that our views were different. But what disturbed me was that we were never able to meet, even when it seemed at times that we agreed. Every time I posited a higher 'one,' he acknowledged it, but then countered with a 'many.' Every connecting universal I proposed was greeted with a nod, followed by the assertion of a unique and separating individual."

"Couldn't your understanding of oneness or selflessness be artificially limited?" I stammered. I was getting worn out. "Isn't the very point of genuine oneness experience and understanding the resolution of the conceptual opposites of one and many, self and nonself, into a higher unity? And isn't this where dialectics is supposed to ultimately lead?" It didn't work. He said that there is no higher oneness; the one is *always* opposed to the many. And we were back in the same loop.

But I hadn't quite run out of steam yet. I finally asked, "If selflessness is a harmful basis for morality, as you argue, what would you base morality upon?"

They both answered, "Survival." They said that given the ecological crisis and the threat of nuclear extermination, this was the problem most urgently facing humanity today. I could not disagree with this. But I asked how a morality of survival could be free from the danger of authoritarianism. "In fact," I went on, "I don't think you could find a morality more susceptible to authoritarian abuse than one based ultimately on survival. Wasn't the survival of China, for example, the rationale for Chairman Mao's

authoritarian oppression? Couldn't survival as the ultimate yardstick justify the most extreme forms of suppression of the individual?" Diana Alstad hesitantly offered that respect for the individual would be seen as necessary to survival of the race. Then Kramer changed the subject again.

Feeling that we were now beyond the point of polite philosophical debate, Kramer told me, in so many words, that although intelligent, relatively sophisticated, and sincere, I was very confused. "I don't hold back saying where I think things are at," he told me, in case I was unsure of this. After four and a half hours of battle with his and Alstad's prodigious intellects, this was one of the few things I was not unsure of at this point. But there was one other.

Joel Kramer had told me that in his days of teaching at Esalen and elsewhere, he had been tempted to become a guru himself. Several times during the course of our conversation he had asserted that he could have pulled it off if he had wanted to. "I know what people expect, and I could play that role," he told me. But when he was teaching he saw the temptation, and the effect that adulation from others had

on him, and he didn't like it. He knew that the temptation to abuse the position was too strong and he renounced taking the role. I respected him for that. I had even had a similar experience, although not as dramatic as his, years ago when teaching a class on spirituality, and had made a similar choice.

"Well, I haven't told you explicitly what I think is behind your philosophy," I said. They invited me to go on.

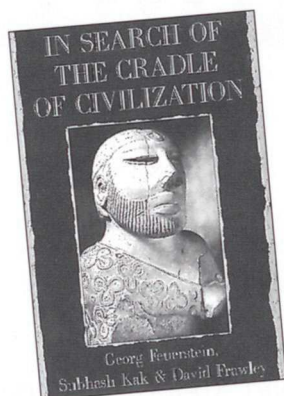
"I think that many people have been deeply burned, both by what they have seen in others who have abused the guru role and by what they have seen in themselves," I said. "Being genuinely selfless is the greatest challenge. Most of us come up against the same temptations in ourselves, and make the same mistakes, over and over again. It is very easy to despair of ever going beyond the temptations of power and selfishness." I was speaking from personal experience here, not from theory. Despite years of effort at personal transformation, I was still very much struggling. "I think that the difficulties that you faced in yourself have made you deeply cynical about the possibility of anyone manifesting real selflessness," I concluded.

There was a moment of silence. I could not tell if they were impressed with my point, or only affected by the emotion behind it. It seemed that for an instant there was the possibility of meeting in mutual respect, but the moment passed. There wasn't much more to say.

Soon, another visitor dropped by and I took my cue to thank them both and leave. On my way out Alstad gave me a book of teachings by Kramer from years ago, some articles by him on yoga and a copy of a manuscript of a new book they are working on about the inherent authoritarianism of Buddhism. Diana and I spoke for a few moments about my current spiritual involvement, and she graciously said to Joel that she thought there was more to it than the usual "oneness ideology." But Joel, looking annoyed, just waved this off, said good-bye and returned to his guest.

I drove back down the mesa, through a grove of eucalyptus, and headed south on Highway 1. Bolinas Lagoon rippled orange beneath the setting sun, silhouetting statuesque egrets, herons and other waterfowl, nature forming a picture of peaceful perfection.

Exhausted, I breathed a sigh of relief. ■



ISBN: 0-8356-0720-8
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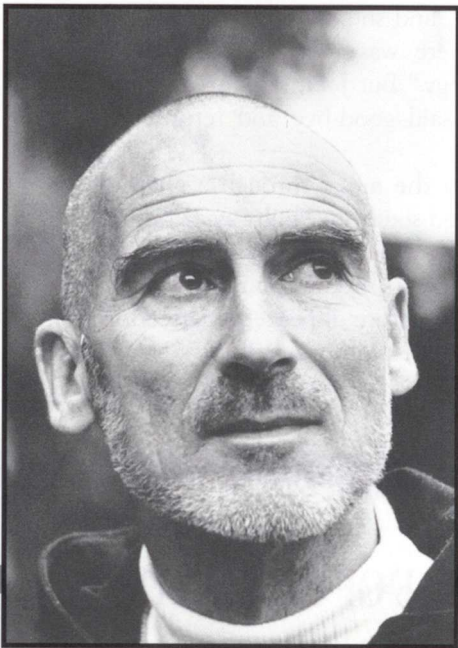
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In this ground-breaking book, renowned scholars Feuerstein, Kak, and Frawley show that India, not Sumer, was the cradle of civilized humanity. Through brilliant analysis of the Vedas, *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization* also examines the wealth of India's spirituality and its importance for the world.

“And they came to Capernaum. And on the Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue and taught. And people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them like someone who has authority, and not like the scribes.”

Mark 1:21-22



A Revolution of AUTHORITY

from a dialogue with
Brother David Steindl-Rast

Born in Vienna, where he studied art and psychology, Brother David Steindl-Rast is a Benedictine monk who has been regarded as Thomas Merton's successor in the Christian contemplative tradition. He has spent the last thirty-five years in both Eastern and Western monasteries pursuing his interest in the roots of mysticism. In the following excerpt from a dialogue which took place in Big Sur, California, he explains Jesus Christ's revolutionary teaching on the true nature of spiritual authority.

WIE:

These days there is a wary climate regarding people who hold themselves out as spiritual authorities. There is a tendency to be very skeptical about the possibility that someone could be a genuine authority. Yet traditionally it's been fairly common for people to seek out a spiritual teacher for guidance, and to commit themselves to that teacher. What are your thoughts on this?

Brother David:

Some twenty years ago, there was a much greater openness to making anybody who came along and seemed to have some great credentials for teaching your guru. Nowadays many people have been burnt and they will look twice. That is skepticism, and it can easily become cynicism, which isn't very healthy. But it also has its healthy aspect because people are less gullible and teachers have to prove themselves. On the other hand, our time is so frightening, there are so many things going on that frighten us, that many people want security at any price. They will let themselves be put down, be abused and become dependent on a teacher just in order to have a sense of security, to feel that they know everything. No questions asked, you just do what you're told, this sort of thing. That is always a great danger in times of fear. And our time is a fear-inspiring time. I understand when you say that many people are more skeptical, but there are also many people who want just this kind of security at any price, and are willing to be put down and pay that price.

There is just one great spiritual teacher, and that is the Divine Spirit in your heart. What any spiritual teacher on the outside can do, at best, is to always lead you back to that teacher in your heart. But the key word here is "authority." We have a very impoverished and actually strongly warped notion of authority nowadays, and we think that authority is the power to command. Well, that's wrong. That's a derived meaning of authority. Originally

authority means: a firm basis for knowing and acting. If you want to know what to do in a given case you will go to a book that is an authoritative book, or you will go to a person who is an authority in his or her field, and so forth. So that's the original meaning of authority. However, because people who provide a firm basis for knowing and acting for others are few and far between, you put them in a *position* of authority, which means you give them power to command. But the more power somebody has, the greater the danger of corruption. This is where some spiritual teachers then go off the deep end. This is where the question of the proper use of authority comes in.

Jesus Christ brought a complete revolution of the understanding of authority. This is, I think, the Christian tradition's most central insight and potentially its greatest contribution to spirituality in the world. It occurred in two ways. First, Jesus placed the authority of God, which was always seen as external, in the very hearts of his hearers. The core teaching of Jesus is not, "I am going to *tell* you all," or anything like that. No, he presupposes you *know* it all. "Don't you know it? I'll remind you of it. You know it all." This is his typical voice. This question opens many of the parables, "Who of you doesn't know this already?" It's not sufficiently emphasized nowadays in Christian teaching, but the moment you are alerted to it you see it.

