

September – November 2009 Issue 45

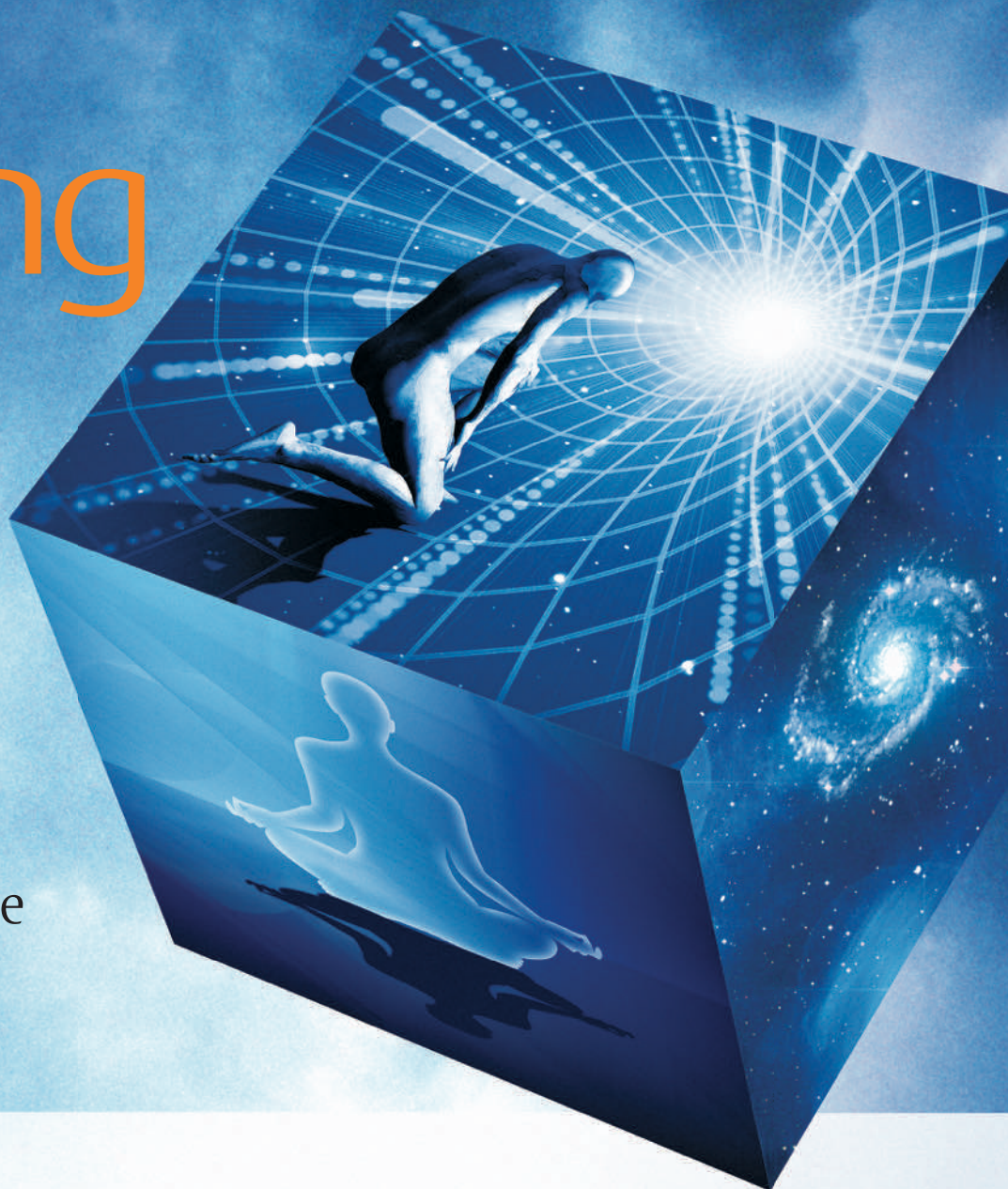
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# EnlightenNext

THE MAGAZINE FOR **EVOLUTIONARIES**™

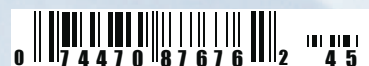
## The Evolving Faces of God

New perspectives  
on the meaning of  
spirituality for our time



**GENPO ROSHI:** The End of Enlightenment as We Know It • **ANDREW COHEN & KEN WILBER:** How to Bring the Ego to Its Knees • “Why I Became a Sufi” with **ALIYA HAERI** • **JEAN TWENGE** takes on The Narcissism Epidemic • **JUN PO ROSHI:** The Making of a Modern Zen Master • **BERNIE GLASSMAN'S** New Breed of Bodhisattva • “Cross-Training for the Soul” with **TERRY PATTEN** • Remembering **THOMAS BERRY** • **AMIT GOSWAMI'S** Creative Evolution • The Spiritual Implications of **TWITTER**

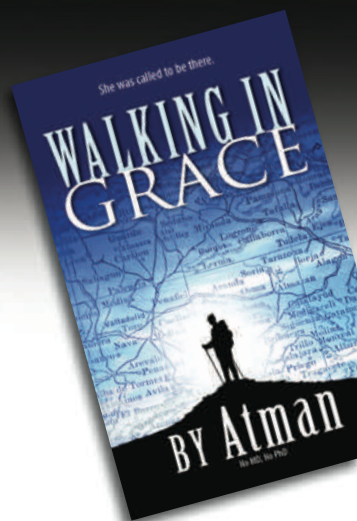
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This experience is personal  
and may save their sorry  
state-of-affairs life."**

*Sharon Crafford - editor*

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online bookstores.**

# EnlightenNext

Issue 45 September – November 2009

*EnlightenNext* magazine is published by a nonprofit educational organization of the same name.

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

EnlightenNext is dedicated to catalyzing evolution in consciousness and culture. We strive to be leaders, examples, and pathfinders in the emerging field of integral and evolutionary spirituality, and to stand for the ultimate relevance of spiritual enlightenment in our time. Through our integrated annual cycle of programs and events and our award-winning publications, we are awakening, connecting, and cultivating a global movement of "evolutionaries"—individuals who feel personally responsible for creating the future.

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**CORRECTION:** In the June–August 2009 issue, we made a typographical error in "The Nanotech Revolution" by Ray Kurzweil: "We found that in order to meet our global energy demand, we only have to capture one part in ten thousand of the 1017 watts that fall on the earth every day." The correct number of watts is  $10^{17}$ .