So, one of the really dramatic events that happened in history—and that's why the world is still reeling with what happened in the life of Jesus—is that with Jesus, the Divine authority was squarely placed in the hearts of every human being. That was a tremendous revolution. The immanence of God and the Divine in the human heart was stressed. And it was probably necessary that this should happen in a setting in which duality was stronger than anywhere else: "Holy" in the Hebrew Bible means "the altogether other." So God was the absolutely other. Then Jesus

comes and maintains that, doesn't deny it in any way, but also says that the absolutely other is closer to you than you are to yourself. So that was the first part of the revolution of authority, that the Divine authority is placed in the heart of the earth.

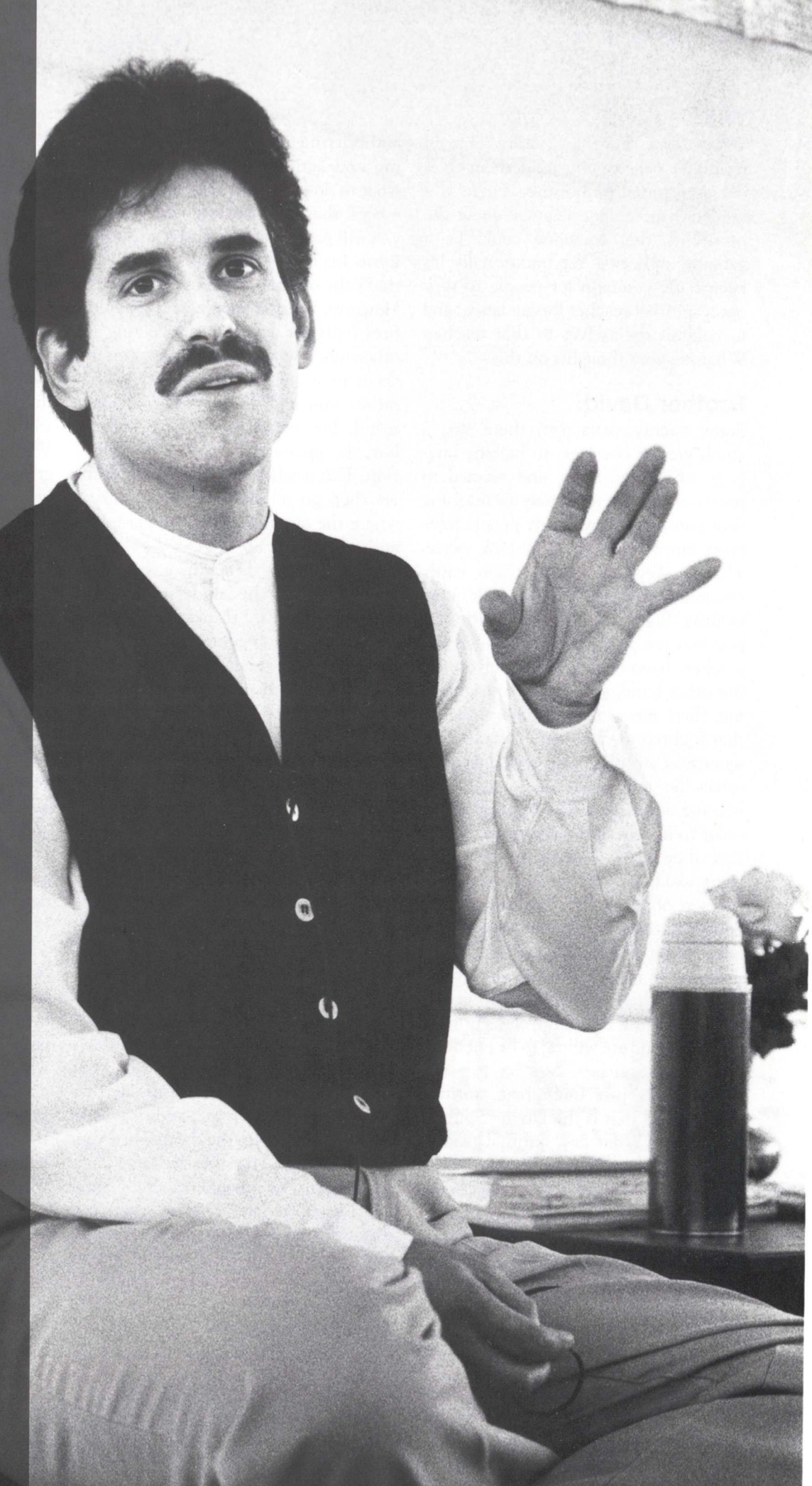
The second aspect is best expressed in the image of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples and saying, essentially, "You call me Lord and Master. In other words, you call me an authority. You are right, that's what I am. But in the world, those who have power lord it over others. With you it should be different. The greatest among you, the one who has the most power, should be the servant of all. And that is what I show you because I am washing your feet." So that is the answer to the question, What is authority good for? Authority must be used, but there is only one legitimate use for it, and that is to empower those who are under authority. One of the most important things about Jesus is that he apparently had great authority but did not fall prey to its power. He even emphatically told his followers that that's not what you do—you turn this upside down and become the servant of all. First divine authority was placed in the hearts of everyone. Then human authority was given a task, namely, not to put those down that are under authority, but to build them up and empower them.

This also gives us a pretty good test for looking at spiritual teachers, and seeing which ones are authentic and which ones are not. Do they use their power to empower others? There may be a phase where a person has to be carried like a child. There may be a phase of dependency that one may have to go through. But you have to look at the whole picture. With any teacher you will see, by looking at that teacher's accomplished students, what it is leading to. When you see that this teacher makes them stand on their own feet, then that's authentic. When you see that this teacher makes them more and more dependent, then that's hands off, that's dangerous. ■

Spiritual teacher and founder of What Is Enlightenment? Andrew Cohen began teaching in 1986 after a spiritual realization transformed his life beyond recognition. Since that time the fire of his awakening has sparked a revolution in the hearts and minds of many people throughout the world. Andrew is outspoken in his questioning of many of the superstitious belief systems that are almost always associated with genuine Liberation teachings. This coupled with his unwillingness to compromise in matters of the heart has led to an original expression of a complete teaching that embraces both heaven and earth in a way that calls any who would hear it to question the definition of what is truly absolute. His teaching is modern in the sense that its reference point is the present time that we are living in and yet its source is that unfathomable Mystery that never changes and always lies beyond the barriers of time and space.

Those who have been touched by Andrew's teachings have found themselves immersed in a profound recognition of their own true nature and propelled into a thrilling discovery of what it means to reach beyond all limitations. For many, this has been the catalyst for coming together in a way that transcends barriers of conflict and separation. In the past few years, communities dedicated to living these teachings have formed throughout the world, with a network of centers in North America, Europe and Israel. Andrew now travels extensively around the world every year, giving public talks and intensive retreats.

Andrew Cohen is the author of *An Unconditional Relationship to Life*, *Enlightenment Is a Secret*, *Autobiography of an Awakening* and *My Master Is My Self*.



“The Teacher and Liberation should be one and the same thing. The relationship to the Teacher should be such that that relationship could only liberate you, and could not do anything else. If this is not the case it means that something is very wrong.”

from *Enlightenment Is a Secret*, by Andrew Cohen

The Teacher and Liberation Should Be One and the Same

Three articles by Andrew Cohen

The role of spiritual authority is among the most controversial and misunderstood issues in spiritual life today. Yet it is one of the most vitally important, because understanding spiritual authority is inseparable from understanding the very nature and significance of enlightenment itself. Since the issue of spiritual authority is so challenging, and evokes such strong emotions, many people fail to go beyond their reflexive responses of “pro” or “con,” hope or fear, cynicism or superstition when considering it. But the real meaning and implications of spiritual authority are much too subtle, significant and far-reaching to be understood in a superficial way.

In the following three articles Andrew Cohen places the issue of spiritual authority in its most revealing and challenging context: the evolutionary call to attain a fully human condition. His investigation clarifies the significance of spiritual authority and discipleship in a way that absolutely implicates both the seeker and the teacher.

In “A Crisis of Trust,” excerpted from his book *An Unconditional Relationship to Life*, Andrew Cohen

examines the roots of the prevailing cynicism about spiritual authority and even enlightenment itself. Cutting through common superstitious beliefs, he reveals the meaning of enlightenment in a way that is inspiring yet uncompromising, calling for clear examples who can show that the achievement of an undivided condition is indeed possible.

“Spiritual Slavery and Prostitution of the Soul” is a dialogue in which Andrew Cohen explores the disturbing enigma, so apparent in our time, of the coupling of great realization with a lack of ethical integrity, and the potentially devastating effect this can have upon the seeker.

Finally, “The Science of the Student/Teacher Relationship” investigates the significance of discipleship in a way that holds both the teacher and the student completely accountable for its results. Andrew Cohen explains what to look for in a potential teacher, and vividly describes the student/teacher relationship as a dynamic partnership based on rare independence and mutual interest in the truth for its own sake.



“The modern spiritual world has been plagued by countless shocking revelations of that vital discrepancy between word and deed. This has created an air of cynicism and a crisis of trust.”

A Crisis of Trust

by Andrew Cohen

The Path and the Goal Are One

The genuine pursuit of spiritual liberation is the pursuit of unity and simplicity. Unity is not only the fact of our ultimate nature, but indeed, if there is any significance in spiritual attainment, unity must finally become the very essence of the expression of the individual who claims to have achieved the goal of unity itself. It is my conviction in this, what I consider to be such an obvious point, that has forced me to stand alone in a time when something so obvious seems to be so misunderstood. The meaning and significance of enlightenment to me is, and I truly believe always has been, the final attainment of nonduality, *not only as inner vision but as that expression of singularity and undivided purity of intention that leaves no room for doubt, confusion or ambiguity.*

Simply because I have not wanted to compromise on this matter, I have gained a reputation of being controversial. Unwavering in my insistence that any individual who dares to show the way for others be willing to live up to the highest expression of human potential, I often find myself alone in what seems like a ridiculous predicament. Many misinterpret my motives in speaking about the failings of other teachers, concluding that my intention is simply to find fault. I have found it necessary to do so only because I feel it is essential at this time to try and demystify the aura and mystique of enlightenment. The utter simplicity of the meaning and significance of profound spiritual attainment in the modern world remains largely hidden behind myth and superstition. And therefore, it is only

by scrutinizing those who have penetrated deeply into the spiritual dimension, that the common denominator that reveals the important differences and essential similarities of those individuals can be brought to light.

The entire process of spiritual evolution and transformation is, after all, only the search for and attainment of a fully *human* condition. This significant point, while obvious to some, is not so apparent to many. As a matter of fact, in my journeys throughout the world I am always struck by the degree of misinformation that abounds regarding this point. Far too many believe that those individuals who have transcended fear, delusion and ignorance have become no different than living gods. In fact, some of my students were told by a well-known rinpoche that their first mistake was thinking that the Buddha was human! It is precisely this kind of thinking that perpetuates the superstitious beliefs that make any simple yet profound understanding of enlightenment difficult to attain.

Recognizing spiritual evolution and transformation as the struggle for a fully human condition makes it possible for anyone who is sincerely interested to come to an understanding of what real attainment is all about. As long as the meaning and significance of spiritual awakening is allowed to remain so shrouded in mystery, it will continue to seem beyond the reach of most to truly understand. There are many paths but the goal is one. This fact must be clarified in a simple and understandable way. Only then will many of us be able to grow up, and in doing so realize the profound independence that results from seeing clearly through eyes that have been freed from false and wrong views.

A Divided Condition

I never knew until I began to teach how profound is the deeply divided condition of most human beings. And I learned early on how extraordinarily difficult it seems to be for most human beings to express an undivided relationship to life. Indeed, it is the divided condition of the human personality that has for so long created the endless cycle of conflict that has been and continues to be the crux of the spiritual dilemma of the race. Interestingly enough, *it is only when a human being makes that critical decision to find the Truth Absolute, that the depth and complexity of compromise that had been the expression of a divided personality is revealed.* This

discovery is often shocking, for few human beings are prepared to come to terms with the enormity of the gap that is exposed between the way one imagines oneself to be and the way one truly is.

A passionate response to the yearning for liberation reveals that a divided condition is entirely volitional. In this revelation, the individual discovers for themselves the path to wholeness. That path is the sudden or gradual unwillingness to compromise in matters of the heart and ultimately in one's relationship to what it means to be a fully human being.

It is for this reason that I feel it is so essential that those individuals, who have been fortunate enough to have fallen into the miracle of transcendent spiritual realization, be able to demonstrate an attainment that clearly and unambiguously expresses the evolutionary potential of the race. For as long as this demand is not made, and those who are showing the way for others are allowed to demonstrate the very same schizophrenic condition of contradictory impulses as everyone else, then the attainment of true simplicity and unequivocal victory over ignorance will remain a myth.

The magnitude of the implications inherent in this, what might not seem like such a crucial matter to some, is extraordinary. Without clear examples, the possibility of a collective evolutionary leap is unimaginable. That is why it is so destructive for the evolutionary potential of the race as a whole when those who have realized that transcendental spiritual perspective seem to be unwilling to go all the way.

That possibility can only be sufficiently demonstrated in a personality that is so firmly rooted in the absolute fact of unity that it will only by its nature express that condition unmistakably and unambiguously as itself.

The Need for Clear Examples

The modern spiritual world has been plagued by countless shocking revelations of that vital discrepancy between word and deed. This has created an air of cynicism and a crisis of trust. It should cause the independent thinker to question the ultimate validity of the attainment of those in whom these discrepancies have become painfully obvious. Yet I have been intrigued by the general lack of serious inquiry into this important question.

As long as significant contradiction exists in any individual who is proclaimed to have reached the yonder shore, it's possible that maybe they stopped somewhere short of the beach. I have been surprised at the acceptance and ambivalence in relationship to this matter in seekers and finders alike. This point is crucial and its significance demands some attention in a serious student of evolutionary potential. What makes this matter so confusing to so many is the fact that it is very difficult to ascertain the actual attainment of another as long as one is struggling within the initial stages of awakening oneself. It is because most of those who aspire to final liberation are precisely at that juncture in their own evolution that they usually feel insufficiently evolved to dare to assume such knowledge. This plus the air of cynicism so prevalent in the time we are living in has made it for many a sign of arrogance to question these matters in a passionate way. From early on in my teaching career, I was compelled to do so because I wanted to understand how and why the actual goal of spiritual seeking and practice was so vague, complex and confusing. I found out almost from the very beginning that this kind of questioning was not generally appreciated, and more often than not was scorned, if not outright condemned.

I have always encouraged others to ask themselves the same questions that I have asked myself, and have discovered that few seem to be deeply interested in asking the kinds of questions that challenge the very foundations of our spiritual beliefs. So often the need to cling onto experiences long gone, beliefs based on superstition and if nothing else only hope seems more important to far too many than the pursuit of the Truth unadorned. Many seekers choose to lazily accept that which cannot bear too much scrutiny for fear of ultimately having to scrutinize themselves far too closely.

Endeavoring to rouse from slumber those insisting that a promise unfulfilled was other than that, I have tried to encourage honest inquiry.

Shortly before the demise of my relationship with my own teacher, I was attending one of his teachings with a small group of my students. When they asked him about the discrepancy between the word and deed of well-known spiritual teachers he became irritated, replying that questions such as these have nothing to do with liberation but only with religion. Indeed, in his

own philosophy there is not necessarily any relationship between the realization of our true nature and the manifestation of the human personality of the one who has realized it.

In Boulder, Colorado I spoke to a gathering in which some disciples of the late Trungpa Rinpoche were present. When I simply stated what everyone already knew, that his abuse of alcohol had killed him and had led some of his followers to become members of Alcoholics Anonymous, many were offended. Who was I to judge?

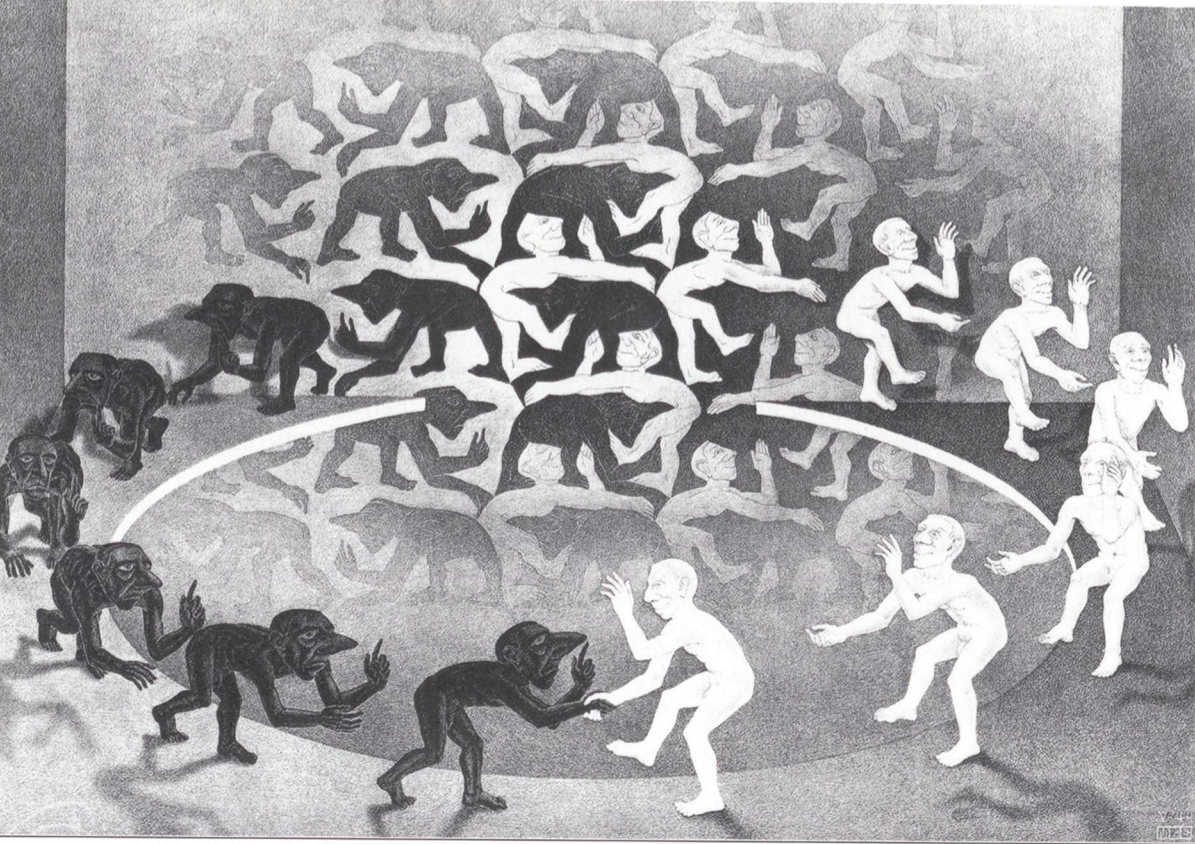
Several years after the death of the legendary Bhagwan Rajneesh, I continue to find that most of his devotees are still unable to even begin to contemplate the possibility that their guru might have had something to do with the treacherous escapades of some of his closest disciples.