# As we face ever bigger questions, where can you turn for the *best answers?*



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Founder, Bnei Baruch + Thinker

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## 2009

October 17 ~ 24      Loveland, Colorado  
Nov. 28 ~ Dec. 5      Green Bay, Wisconsin

## 2010

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March 20 ~ 27      Green Bay, Wisconsin  
May 1 ~ 8      Loveland, Colorado

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# EnlightenNext

THE MAGAZINE FOR **EVOLUTIONARIES**<sup>SM</sup>

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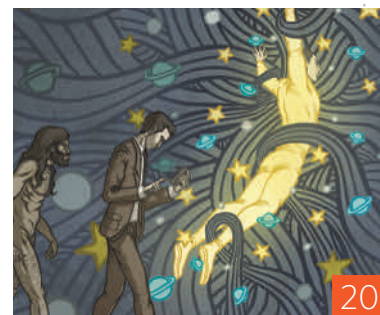
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BY CARTER PHIPPS



# EnlightenNext online

Take your inquiry further at [EnlightenNext.org/magazine](http://EnlightenNext.org/magazine). Read fresh news and insights from the editors on our blog; watch and listen to interviews with the leading-edge thinkers featured in each issue; and much more!

## This issue's featured audios:



### Aliya Haeri—An Unlikely Path to Liberation

A spiritual teacher speaks about the Sufi path and her unconventional marriage to Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri.

[enlightennext.org/haeri](http://enlightennext.org/haeri)



### Jean M. Twenge—The Narcissism Epidemic

A research psychologist explores the startling cultural trend toward increasing self-obsession.

[enlightennext.org/twenge](http://enlightennext.org/twenge)



### Steve Kanji Ruhl—Socially Engaged Buddhism

A "Zen minister" talks about Roshi Bernie Glassman's new program to train aspiring bodhisattvas.

[enlightennext.org/ruhl](http://enlightennext.org/ruhl)



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## The *EnlightenNext* Editors' Blog

[blog.enlightennext.org](http://blog.enlightennext.org)

Ideas, opinions, and commentary from the editors of *EnlightenNext*. Here's a sampling of recent posts:



### Evolutionary Enlightenment 101

Exploring the true meaning of nonduality.

by Andrew Cohen



### The Birth of a Moral Leader

Does Obama's willingness to take a strong moral stand represent a new kind of leadership among progressives?

by Carter Phipps



### Divine Feminine Alert No. 1

A challenge to women-centered spirituality's most sacred cow.

by Elizabeth Debold



### Perspectives on Integral Ecology

An ongoing dialogue at the leading edge of environmental thought.

by Ross Robertson & Michael Zimmerman



### All Excellence Is Elitist

Striving for spiritual excellence in a world of mediocrity.

by Tom Huston



### Why We Need to Compare Ourselves to Others

Thoughts on Kobe Bryant, humility, narcissism, and turning thirty.

by Joel Pitney

# Letters

Send your letters to [letters@enlightennext.org](mailto:letters@enlightennext.org) or PO Box 2360, Lenox, MA 01240 USA



Issue 44  
June–August 2009

## NEVER FEAR

A most hearty congratulations to brothers Andrew and Ken for articulating so concisely and beautifully the basic dynamics governing our overall human predicament in their opening comments of the Guru & Pandit dialogue. I have never come across a more powerful and convincing synthesis of where we are at and what we need to be cognizant of in our present existential crisis.

We must never underestimate the ability of fear abetted by egoistic needs to undermine our most coveted second-tier levels of consciousness and push us back down to first-tier levels.

**John H. Boyd**  
Toronto, Canada

## MORE SACRED, NOT MORE STUFF

The Western mind does not easily speak of concepts like the journey of a soul, the evolution of all things, or the sacred. This was my observation while reading

the excellent last edition of *EnlightenNext*, an issue that elaborated on the central questions of the day and could easily position this publication as one of the premier magazines of our time.

The content was exacting, but I felt a “hardening of the categories” as I read each interview. I saw the Western industrial mindset at work, not the central questions of the sacred you normally ask about and strive to illuminate. There is an absolute dearth of discussion about where we are going, and the futurists you chose, brilliant as their discourse was, revealed just how much more work there is to do to reach our dreams.

We need to stretch to think about our highest purpose for the future, not just the technologically slick tools of the next world. Remember Ernest Callenbach’s *Ecotopia*? Remember the Wizard of Oz and the Emerald City? These ideas invite the creative impulse to reach deeper than the industrial footprint we have built upon. The footprint that drives Americans from subdivision to factory to mall is a lonely and soulless journey of specialization, division, and almost total separation from nature. We need to stretch toward ultimates, not just the latest fashion. More *stuff* is a dead-end road.

**Jim Channon**  
Hawaii

## KEEPING OUR EYES ON THE PRIZE

In “Freedom in the Face of Fear,” Wilber and Cohen rightly warn us against falling prey to fear in the crises looming ahead. This raises the question: How can we cope with this fear in order to avoid letting ourselves become diverted from the path toward our evolutionary destiny? The latest book by Ken Wilber et al., *Integral Life Practice*, provides an example of how to do this. They start by working on the shadow, which refers to the dark aspects of our psyche like fear and anger, before taking on the truly creative tasks. So coping with our own personal shadows can at the same time prepare us for the worst global nightmares that we may face in the future.

**Jan Bossuyt**  
Avelgem, Belgium

## AMERICA AS EMPIRE

Does liberation without a face include going beyond a national identity? I feel that because most of your editors are American, they bring an “America the Beautiful and Land of the Free” spin to a magazine meant for evolutionaries the world over.

It would be nice to see some reflection on the areas where the U.S. is *not* doing so well. For example, in a recent UNICEF study, the northern European nations were shown to be doing the best job of providing for the health, education, and

well-being of their children, while the U.S. and UK were at the bottom of the list.

I agree with Dr. Thomas Barnett that it is very important to have a grand strategy that looks at the entire structure of our world and how to move it forward. But I am not so sure that globalization needs to happen “at the barrel of a gun.” I am much more comfortable with how Jim Garrison articulates his vision of how this global transition could take place as paraphrased on [integrallife.com](http://integrallife.com):

*The central paradox of the world is the fact that America has become the most powerful nation-state in the history of civilization, at precisely a time when the forces of history are demanding that we move beyond the very concept of nation-states, into a new era of truly world-centric global governance. And herein lies the ultimate challenge for America: to consciously view itself as a ‘transitional empire,’ leading the human species away from political fragmentation and economic isolation, toward a genuinely integrated world governance. In this way, America can guarantee that it will indeed be history’s very last empire, by helping to make obsolete the need for imperial powers altogether.\**

**Sue Wali (Cook)**  
Vancouver, BC

\*See our February–April 2004 issue for an excerpt from this book.

*Letters continued on page 104*



# Editorial: An important message from the founder of EnlightenNext

Like just about everyone else these days, we at EnlightenNext are undergoing a period of enormous transition. Eighteen years ago, I came up with an intriguing idea:

Produce a second-to-none spiritual magazine that would play a significant role in helping to make better sense out of the complex journey that Eastern enlightenment was taking as it slowly but surely established a small but not insignificant niche in postmodern Western culture. Over the years, as I and we have grown and evolved, the magazine has become much more than what it originally was, embracing integral theory, evolutionary cosmology, and the all-important relationship between consciousness and culture.

What is most deeply satisfying to all of us here is to look back on our work over the last almost two decades and to witness the evolution of consciousness in action and . . . in print! Which brings me to the main point of this editorial. For the entire time we've been producing this magazine, it has been strictly a labor of love—a love of Truth, God, Spirit, philosophy, and, above all, our collective capacity to express a deeper humanity as we spiritually awaken. But this labor of love also costs us lots of effort and lots of money. You need to know that we have been producing the magazine at an enormous loss for many, many years. As is the case for so many other magazines today, what we have been doing is just no longer sustainable!

Our problem is that we are so inspired by this work that as long as we could manage it, we have been willing to carry the shortfall in the bottom line ourselves. But we simply can't do that anymore. One way or another, we will continue, but exactly how that's going to unfold depends to a large degree upon you, our loyal readers. It depends upon all of you who value the care and precision that we bring to every single word that we put on paper.

If you feel that the print version of EnlightenNext has significant value as a powerful vehicle for the evolution of consciousness and culture, please express that appreciation through your generous support.



The truth is, right now we really are depending on you. And how we are going to continue doing the important work we are committed to depends on you and what YOU want. We all know that print in many forms will soon be a thing of the past . . . but we also strongly feel that spirituality, philosophy, and serious cultural commentary held in your hands on the printed page can travel much more deeply into a reader's heart, mind, and soul than even the best online communication can. We do have plans to significantly expand our online presence. But at the same time, we would very much like to be able to produce what we can't help but feel is the best spiritual magazine available, in print form, for many years to come.

We invite you to collaborate with us and express your views on the direction you feel we should take—we want to work with you in a new spirit of openness. Also, and most importantly, please support us by sending a generous donation. Thank you!

**Andrew Cohen**  
Founder and Editor in Chief

## UNDERWRITE ENLIGHTENNEXT

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# EnlightenNext Discovery Cycle:

## EnlightenNext is more than just a magazine . . .

It's the hub of a growing global movement of evolutionaries—thinking people who are stepping forward to help define what the future will be. If you're inspired by life, turned on by what's possible, and want to participate in the evolution of human consciousness and culture, then join us as we embark on the next phase of EnlightenNext's twenty-year journey . . .

The EnlightenNext Discovery Cycle is designed to awaken, connect, and cultivate a global network of evolutionaries through a dynamic annual cycle of engagement. This cycle is organized around two major events: the Being & Becoming Retreat and

the Conference for Evolutionaries. Both will be milestone experiences in their own right, yet they are also much more than that. They are the two primary elements of one integrated process designed to explore how the evolution of our *interiors*—our consciousness, values, and perspectives—affects the evolution of the *exterior* world we all share and create.

The Discovery Cycle is the culmination of more than two decades of experience at EnlightenNext engaging with spiritual leaders, cultural visionaries, and thousands of evolutionaries around the world. Founded in 1988 by spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen, we've been working ever since to awaken people to the liberating freedom of their own highest self and the empowering clarity of an evolutionary perspective.

## The EnlightenNext Discovery Cycle

The Being & Becoming Retreat

COLORADO  
AUGUST 2010

The Conference  
for Evolutionaries

MAY 2010

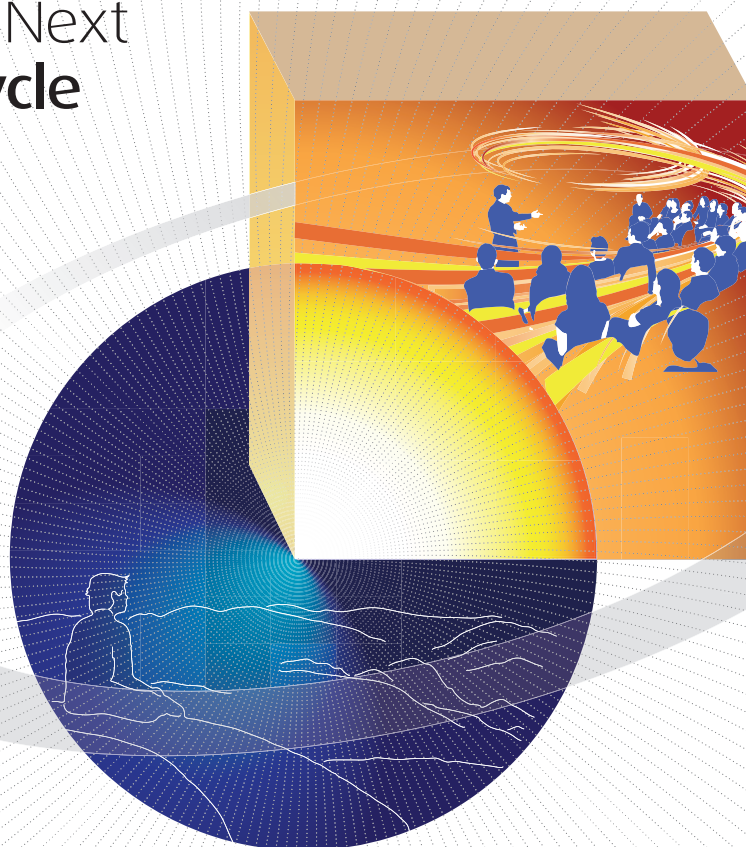
As part of the Discovery Cycle,  
Andrew Cohen will also be leading  
three weekend intensives in Fall 2009:

October 16–18 Watsonville, CA

November 6–8 Lenox, MA

November 20–22 Oberus, Germany

Visit: [www.andrewcohen.org/events](http://www.andrewcohen.org/events)





# Participate in a Global Movement to Consciously Create the Future



## The 2010 Conference for Evolutionaries!

May 15–17, 2010

A virtual journey to the edge of cosmic evolution

**God . . . Soul . . . Eros . . . Evolution . . .** Everything in the cosmos, from the first moments of the big bang to the firing of the synapses in your brain as you read these words, has been shaped by a mysterious creative impulse. And we've designed our first Conference for Evolutionaries, the next major step in the EnlightenNext Discovery Cycle, as a rich virtual journey through the nature and dynamics of this universal drive to develop and evolve.