During a radio interview in Amsterdam by a woman who was a devotee of the late Swami Muktananda, I mentioned the widely known fact that he had gone to bed with the young daughters of his own disciples whom he had asked to be celibate. She was outraged.

In so many cases, discipleship unknowingly becomes a form of spiritual slavery. Too many are unwilling to question the perfection of the attainment of their teacher for fear of threatening the perceived link with the absolute that the teacher represents.

The spiritual crisis of the human race is a crisis of trust. For awakened perception to become stable and permanent, the individual must find a way to trust that is above and beyond the usual perimeters of human experience. It is the inability and unwillingness to trust that makes the goal of utter simplicity and perfect union seem so distant. Indeed, trust is the very foundation of spiritual transformation.

The integrity and inherent perfection of life is demonstrated in that individual who has deeply realized and is able to manifest unity and simplicity. That is why the significance of some individuals actually being able to demonstrate that attainment as self unambiguously is so great. The explosive and deeply liberating power of trust can only manifest itself in that spiritual arena where no taint of ambiguity about the living reality of that possibility exists. As long as any doubt, gross or subtle, continues to exist, it will be almost impossible for the individual to trust in the possibility of realizing their own potential as a fully human being. ■



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

Spiritual Slavery and Prostitution of the Soul

A Dialogue with Andrew Cohen

QUESTION:

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

ANDREW COHEN:

Maybe in the cases that you are speaking about, the ego *didn't* die. Maybe in these cases, there is a fully intact ego

coexisting with a profound realization. Most people don't realize that ego and profound realization can coexist. It is for that reason that so many people have gotten into trouble.

Q: *But I don't understand how, even after the failings of the guru have become obvious, people will still allow themselves to be taken advantage of. They often will continue to be followers in the face of unethical behavior, and in some cases even gross abuse.*

A: Often when a person meets a teacher in whom the Absolute is

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

Q: *Is that when they start to rationalize?*

A: Yes, then they become corrupt, in the same way the guru is. When you try to talk to the disciples of these gurus about simple virtues, they often are unable to make any sense. Also, they will frequently say things like, "Ethical conduct and enlightenment have nothing to do with each other," in an attempt to justify the confusing behavior of their guru. The minute anybody allows themselves to tolerate corruption they become a part of it. These people desperately don't want to see the depth of the corruption that they themselves are immersed in. The security of their spiritual well-being *depends* on the fact that no matter what, the actions of the guru are *never* questioned. Because their hearts are so invested in the guru, they will make almost any

"Most people don't realize that ego and profound realization can coexist. It is for that reason that so many people have gotten into trouble."



rationalization or justification for the guru's actions. They will do almost anything in order to protect that love that the guru has revealed to them. This is spiritual slavery and prostitution of the soul. In weak-minded people the seal of enlightenment becomes a license for abuse.

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

A: Yes.

Q: *Then not to the guru?*

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

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

A: But in a sense that's all people surrender to anyway. They surrender to their own experience. If you go to a teacher and you have a powerful experience, it's that *experience* that you surrender to. What usually happens next though, is that you get involved with the personality of the teacher. Powerful experience makes you hungry for more. That's why people get more involved. They want to get to know who this guru is. They fall in love and then want to be more intimate. Then they get involved with the personality of the teacher. At that point it's no longer just a spiritual experience; they

begin to get involved with a human personality. That's when the trouble starts. If there's any trouble that could start, that's when it's going to begin.

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

As I said before, people are weak, weak-minded, and if someone is truly enlightened, they will have a very powerful mind and be very charismatic. People are easily overwhelmed by that. Because their heart has been awakened, because they have been deeply touched by something, they often don't care about anything else. And in order to protect that experience, they will often tolerate just about anything. This is dangerous. This is a corrupt condition that a great deal of the spiritual world is in these days. If the guru is corrupt and you're intimately involved with the guru, you can't help but be corrupt yourself. It's unavoidable. By association it's an automatic result. It's a very delicate business.

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

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

Q: *So where do you draw the line?*

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



“The relationship with the true teacher should offer no security for the ego whatsoever and should instead result in the discovery and attainment of perfect aloneness, perfect independence and the perfect and ultimate fulfillment of one’s individuality.”

The Science of the Student/Teacher Relationship

by Andrew Cohen

I always encourage people as much as possible to look into the whole world of superstitious beliefs in relationship to spiritual authority figures. If someone wants to be free, it is of the utmost importance to dare to look closely at the kind of position that one takes in relationship to individuals who have assumed roles of authority in spiritual matters.

It is dangerously easy in the relationship with spiritual authority figures to allow oneself to assume all kinds of things that may not actually be true. The only way an

individual can enter into a relationship with a spiritual teacher, and not get lost in the arena of superstitious beliefs about the teacher or about oneself, is by embarking upon a very sincere investigation. What kind of an investigation? One must dare to question every aspect of the human condition as oneself. One must dare to look very deeply into the nature of the human condition in relationship to the highest possibility of perfect liberation. Only then will one be able to truly recognize the depth or level of attainment of the spiritual teacher.

Meeting the True Teacher: The Promise of No Limitation

In the presence of that rare individual who has attained extraordinary spiritual enlightenment, a tangible sense of expansion of Self can be felt. When an individual is living life with that much intensity, freedom and love, one recognizes a liberated personality. By their example and in their reflection one can discover, maybe for the very first time, what it would be like to be free.

In such a meeting, unanticipated experiences involving rare insight and/or exhilarating feelings may occur. An event such as this can shake the very foundation of one's belief system. The effect of this meeting can be so powerful that the individual may suddenly find themselves entering into what seems like the most profound relationship that one human being could ever have with another.

What makes the idea of entering into a relationship with the spiritual teacher so enticing and profound? It is the promise of no limitation.

Few people make full use of the potential inherent in that unique and unusual relationship based solely on the promise of no limitation. Why is this? Because a true teacher always remains true to the fact of no limitation. The true teacher never wavers from the demand that those who claim interest in liberation above all else be willing to meet him or her *fully and completely* in the living fact of no limitation. Ultimately challenged, the student comes face to face with the true measure of their own desire for liberation. This challenge creates a tension. That tension is the expression and manifestation of the gap between the teacher's living example and the student's actual condition. That tension dissipates and finally disappears altogether only when the student endeavors to fearlessly and courageously meet the teacher absolutely, completely and without reservation.

In the true teacher's reflection, all *should* be revealed. Therefore the teacher's living example only becomes superfluous when and if the student equals or surpasses the teacher's attainment. Until that point, the teacher's living, breathing example is of the utmost importance, for it is in the teacher's example that the teaching clearly comes alive and therefore can be seen and recognized. Without the teacher's living, breathing manifestation of the teaching, the ultimate goal of spiritual experience and practice remains lost in vague, superstitious and even dangerously confused notions.

In most cases, a teaching—even a perfect teaching—in and of itself will not create enough tension to thrust the individual into the radical transformation that is necessary for meaningful and permanent change to occur. It is the dynamic of the relationship with a living teacher that creates the kind of tension in which real transformation can occur.

In the relationship with the living teacher, the individual is afforded the opportunity of a clear reflection—of actually perceiving themselves clearly and without distortion. Association and relationship with an individual who is the living expression of no limitation will make apparent those limiting ideas, beliefs and tendencies that the student compulsively and usually unconsciously imposes upon themselves and on reality as a whole. Therefore, it is through that association that the student will be able to see very clearly and accurately how and where they are limiting their own potential of realizing and ultimately manifesting no limitation.

No Refuge for the Ego

Instead of striving to fulfill the promise of no limitation, which is the discovery and attainment of no security for the ego, most individuals actually endeavor to *find* security for the ego in the relationship with the spiritual teacher. In this way, they allow a relationship of dependence to develop only because they are not actually seeking for genuine liberation, but instead use the relationship with the spiritual teacher only to take refuge from the very challenging ordeal of mundane existence.

There is no doubt that taking refuge in the knowledge and power of an extraordinary human being has great benefits. But as great as those benefits may be, their effect will ultimately always express limitation. Indeed, the relationship with the spiritual teacher becomes literally evolutionary only when the individual has come to the point when they are finally ready to take full responsibility for their own life. And in that responsibility, the individual must strive to meet the teacher absolutely—in perfect independence.

But because most seekers' belief and conviction in the actual possibility of genuine liberation for themselves tends to be very weak, the extraordinary and profound surrender and renunciation necessary to truly face and ultimately destroy all false notions of self, which alone will result in true independence, is lacking. In fact, what often imitates that extraordinary and profound surrender and renunciation necessary to truly destroy all false notions of self, which alone will result in true independence, is instead *only the desire for validation of the personality*.

The relationship with the true teacher should offer no security for the ego whatsoever and should instead result in the discovery and attainment of perfect aloneness, perfect independence and the perfect and ultimate fulfillment of one's individuality.

Perfect Independence Allows True Partnership

At the beginning stages of association and relationship with a spiritual teacher, it is reasonable for the individual to seek for affirmation of self, and in that affirmation, healing at a deep emotional level. That experience—absolute validation of self—is the unanticipated and mysterious event that occurs in a real meeting with a true teacher. But that event, instead of becoming an end unto itself, should serve as the foundation for the individual's pursuit and ultimate attainment of final liberation.

Ideally, the healing that occurs in the meeting with the true teacher serves as a catalyst for the simultaneous ending of the past and the beginning of a truly unimaginable future. That future is the intense pursuit of the dissolution of all false and deluded notions about the nature of reality, relative and absolute, and in that dissolution, the rebirth of a human personality that has been liberated from the consequences of being painfully lost in false and deluded notions about the nature of reality, relative and absolute.

For this dissolution to occur, an enormous amount of responsibility must be taken by the student for their own evolution. That means that the individual who wants to be free must come to that point in their own evolution where they would be willing to give *everything* for the highest attainment. What is that attainment? That attainment is the living, breathing manifestation of perfect liberation as *oneself*. It is only at that point—when the student is finally willing to take full responsibility for their own evolution in the biggest possible way—that the literally evolutionary potential inherent in the relationship with the spiritual teacher can begin to manifest itself. The literally evolutionary potential inherent in the relationship with the spiritual teacher is the realization and manifestation of a dynamic partnership based on the *mutual* pursuit of, and intense interest in, the Real.

As long as distinct differences in depth of interest remain between teacher and student in the pursuit of, and intense interest in, the Real, the recognition of that relationship as a dynamic partnership will not occur. Only when the relationship with the spiritual teacher is based on the *mutual* pursuit of, and intense interest in,

the Real can that rare and dynamic partnership begin to reveal itself and actually occur.

Only the individual who has come to that point where they are willing to take full responsibility for their own evolution will be ready to embrace all the implications of what it means to be a truly independent human being. The individual who has not yet come to that point where they are willing to take full responsibility for their own evolution will not be able to move beyond a relationship of dependence with the spiritual teacher, and therefore, will not be prepared to enter into a dynamic partnership with the spiritual teacher based on the *mutual* pursuit of, and intense interest in, the Real.

Recognizing the True Teacher: What Is the Seeker Actually Looking for?

What is the seeker actually looking for?

Does the individual who is looking for a spiritual teacher want to be free? Is the individual who is looking for a spiritual teacher aspiring to attain perfect liberation in this very birth? Or is the individual who is looking for a spiritual teacher seeking for something other than perfect liberation in this very birth?

It is important to understand that how one will recognize a true teacher is determined by what it is that the individual is actually looking for. Generally speaking, most people do not go to spiritual teachers out of the genuine desire to attain spiritual liberation in this birth. Instead, many go in search of "blessings" and affirmations. Many seek the presence of a spiritual authority figure to help them to feel better, to find some relief from the burden of the mundane. The individual who is seeking affirmation of who they already are will be looking for the kind of spiritual authority figure who poses no threat to the status quo.

On the other hand, the individual who is seeking for genuine spiritual liberation realizes the awesome magnitude of the challenge they are taking on. That individual will be looking for very different qualities in a spiritual mentor than would the individual who is seeking mainly for affirmation of who they already are.

What Are Some Signs of Attainment in a True Teacher?

The spiritual teacher must be a natural expression of a true teaching of liberation—without effort or any sign of pretense. It is not that difficult with some attainment, a little effort and a lot of pretense to give a convincing

presentation. *Be aware that a less-than-perfect attainment can actually empower the ego.* Indeed, there have been many powerful and charismatic spiritual teachers who have been very knowledgeable about spiritual matters but who have turned out to be extremely untrustworthy as human beings.

Integrity is the single most important virtue that the spiritual mentor must be able to demonstrate, for it is integrity in the spiritual mentor alone that creates that most delicate foundation upon which perfect trust can be realized. It is the realization and discovery of perfect trust that can destroy any and all boundaries between self and other.

Rare vulnerability is the natural condition and expression of an individual who is deeply in touch with themselves and directly in touch with life itself. Nothing exists between the individual who has awakened and the actuality of life. The individual who is deeply in touch with themselves and directly in touch with all of life is refreshingly vulnerable, unusually natural and shockingly real.

Lack of self-consciousness should be the expression of the individual who has realized the nondual because the extraordinary impact that the profound realization of singularity has on the personality is *unification*.

Self-consciousness is the expression of a personality built upon a dualistic foundation. The individual who has not realized the singular or nondual as Self to a significant enough degree will still as a personality express a divided condition as self-consciousness.

The personality of that individual who has realized singularity as Self manifests a fundamentally undivided, unselfconscious condition expressed as unity and simplicity.

Spontaneity is the expression of a personality that has been liberated from the chains of fear and self-consciousness. The individual who has realized an undivided, unselfconscious condition has the natural ability to be who they are, as they are, in the most natural and unpremeditated fashion.

Trusting the True Teacher: The Door to Liberation

When an individual chooses to become seriously involved with a spiritual teacher a process of osmosis begins to occur within that individual at a very deep psychological and emotional level. This osmosis takes

place both consciously *and unconsciously*, and its effect is much greater than most people tend to be aware of. It's a dangerous business. Most people have no idea how delicate it truly is.

When an individual becomes seriously involved with a spiritual teacher, every aspect of the teacher's personality—gross and subtle, conscious and unconscious—is absorbed at the deepest levels of being. It is not only the teaching that is studied and absorbed, but indeed it is also the very condition that the teacher as human being is in at the deepest psychological and emotional level that the student consciously and unconsciously begins to emulate. Therefore it is not only the depth and breadth of the teacher's teaching that is important, but it is the ultimate condition or attainment of the teacher as human being that has the most significant influence on the student.

The individual who seriously seeks for a teacher, master or guru wants to find a mentor who they feel is truly worthy of being teacher, master or guru. There is always the desire in the seeker to ultimately find a spiritual mentor who they perceive as being perfect, or if not literally perfect, then as close to perfect as is humanly possible. Why is that necessary for the seeker? Because it is necessary for the seeker to have enough confidence in the integrity of the attainment of the mentor to allow themselves the profound and rare liberty of utterly letting go at the deepest levels of their being. It will only be possible for a seeker to achieve that degree of liberty—which is the rare and euphoric discovery of trust—if they are convinced of the integrity of the attainment of the mentor as human being.

The euphoric discovery of trust in the mentor enables a radical shift in consciousness to occur. The effect of that shift in consciousness is that the student now feels that they have a center, a very strong center, the foundation of which is the discovery of a deep trust. In what? In the validity of the perfection or near perfection of the attainment of the mentor. That trust enables the student the luxury of being able to trust, maybe for the first time, in life itself. It is in the attainment of absolute trust in the mentor that the student finds the extraordinary freedom inherent in the discovery of trust in life itself.

Ideally, the trust found in the relationship with the spiritual mentor serves as the bridge from isolation and separation to the discovery and attainment of conscious recognition of perfect interrelatedness. It is in this way that the relationship with the teacher can serve as a door to liberation. ■

The Seal of GOD

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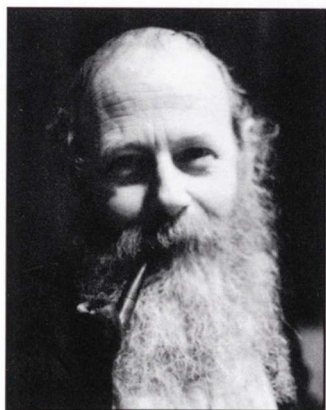
Jewish

measure

of

spiritual

authority



**RABBI
ADIN
STEINSALTZ**

Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz is one of the foremost Judaic scholars and teachers of this century. His accomplishments include the publication of multiple volumes of the Steinsaltz Talmud, a new edition of the traditional Jewish scriptural commentary. The above excerpt is from a dialogue between Rabbi Steinsaltz and Andrew Cohen at the rabbi's home in Jerusalem last year.