Hosted by EnlightenNext founder Andrew Cohen and the editors of *EnlightenNext* magazine, this three-day virtual "foundations course" in the emerging evolutionary worldview will feature talks, dialogues, and discussions with many of the leading spiritual and philosophical voices on the planet, including Ken Wilber, Brian Swimme, Rupert Sheldrake, Deepak Chopra, Jenny Wade, Annette Kaiser, Genpo Roshi, Don Beck, and many, many more.

Beginning with the story of the evolutionary impulse as seen through the lens of cosmology and cutting-edge science, we'll explore the creative mechanics of culture and consciousness from many different perspectives: philosophy, psychology, integral thought, the great mystical traditions, and the evolution of contemporary spiritual experience. We'll ask questions like: How do we measure higher human development? How does the soul evolve? What is the relationship between conscious evolution and ego transcendence? How do we build a vital movement of evolutionaries committed to bringing a new spiritual and moral paradigm into the heart of twenty-first-century culture?

It's all part of the larger EnlightenNext Discovery Cycle, which continues throughout the year with weekly webcasts, discussion forums, and in-depth workshops—and leads up (through the next Being and Becoming Retreat in Colorado in 2010) to our first-ever live Conference for Evolutionaries, coming in 2011.

Featuring . . .



**Ken Wilber**  
Integral Pioneer



**Andrew Cohen**  
Founder of EnlightenNext



**Jenny Wade**  
Developmental Psychologist



**Deepak Chopra**  
Spiritual Leader



**Rupert Sheldrake**  
Innovative Biologist



**Annette Kaiser**  
Sufi Teacher



**Elizabeth Debold**  
*EnlightenNext* Senior Editor



**Genpo Roshi**  
Zen Master

. . . and many, many more.

For information about the 2010 Conference for Evolutionaries and the rest of the EnlightenNext Discovery Cycle, visit:

**[enlightennext.org/discovery](http://enlightennext.org/discovery)**



 Zeitgeist

## Twitter Gets Spiritualized

This past June, the text-messaging phenomenon known as Twitter seemed to penetrate humanity's collective consciousness from every angle at once. First, *Time* magazine led the charge with a cover story, "How Twitter Will Change the Way We Live." Then every news outlet from Al Jazeera to the BBC declared a "Twitter revolution," as thousands protesting Iran's mock election began using the social-networking service to coordinate among themselves and to share their dreams of democracy with the rest of the world. By June 26, more than two million Twitter messages, or "tweets," related to the protests in Iran had been sent, and no one could deny the political significance of the new online tool.

But others had already begun intuiting deeper currents swirling in the Twittersphere. In May, **Stephen Dinan**, editor of *Radical Spirit* and the forthcoming *Sacred America*, wrote a widely circulated blog post outlining a seven-point argument for "The Spiritual Importance of Twitter." Initially skeptical of the power of the tweet, Dinan confesses that he is "now convinced that Twitter is part of the spiritual evolution of our species. Its growth corresponds to the accelerating spread of a global consciousness, one in which our sense of boundaries no longer ends at national boundaries, and we are increasingly in touch with our sense of 'oneness' with others."

Dinan isn't the only one seeing Twitter's consciousness-expanding potential. In the past six months, many integralists and evolutionary thought-leaders have established large followings on Twitter, and a number of spiritual teachers have also entered into the tweeting fray with their dharmic guns blazing. "When you have the willingness to face your fear," writes Zen teacher **Genpo Roshi** in one tweet, "fear is nothing, just another big concept—maybe overwhelming, but basically just an idea." Among the usual tweets about what your friends had for breakfast, these bite-sized snippets of wisdom from the likes of **Eckhart Tolle**, **Barbara Marx Hubbard**, and **Deepak Chopra** are often a welcome relief.

So where will Twitter go from here? Dinan, for one, envisions the growing network of Twitterers as the building blocks of an emerging planetary consciousness, or noosphere. "As our learning and exchange networks become ever more instantaneous," he writes, "we participate in something like a global brain, with each of us as synapses between different learning nodes, all connected to thousands of other nodes." To ensure that we established our own noospheric node, *EnlightenNext* officially entered the Twittersphere last spring. Follow us at **Twitter.com/ENextMag** (and track conversations about the world of *EnlightenNext* with the #enext hashtag).

## Sites & Blogs



### **transformingtheology.org/blog**

Backed by powerhouse theological innovators like John Cobb and Philip Clayton, this site is dedicated to upgrading the "irrelevant and abstract" aspects of Christianity to fit a more progressive, evolutionary worldview.



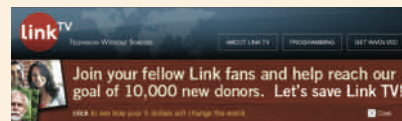
### **npr.org/news/specials/2009/brain**

This fascinating NPR site entitled "Is This Your Brain On God?" shows how the brain reacts to a variety of spiritual experiences, including near-death experiences, hallucinogenic drug trips, and deep meditation.



### **seedmagazine.com**

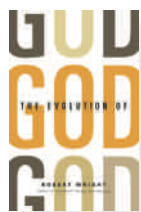
With its hip design, wide-ranging topics, and compelling tagline, "Science Is Culture," *Seed* magazine's website is our perennial one-stop shop for daily science news.



### **globalspirit.tv**

Featuring everything from full-length documentaries and newsbytes on global issues to interviews with spiritual visionaries, *Global Spirit* hopes to "counter the cynicism and resignation that can result from watching conventional television news."