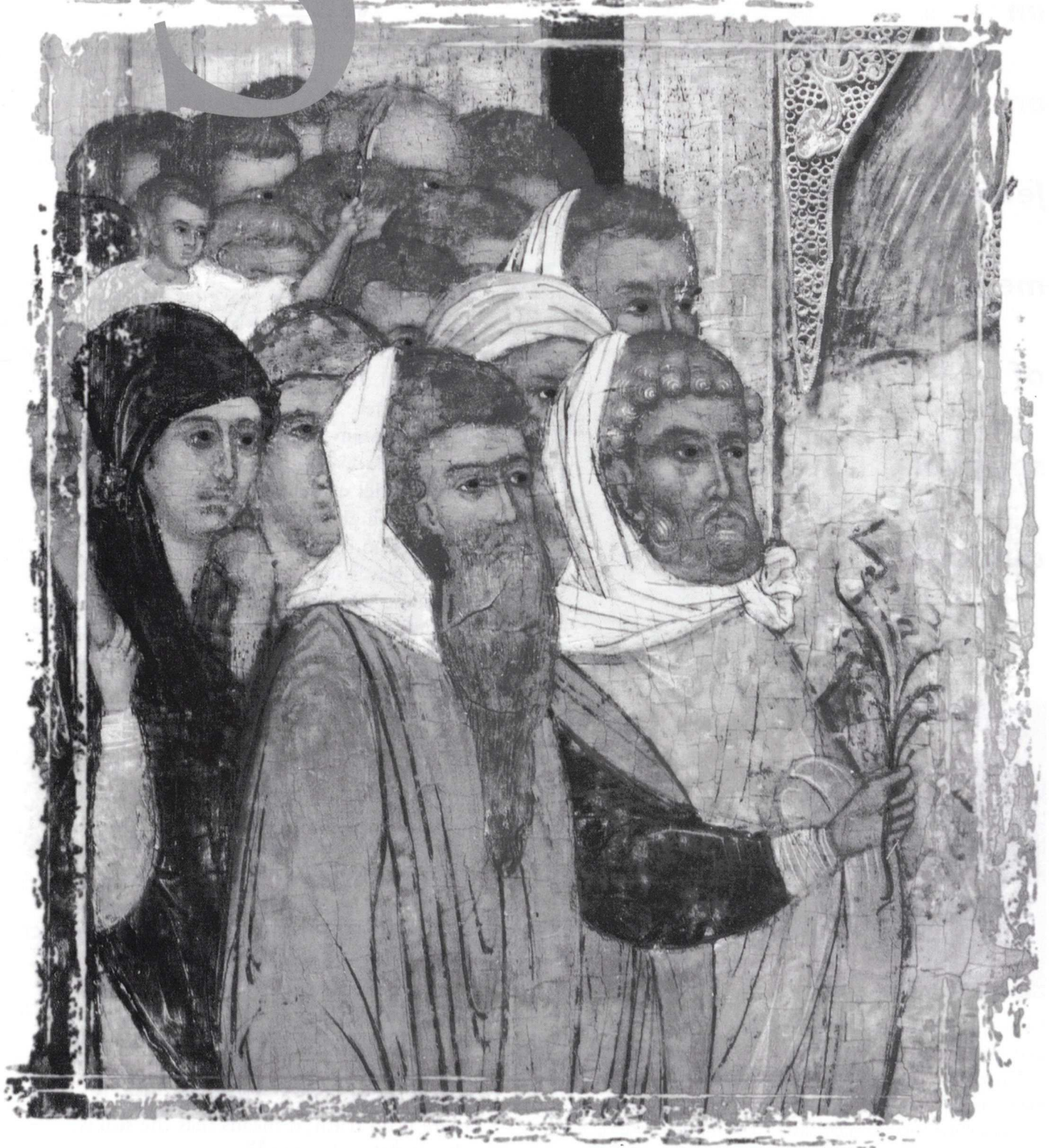
“**T**here is a dividing line. We have always had a demand that is written even in the books of law: a person may be a great scholar, extremely intelligent and all that—but if he doesn’t measure up to what he says, he is of no value and he shouldn’t be honored. He shouldn’t be respected; he’s only talking.

“There is a book, one of the most famous books we have on morality. For us, as an old people, it’s a recent book, only four hundred years old. This book became very influential. It’s called *The Beginning of Wisdom* because there is a verse in Proverbs that says, ‘The beginning of wisdom is fear of God.’

It’s a book on morality, which means behavior, and includes everything from theology to sex, with very high demands on every level, very high demands. After he wrote this book, the author was living here in this country, in Zefat, and some scholars were sent to examine him. Now they didn’t examine what he wrote in his book because they knew that he was scholarly enough to write everything correctly. They wanted to see whether he was the kind of a person who behaves according to his book; that was what they wanted to check. It was a different kind of a check, it was not checking on whether what he wrote was correct.

“In this case they found out that he was consistent. Then the book came to have a great amount of influence, but not so much because of the content. It was not just a matter of sincerity; it was a matter of having here a person who is saying what is true, true in the sense that he is living it, he is being with it, he is a part of it. So because of that we believe that the book has what we call the Seal. The seal of God is Truth. That is the seal. Where there is no truth, it means that the seal is absent. It’s a forgery.”

“Such People We



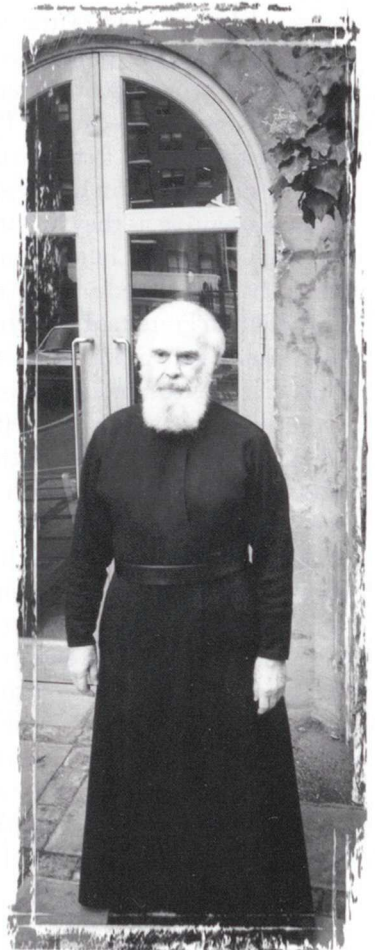
Have Never Seen”

METROPOLITAN A Meeting with the Head **ANTHONY** of the Russian Orthodox Church **OF SOUROZH** in Great Britain

In the following article and interview we meet a living example of purity in spiritual authority. Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh is the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Great Britain, a church that sees itself as proceeding in an unbroken lineage from the earliest days of Christianity. Having split from the Western church in 1054, Eastern Orthodoxy today has over 170 million followers and, with Russia's new openness to religion, is growing in size and influence. For many years, Metropolitan Anthony's sermons have been broadcast by BBC radio and television, and he is well known in Europe and Russia as "the voice and face of Orthodoxy."

Central to Orthodox Christianity is the hesychast tradition, the esoteric practice of silent contemplation under the direction of a staretz, or spiritual father. This tradition is said to go back to the early saints and Christian contemplatives known as the Desert Fathers. Metropolitan Anthony is himself a contemplative as well as a spiritual father to many. Through his books and talks, he has brought prayer and spirituality to life for innumerable others. While fulfilling the responsibilities of a patriarch in the Church organization, Metropolitan Anthony sees union with the Divine and manifesting this union in the world as his foremost task. His humility and single-minded seriousness of purpose shine through in this portrait of a rare and extraordinary human being.

article and interview by Chris Parish



It's Sunday morning. As I approach the Russian Orthodox Church, which looks small and unimposing amid the stately Georgian architecture of affluent Knightsbridge in Central London, I am wondering what it will be like to meet Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Great Britain and a man regarded by many as nothing less than a modern-day saint. In a time when organized religion seems to have fallen into disrepute and spiritual authorities in general are regarded with suspicion and mistrust, what is it that attracts this man's parishioners to Christian Orthodoxy, and why do they and so many others hold him in such high esteem? As I pause before the pale stone front of his church, it excites me to realize that I am about to find out.

After entering through the heavy wooden door, it takes my eyes a moment to adjust to the dim light within. But then what strikes me is just how many people are here for today's service—hundreds, and they're all standing. I'm surprised to see that there are hardly any chairs, though I find out later that this is the norm for services in the Orthodox Church. The atmosphere is rich with the smell of incense and the beautiful voices of an unaccompanied choir. The walls and pillars are covered with golden icons depicting the Orthodox tradition's pantheon of saints. Candlelight shimmers in the darkness, reflected by the gold of the icons. A feeling of devotion is palpable as people pray, kneeling periodically on the bare wooden floor, or deep in contemplation, offer a candle and kiss the icons unselfconsciously. Partly in Russian and partly in English, the service lasts for a good two and a half hours, by the end of which I can hardly stand. But the people around me look as attentive as they did at the start.