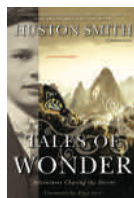
### The Evolution of God

"Was God born bad?" is a question asked by **Robert Wright**—journalist, evolutionary psychologist, political commentator, and author—in his new book *The Evolution of God*. In other words, was it inevitable that the emergence of monotheism in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam would lead to religious violence? Wright's answer, born out of ten years of in-depth research, is an emphatic *no*. In a sweeping historical narrative covering tribal days to the present, Wright, also author of the acclaimed *The Moral Animal* and *Nonzero*, reveals that it's the hard facts of politics and economics that determine how we treat those of other faiths, not our differing beliefs about God. Explicitly materialistic in his approach, Wright offers a "win-win" solution for believers and nonbelievers alike.



### Something Beyond Greatness: Conversations with a Man of Science & a Woman of God

Inspired by the Indian spiritual leader **Dadi Janki**, *Something Beyond Greatness*, by **Judy Rodgers** and **Gayatri Naraine**, explores what it is that compels a human being to live an extraordinary life. After searching to find exemplars of true heroism of spirit and coming up empty-handed, the authors turn to Dadi Janki herself, pairing her in dialogue with the Chilean philosopher-biologist **Humberto Maturana**. Combining the wisdom of a God-intoxicated sage with the intellect of a radical rationalist, this passionately argued book calls us to surrender what we know in order to achieve the greatness that comes from "act[ing] instinctively from love."



### Tales of Wonder

What do taking peyote with Native American shamans, teaching the **Dalai Lama** about the big bang, practicing Islam for ten years, and selling 2.5 million books have in common? They're all small episodes in the epic life of religious scholar **Huston Smith**,

whose autobiography, *Tales of Wonder*, hit bookstores this past May. Best known for his classic *The World's Religions*, Smith is an explorer and academic who has been hailed as "the man who brought the world's religions to the West." His latest book chronicles his "adventures chasing the divine" with the likes of **Mother Teresa**, **Martin Luther King Jr.**, **D.T. Suzuki**, and **Timothy Leary**, capturing the charming character of a man who helped bring yin, yang, and yoga into the mainstream.

## The Parliament of the World's Religions 2009



This December, more than ten thousand religious leaders, scholars, and activists from all over the world will converge in Melbourne, Australia, for the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions. The fourth gathering in recent history (the previous three were Chicago in 1993, Cape Town in 1999, and Barcelona in 2004), this year's event will focus on exploring how the religious traditions can help to address a variety of contemporary issues such as climate change, the reconciliation of science and religion, and the role of Islam in twenty-first-century society. Running for seven days, the Parliament will feature seminars, debates, films, and keynote addresses from an interreligious menagerie of distinguished speakers, including **His Holiness the Dalai Lama**, eco-religious scholar **Mary Evelyn Tucker**, and renowned spiritual leader **Sri Sri Ravi Shankar**. To experience the incredible breadth of spiritual wisdom present at these Parliaments, check out the video interviews we conducted at the 2004 event in Barcelona at [enlightennext.org/parliament](http://enlightennext.org/parliament).



What's up with Generation Y? In 2005, four college grads—including film producers Matt Heineman and Matt Wiggins—set out on a three-month road trip across America in pursuit of an answer. Four years later, they've condensed their journey into an entertaining sixty-minute film called *Our Time*, which chronicles their interstate adventure interviewing eighteen- to twenty-five-year-olds from every demographic under the sun. The interviewees—including aimless drug dealers in New Mexico, ranchers in Texas, and enterprising Facebook founder **Mark Zuckerberg**—present a surprisingly diverse picture of Gen Y, one that is more complex than the usual image of an army of tech-savvy iPod people. But what ties them together is the surprising ease with which they voice clear opinions on what they think their generation is about. One wonders if their Gen-X predecessors, when they were in their twenties, could have articulated their generational predicament so matter-of-factly. Yet whether this is a sign of increased self-awareness or another symptom of their growing narcissism (see p.76) remains to be seen. To find out more about *Our Time*, visit [tyap.com](http://tyap.com).





# Homo Sapiens 2.0

*Homo habilis* used tools. *Homo erectus* walked upright on two feet. And we *Homo sapiens sapiens* have the unprecedented ability to “know that we know.” What characteristics and capacities will define the human beings of tomorrow? Starting with the Russian physicist and “father of rocketry,” Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (1857-1935), who assigned the name *Homo cosmicus* to our future space-traveling progeny, many visionaries have pondered the next stage in human evolution. Whether couched in terms of genetic engineering, fusion with machines, or spiritual transformation, many different names have been suggested for the species that will eventually supplant us. These are ten of our favorites.



## Ten Candidates for the Next Human Species

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>10</b> <b>Homo sapiens sapiens sapiens:</b> Peter Russell, futurist, scholar of science and consciousness</p> <p><b>9</b> <b>Cyber sapiens:</b> Chip Walter, science writer, documentary filmmaker, former CNN bureau chief</p> <p><b>8</b> <b>Homo integralis:</b> Institute for Integral Consciousness-Research and the Future of Man, Germany</p> <p><b>7</b> <b>Homo luminous:</b> Alberto Villoldo, spiritual guide, author of <i>The Four Insights</i></p> <p><b>6</b> <b>Homo progressivus:</b> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jesuit priest, paleontologist, evolutionary mystic</p> | <p><b>5</b> <b>Robo sapiens:</b> Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio, authors of <i>Robo sapiens: Evolution of a New Species</i></p> <p><b>4</b> <b>Homo noeticus:</b> John White, consciousness researcher at the Institute of Noetic Sciences</p> <p><b>3</b> <b>Hetero-techno sapiens:</b> Buckminster Fuller, visionary architect, designer, inventor</p> <p><b>2</b> <b>Homo evolutus:</b> Juan Enriquez, biotech entrepreneur, author</p> <p><b>1</b> <b>Homo universalis:</b> Barbara Marx Hubbard, evolutionary activist, author of <i>Conscious Evolution</i></p> |
|---|---|



## Kudos



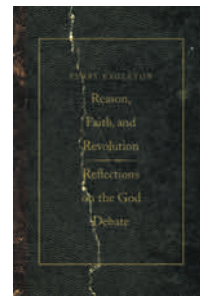
**Kudos** to the venerable seventy-six-year-old Thai Buddhist leader, activist, and social critic **Sulak Sivaraksa**, whose **International Network of Engaged Buddhists**—cofounded with the **Dalai Lama**, **Thich Nhat Hanh**, and **Maha Ghosananda**—celebrates its twentieth anniversary this November. When we interviewed Sulak at the Parliament of the World's Religions in 2004, we were struck by his bold assertion that simply utilizing Buddhism as a path to personal happiness is no longer a valid option in today's world. His own work as a Buddhist activist continues to drive the point home, as he proves what is possible when inner spiritual revelation is understood to be inseparable from outer social transformation. To learn more about Sulak, see his new book, *The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century*, or watch our interview with him at [enlightennext.org/parliament](http://enlightennext.org/parliament).



## On Our Bookshelf

*"Postmodernism is allergic to the idea of certainty, and makes a great deal of theoretical fuss over this rather modest, everyday notion. As such, it is in some ways the flip side of fundamentalism . . . Some postmodern thought suspects that all certainty is authoritarian. It is nervous of people who sound passionately committed to what they say. In this, it represents among other things an excessive reaction to fascism and Stalinism. The totalitarian politics of the twentieth century did not only launch an assault on truth in their own time; they also helped to undermine the idea of truth for future generations. The line between holding certain noxious kinds of belief, and holding strong beliefs at all, then becomes dangerously unclear. Conviction itself is condemned as dogmatic."*

—from *Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate* by Terry Eagleton



## Huh?



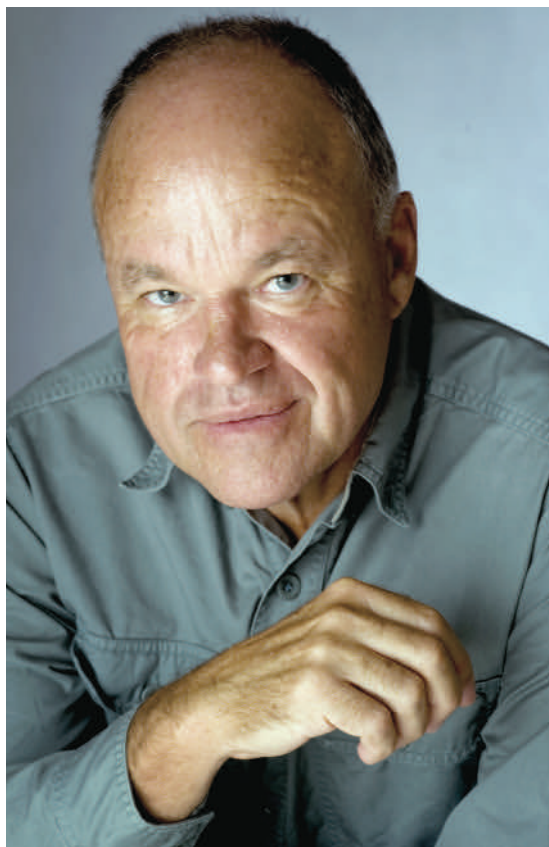
It's been a while since we featured someone under this section heading, but psychologist **Susan Blackmore**'s latest book, *Ten Zen Questions*, has left us scratching our heads. Like many theorists in the new field of consciousness studies, Blackmore believes that "consciousness is an illusion" and that all spiritual realities are ultimately reducible to the material mechanics of the human brain. But in *Ten Zen Questions*, which is based on her studies of neuroscience and two decades of practicing Zen, she argues that the *Buddha* was basically saying the same thing! We appreciate her open-minded and honest effort to grapple with the mystery of consciousness, but we have to wonder why it has recently become popular in some scientific circles to believe that Buddhism and materialism are somehow compatible. Last time we checked, the Buddha and the great Zen masters were anything but materialists. "Do not think that this [nirvana] is an empty or void state," the Buddha says in the *Brahma-nimantanika Sutta*. "There is this consciousness, without distinguishing mark, infinite and shining everywhere; it is untouched by the material elements and not subject to any power."





## John Stewart *The Empiricist*

John Stewart is a self-made evolutionary. As an Australian civil servant (now retired), Stewart pursued a career that left him ample time for his true passions — science, spirituality, and evolution. In 2000, he published *Evolution's Arrow: The Direction of Evolution and the Future of Humanity*, a thoughtful manifesto on the mechanisms that drive evolution toward higher and higher levels of cooperation. Pragmatic and practical, Stewart is a soft-spoken but hard-headed theorist with an almost religious passion for following the material facts wherever they lead — even to surprising and controversial conclusions. Today, Stewart is a core member of the internationally renowned Evolution, Complexity and Cognition Research Group of the Free University of Brussels. He makes his home in Melbourne, where he studies, writes, meditates, and considers the future of consciousness and evolution in a scientific age.



### Where is evolution's arrow going to lead us in the next one hundred years?

If we are to contribute positively to the future evolution of life in the universe, we will need to continue the two great developmental trends that are operative in evolution on Earth. The first is toward the unification of life into larger and larger cooperative wholes (e.g., from family groups to bands to tribes to city states to empires to nations, etc.). The second great trend is toward what I call "evolvability," which means developing higher and higher capacities for adaptation and innovation, both individually and collectively. This could include practices like meditation, which further develops our individual consciousness, and the integration of new technologies, like artificial intelligence, into our lives. It also involves the development of our collective abilities, including new forms of collective consciousness and collective intelligence.

### Which evolutionary thinkers have had the most influence on your work?

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and George Gurdjieff. In part this is because they provided inspiring evolutionary visions, but it is also because their visions were not supported by comprehensive science-based models and explanations. This challenged me to attempt to develop these scientific underpinnings.

### What is your take on the central evolutionary difference between humans and other primates?

Other primates don't need to meditate. Like babies, their minds have not yet been colonized by thinking. But it also means they don't have our capacity to use thought to build complex mental models that enable long-term planning, anticipation, strategizing, and understanding. They cannot understand the evolutionary processes that shaped them. They will never be evolutionaries.

### What do you think is the function of meditation in the evolutionary process?

Meditation generally involves the practice of disembedding from trains of thought and from desires and emotions. Disembedding from thinking enhances our evolvability by giving us better access to intuition, wisdom, pattern recognition, and other higher capacities. Disembedding from desires and emotions enhances evolvability by freeing us from the dictates of our needs and feelings. This enables us to move at right angles to our biological and cultural past, which in turn liberates us to do whatever is necessary to advance evolution.