The Orthodox Church is an Eastern branch of Christianity which has developed in near-total isolation from the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches of the West. Prayer has always been paramount in its tradition as a way of communion with God, and the extraordinary lives of its many saints through the centuries are testimony to its efficacy. In our time the Orthodox Church is increasingly attractive to many Western Christians who feel that it offers a depth of spiritual life not available to them in their own traditions. I've been told that recently an Anglican priest together with his entire congregation converted to Orthodoxy in this very church. The priest said during the ceremony that for him it was a homecoming.

Suddenly the congregation crowds expectantly to the front and an elderly archbishop with a gray beard and an ornate robe and mitre begins speaking in English. I know at once that this must be Metropolitan Anthony. As he leans on his staff, eyes closed and seemingly in meditation, his carefully chosen words emerge with a natural warmth and authority. His sermon is short, but his words command attention and have undeniable power and authenticity:

"People usually say that a heretic is someone who holds false and wrong views, but also I say a heretic is someone who

doesn't live what they preach. So let us examine ourselves. Why is it that people who meet us never notice that we are limbs of the risen Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit? Why? Each of us has got to give his own reply to this question. Let us, each of us, examine ourselves and be ready to answer before our own conscience, and do what is necessary to change our lives in such a way that people meeting us may look at us and say: 'Such people we have never seen. There is something about them that we have never seen in anyone. What is it?' And we could answer: 'It is the life of Christ in us. We are His limbs. This is the life of the spirit in us. We are His temple.' "

Suddenly the service is over and the congregation begins to disperse. When the Metropolitan reappears after a few minutes, the robe and mitre are gone, replaced by a plain brown monk's habit and a well-worn leather belt. People waylay him and ask with moving devotion for a quick word or a blessing for their babies. As he strides purposefully towards me, I realize how extraordinarily vigorous and solid he is for a man over eighty years old. He takes both my hands together in his and readily agrees to my request for an interview. Then he's gone, disappearing out a side door.

Although we've hardly spoken, I feel that I've just met with a fellow human being rather than with the representative of a powerful institution. Why this is so becomes clearer to me during another visit to the church to listen to the Metropolitan speak at the ordination of a new deacon:

"Let us therefore pray with him and surround him with care, with compassion, because we have sent him like a lamb among the wolves. The wolves are all the temptations that may come with new force to everyone who devotes his life to the service of God. It is also those people to whom he will be sent, of whom some will receive his words with gratitude and some will reject them with anger, because the message he is to bring is a message of total transparency, total surrender to God, and also of a heroic following of Him who has said to us: 'I have given you an example to follow.' " Listening to this, I have the feeling that Metropolitan Anthony is speaking as much about himself as anyone else.

Returning a few weeks later at the time we've arranged for our interview, I'm surprised that it is the archbishop himself who heaves open the door to greet me. Seeing him again I realize that he is shorter than I had thought, his bearing and presence having given the impression of a man of larger physical stature. I follow him upstairs to the gallery, where we have to climb through all manner of boxes and old clothes—stored here for rummage sales—in order to get to the small space where he keeps a makeshift desk. Since the gallery is tiered and narrow, the seat he offers me is on a higher level than his own, so that I find myself looking down at the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Great Britain and feeling

slightly embarrassed by this reversal of protocol. He seems to have no secretary or office and appears indifferent to such material concerns. I notice that his monk's habit is held together by a safety pin.

The Metropolitan is very welcoming, and although his gaze is steady and penetrating, his eyes often flicker with humor. I find him down to earth, completely natural and quick to laugh, and I sense in him a fearlessness that must come from having gone through the fire himself. Because he is so self-effacing, tending to downplay his knowledge and spiritual attainment, it is sometimes difficult to draw him out about his own inner life. He seems to prefer sharing stories and anecdotes reminiscent of the teaching stories of the Desert Fathers, the early Christian ascetics of the Egyptian desert among whom the Orthodox tradition originated. He relates with amusement that the posters announcing a seminar he once gave at Oxford made it clear that believers were not invited, because it is his experience that believers

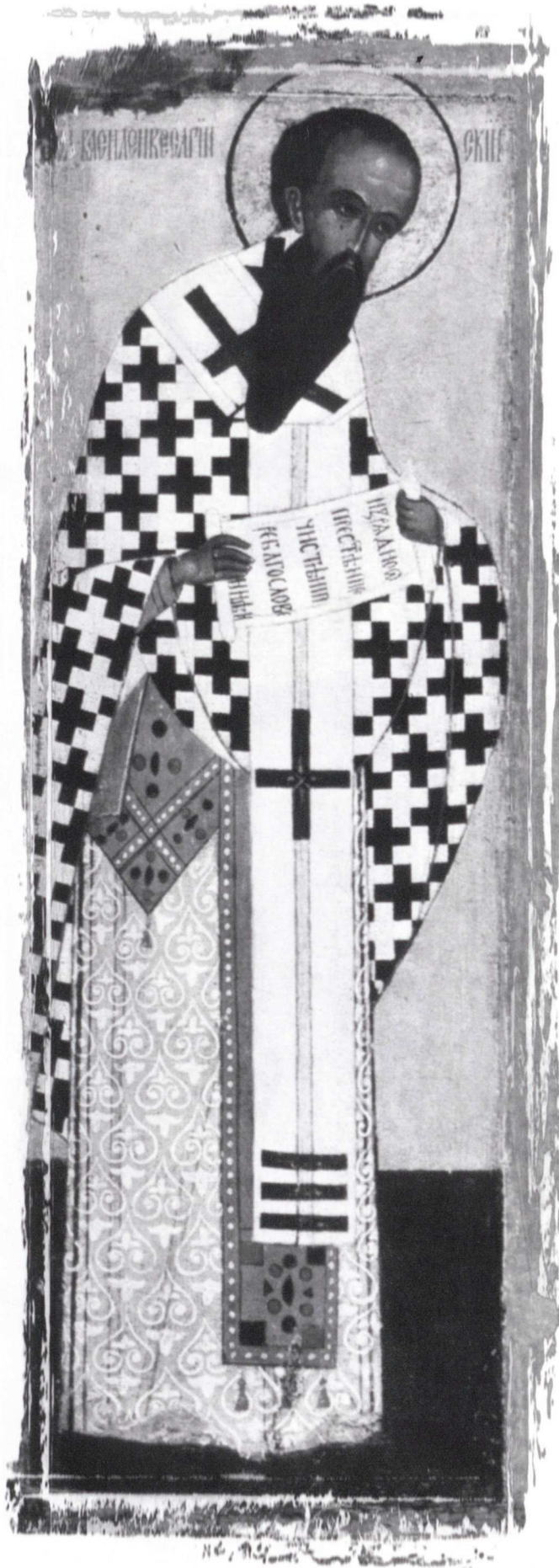
Man's aim, the end and vocation set before him, is that through and beyond his own union with God, he should make this transcendent yet ever-present God (who enfolds and penetrates all, in whom we live and move and have our being, but who remains unknown to the world, unknowable indeed from without) interior and immanent in man and through man in the world; united with his creature indissolubly, though without confusion, distinct yet not alien, still himself, still personal, still God—yet closer to the soul than breathing itself. . . .

Thus, as he embarks on his course, the Christian must make his peace with God, with his own conscience, with men and things; relinquish all care about himself, firmly purpose to forget himself, not to know himself, to kill in himself all greed, even for spiritual things, in order to know nothing but God alone. . . .

Henceforward the worshipper must free himself from the bondage of the world by unconditional obedience—joyful, total, humble, and immediate; he must in all simplicity seek God, without hiding any of his wretchedness, without founding any hope on himself, in this active self-abandonment to God which is the spirit of watchfulness in humility, in veneration, with a sincere will to be converted, ready to die rather than give up the search.

Metropolitan Anthony
from his introduction to *The Way of a Pilgrim*





think they have all the answers and tend not to be open! Having read some of his books and listened to some of his BBC radio and television broadcasts, I know his talks and writings to be an extraordinary and universal testament to the fruits of the spiritual life. But he smiles with a certain relish as he confesses that he never went to theological college.

The son of a Russian diplomat, Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh was born in 1914 and spent his early years in Russia and Persia. Because of the revolution, his family emigrated to France, where he eventually became a medical doctor in Paris. He recalls that his father was a powerful spiritual influence on him as he was growing up. Once, when he returned home late from a holiday, his father told him that he had been worried about him. "Did you think I'd had an accident?" he asked. But that wasn't what his father was concerned about. "That would have meant nothing," his father answered, "even if you had been killed. I thought you had lost your integrity." This incident made a profound impression on him, and has stayed with him all his life.