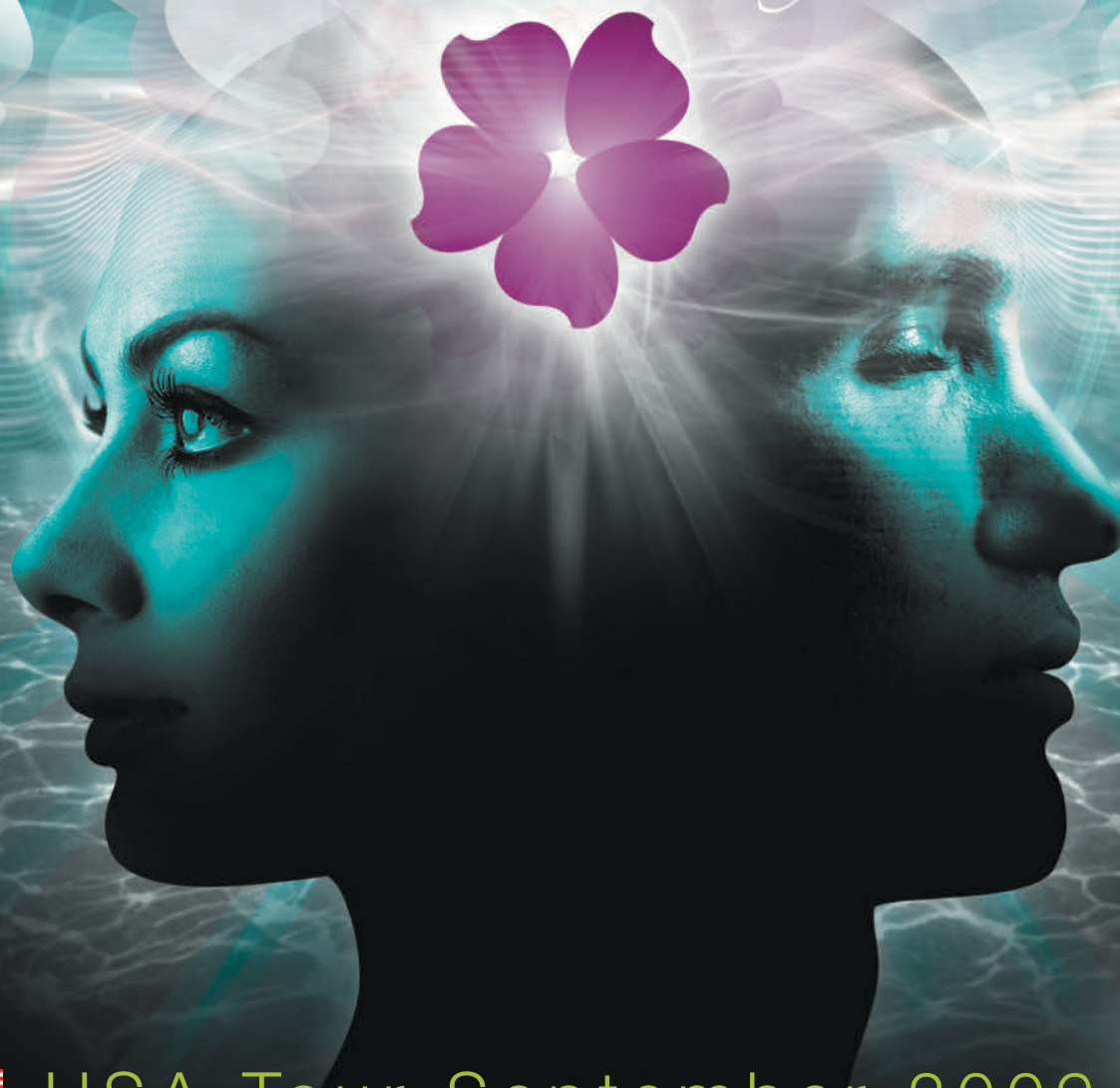
### Are we the most evolved species in the universe?

There are strong reasons to believe we are not. Planetary systems that are capable of giving rise to life will likely prove as numerous as the grains of sand on a beach.

### You've spoken about humanity's potential to develop into a galactic civilization. Is that likely? And why or why not?

Humanity will need to awaken to the fact that we are embedded in a directional evolutionary process, realize that the continued success of the process depends on our actions, and commit to advancing the evolutionary process intentionally. If we complete this transition successfully, life on Earth will self-actualize as a planetary organization. It will then continue to advance evolution's trajectory by linking up with life that originates elsewhere to form a galactic organization.

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*Things Every Evolutionary Should Know . . .*

## Eros n.

The creative energy and intelligence that drives the evolutionary process at all levels of existence.

**IN THE MYTHICAL PANTHEON** of ancient Greek gods, Eros was commonly portrayed as a young winged archer whose golden arrows struck the hearts of gods and mortals alike, causing them to be overcome by sexual passion. “Once again,” wrote Sappho of Lesbos, “Eros drives me on, that loosener of limbs, bittersweet creature against which nothing can be done.”

Today he is better known by his Roman name, Cupid. But beneath the erotic and cherubic exterior, Eros has always possessed a deeper mystical significance as the primordial power of creation itself. The Pythagorean and Orphic mystery schools invoked him as Eleutherios, “the liberator,” and Protogonos, the luminous and genderless “first born” of the gods, who arose out of the empty void of Khaos to create the harmonious order and beauty of the Kosmos. In *The Passion of the Western*