During the Second World War, he served in the French Resistance as well as practicing medicine. Many of his anecdotes about the conditions which really test an individual's devotion to truth and readiness for self-sacrifice are drawn from his experiences during the war. He took monastic vows

Doing the will of God is a discipline in the best sense of the word. It is also a test of our loyalty, of our fidelity to Christ. It is by doing in every detail, at every moment, to the utmost of our power, as perfectly as we can, with the greatest moral integrity, using our intelligence, our imagination, our will, our skill, our experience, that we can gradually learn to be strictly, earnestly obedient to the Lord God.

Unless we do this our discipleship is an illusion and all our life of discipline, when it is a set of self-imposed rules in which we delight, which makes us proud and self-satisfied, leaves us nowhere, because the essential momentum of our discipleship is the ability to reject our self, to allow the Lord Christ to be our mind, our will and our heart. Unless we renounce ourselves and accept his life in place of our life, unless we aim at what St. Paul defines as "it is no longer I but Christ who lives in me," we shall never be either disciplined or disciples.

Metropolitan Anthony
from "Living Prayer"

secretly in 1943 and was ordained as a priest in 1948. Soon afterward he moved in order to serve his church in England, where he has lived ever since. He became an archbishop in 1962, and Metropolitan (which means bishop of a chief city, or metropolis) in 1966.

By the Metropolitan's own account, he was "aggressively anti-church" during his teenage years in Paris, and did not believe in God. At a certain point, while at boarding school, it occurred to him that life would be unbearable if it had no meaning. He allotted himself one year in which to discover whether life did have any meaning. He decided that if at the end of that year he had found none, he would kill himself.

Months went by and no meaning appeared. Then one day he was persuaded to attend a talk by a priest who had been invited to address a Russian youth group to which he belonged. He sat through the lecture reluctantly, finding himself disturbed and repelled by the picture of Christianity which the priest presented. Returning home, he read through one of the Gospels to see if it would confirm the negative impression the lecture had given him. As he read he suddenly became aware of a mysterious and overwhelming presence in the room. To his shock and surprise he knew without any doubt that this was Christ. This direct experience was, he says, the turning point of his life, and gave him a certainty which has never left him.

Metropolitan Anthony answered several questions on the subject of spiritual authority for this issue of What Is Enlightenment?

WIE: What is the importance of a spiritual father or master in guiding a sincere person who wants to go further in their spiritual life, who wants to be serious about God?

METROPOLITAN ANTHONY: As in every walk of life, before you can walk independently you must be taught how to walk and in what direction. If you have someone who is more experienced than you are, knows perhaps more or better, it's natural that you should learn to listen. And the point of obedience, which we always think of in terms of being like a little dog who is given commands and obeys them—it isn't that at all. Obedience is a word that means *listening*. If you learn to listen to someone else, not only to the words he speaks but to the mood and meaning he tries to convey, you become freer of your self-centeredness, of your narrowness, and you become capable of listening not only to this man but to every person, and to the totality of life, and to God. Because unless you learn to listen to one person you cannot learn to listen. But on the other hand, it is not everyone who knows a little and can teach a great deal. If you find a great spiritual guide you are lucky, but they don't grow like grass.

WIE: In the modern world there have been many people who've assumed the role of mentor or teacher and abused their power, so that people have become suspicious of genuine spiritual authority.

MA: One must learn at the same time to listen with openness, and never to renounce one's right to say, "I cannot follow beyond this point." Because otherwise you will obey the guidance of people who have no basis for guidance, who have no reason to guide you. It doesn't mean you have a right to judge everyone, to say, "I know better." But it means that you must be very sure that this person knows what the answer is to your question, to the question you are asking.

WIE: I read your beautiful introduction to *The Way of a Pilgrim*, the famous classic of Russian Orthodox spirituality. You wrote there about the importance of a relationship with a master who is well qualified to guide one on the way.

MA: Yes, but the master doesn't always tell you, "You do this and you do that and you will arrive at such and such a point." At times he's an example to you, at times there is something in him that

makes you follow. I remember how I found my spiritual father. I came to a church late for the service and I saw a man coming out. There was in him such serenity, such centeredness and light that I came up to him and said, "I don't know who you are, but would you be my spiritual guide?" And afterwards he hardly ever gave me guidance, but I'm sure he prayed for me, and I found that I was like a little skiff tied by a long rope to a great boat. He was moving in that direction and I was moving behind him, but there was always this rope between us. I saw him once or twice a year, and whenever we met I discovered I had come to a point where he was. Not in the same degree, but like a little circle and a big circle: both are a circle, but there is a difference of size, of scale. Before he died he sent a note to me, "I know now what the mystery of contemplative silence is, I can now die." And he was dead within three days.

WIE: He was obviously an important influence on you.

MA: Yes, but he must be ashamed of me now because I have not born fruit of what he was. But he is really an image for me.

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WIE: Often people don't like the idea of obedience to authority, but you are talking about being inspired by and following the example of another.

MA: If only people thought less in terms of drill and doing what they are told, but thought instead, "If I want to learn to play the piano, I must ask someone to direct every finger of mine." The same is true about everything we want to learn. You cannot learn the piano by simply banging and hoping it will come out right.

WIE: For the Orthodox Christian and the Orthodox Christian path, what is the ideal goal or result for a human being?

MA: I think I would answer in a way that may sound very stupid: to become a real human being. Because habitually we are not real human beings, we are human animals. We develop our intellect, we have our emotions, we have a

wavering will. This is not real harmony. This is not wholeness. The perfect wholeness to us is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The aim of the Christian life is to become disciples, people who learn from him, not only obedient in the sense of being well drilled but obedient in the sense of being able to listen deeply, to understand his thought, his heart, and to grow into the full measure of our humanity, which is His humanity.

WIE: What would it mean to grow into the full measure of one's humanity, the full measure of Christ's humanity?

MA: I think the ideal would be to love one's neighbor with all one's being—if necessary at the cost of one's life—and to know and love God with all of one's being, because it is His life and His love that finds perfect expression in us when we are sufficiently open. ■

Chris Parish is an associate editor of *What Is Enlightenment?* He currently resides in London.

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A Talk by Andrew Cohen

The Challenge of Enlightenment

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For more information, contact Torbjörn or Ashok at: [tel/fax 46-8-759-0932](tel:46-8-759-0932) (Sweden).

Or e-mail to: explore@himalaya.se

Details of this journey with photos can also be viewed on the Internet at:

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Books by Andrew Cohen

Praise for **An Unconditional Relationship to Life**

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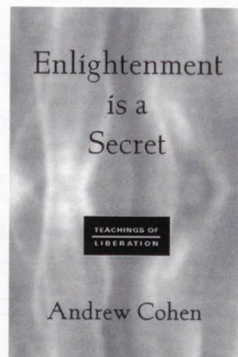
An Unconditional Relationship To Life

The Odyssey Of A Young American Spiritual Teacher

Andrew Cohen

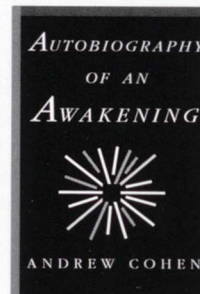
An Unconditional Relationship to Life, Andrew Cohen's most recent book, is a strikingly original and powerfully experiential journey through the modern spiritual world both East and West. Describing the evolution of his own understanding through his meetings with teachers from various traditions and 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.

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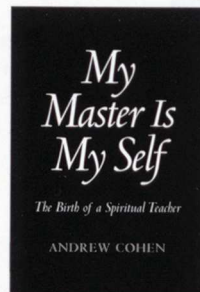
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Autobiography of an Awakening is a portrayal of Andrew Cohen's uncompromising search for liberation, his profound awakening, and finally his painful struggle to come to terms with the discrepancy between his teacher's realization and his own. The essence of his story is a captivating and provocative inquiry into the nature of enlightenment.

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My Master Is My Self is the compelling story of Andrew Cohen's single-hearted dedication to the discovery of the truth and the profound spiritual realization that irrevocably transformed his life. Through diaries and letters it chronicles his meeting with the then little-known Indian teacher H.V.L. Poonja, and describes how his own teaching began. Portraying the unfolding of a remarkable awakening and the birth of a profound spiritual teaching, *My Master Is My Self* has come to be regarded as a modern underground spiritual classic.

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Boston	April 14
New York City	April 19, 20
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Stockholm	May 24-26
Berlin	May 28
Frankfurt	May 30
Cologne Retreat	June 2
Paris	June 5
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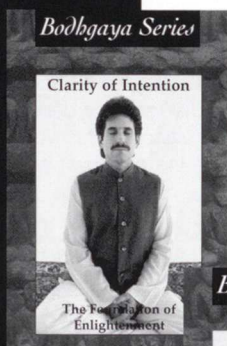
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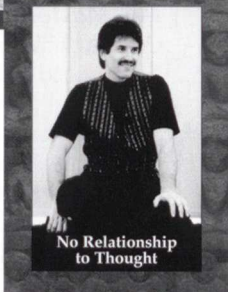
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