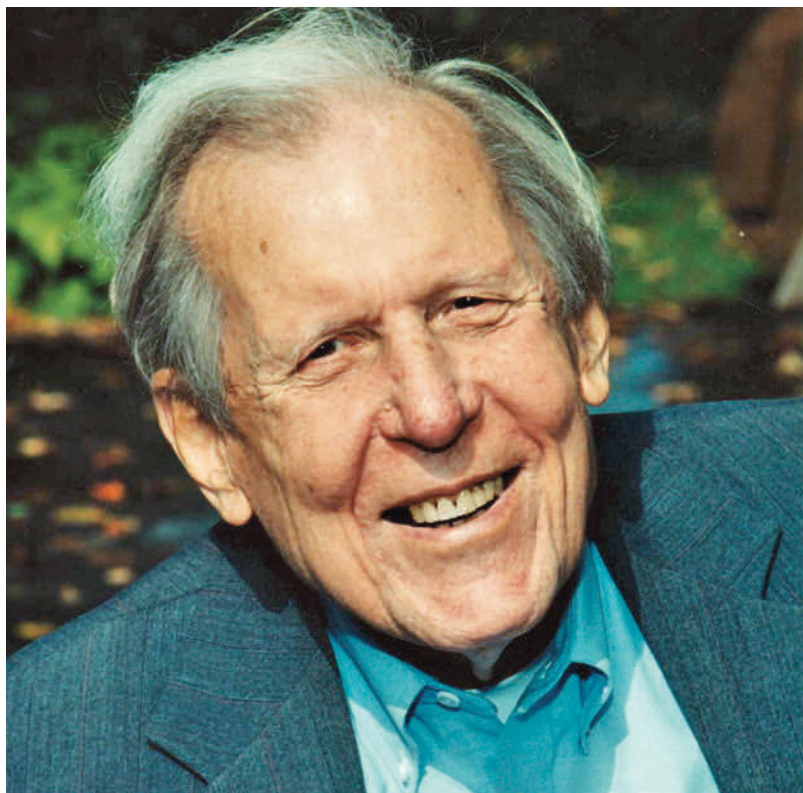
*Mind*, Richard Tarnas describes this subtler conception of Eros—espoused most eloquently by Plato—as “a complex and multidimensional archetype which at the physical level expresses itself in the sexual instinct, but at higher levels impels the philosopher’s passion for intellectual beauty and wisdom, and culminates in the mystical vision of the eternal, the ultimate source of all beauty.”

When we use the term “Eros” in *EnlightenNext* magazine, we’re continuing in the lineage of the ancient Greeks but reinterpreting it in a context of cosmic *evolution*. And while some early Greek works hint at the idea of evolution, it wasn’t until the emergence of post-Darwinian philosophers in the twentieth century, such as Charles Sanders Peirce and Alfred North Whitehead, that Eros began to be seen as the creative force that drives

the evolutionary process. “We have to ask,” wrote Whitehead, “whether nature does not contain within itself a tendency to be in tune, an Eros urging towards perfection.”

Whitehead’s ideas were a primary influence on the contemporary integral philosopher Ken Wilber, who defines Eros as “the drive that takes you beyond yourself.” *EnlightenNext* editor in chief Andrew Cohen calls that drive the “evolutionary impulse,” explaining that when one begins to consciously identify with that impulse in oneself, a powerful new recognition begins to emerge. “Each one of us, at our highest level, is actually not separate from the energy and intelligence that originally inspired the entire creative process. You begin to intuit, and feel directly connected to, the very impulse that initiated this whole event fourteen billion years ago and is driving it right now.”





## Thomas Berry: Scholar, Teacher, Sage

(1914–2009)

by Mary Evelyn Tucker

Yale University Forum on Religion and Ecology

I remember the first time I met Thomas Berry, on a cold winter day in early February 1975. He was living along the Hudson River, just north of New York City, at his Riverdale Center for Religious Research. We sat on his sun porch overlooking the Palisades and under the spreading branches of a great red oak.

I had just returned from two years in Japan, where I was teaching at a university in a provincial capital five hundred miles south of Tokyo. It was, indeed, another world. I had traveled through Asia on my way back home, encountering Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore in their early phase of economic development. I also traveled to Vietnam

close to the end of the war, and to India still struggling to feed its burgeoning population.

The immense inequities, the complex histories, and the vastly different religions were overwhelming to me, so recently out of college and so woefully ignorant of Asia. I was in need of sorting out this disorienting experience. I came to Thomas Berry because he was already immersed in studying the religious traditions of Asia. He had created a successful graduate program in the history of religions at Fordham University and had founded his research center in Riverdale. He had published a book on Buddhism and another titled *Religions of India*. I knew I could learn something here.

The remarkable journey of Thomas Berry encompassed ever-widening circles of history. Beginning as a historian of Europe immersed in its religious, cultural, and intellectual currents, Berry expanded this approach to embrace Asia as well. He read widely in world history and religion and built a library of some ten thousand books at Riverdale. This reading culminated in his move beyond human history to Earth history as he traced his way back into deep time. He was especially influenced by the integrating evolutionary vision of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Knowing on some intuitive level that we humans are guided by story, Berry ultimately called for the telling of the universe story. He felt that it was only at that comprehensive scale that we could situate ourselves fully. His great desire was to see where we have come from and where we are going amid ecological destruction and social ferment. It was certainly an innovative idea—to announce the need for a new story that integrated the scientific understanding of evolution with its significance for humans. This is what he found so appealing in Teilhard's seminal work, *The Human Phenomenon*. From Teilhard, then, Berry derived an immense appreciation for the grand sweep and complexity of evolution; he also became ever more aware of the human as the self-reflexive consciousness of this process, and thus responsible for its continuity. To see the human as part of the evolutionary process also meant that we needed to stem the tide of ecological destruction.

But how did this all begin? What was Berry's own evolution of ideas and influences? As a young graduate student, he was already striving to see the whole. He wrote his PhD thesis on Giambattista Vico, whose philosophy posited three stages in world history—namely, the age of the gods, the age of the heroes, and the age of humans—and explored the significant “barbarism of



Thomas Berry's funeral at Green Mountain Monastery in Greensboro, VT, on June 8, 2009.

reflection" that ended each age and gave rise to the next. In later years he explored other historical perspectives, such as those of Herbert Spencer, Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, Christopher Dawson, Eric Voegelin, and William McNeill.

But first he studied world religious traditions, beginning with his own Christianity. He read the Church Fathers, Augustine, and the medieval theologians, including Bonaventure but especially Thomas Aquinas. He explored the mystics, such as John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila,

challenge of modernity. How Christianity and other religions changed and developed over time became a major focus of his thinking. As a historian he was fascinated by the rhythms of continuity and change displayed in religions.

As his studies spread to other religions, Berry began to identify some of the comparative patterns of religious development from the initial classical period with the appearance of great religious leaders such as the prophets in Israel, Buddha in India, or Confucius in China. With the early

Berry was profoundly aware of the deep alienation that had beset 20th-century civilization, torn by two world wars and confronted with an existential crisis of meaning.

and Meister Eckhart, and read literature associated with the rise of the Beghards and the Beguines in the Low Countries. He pored over the twentieth-century debates regarding modernism and the Second Vatican Council. He was seeking a way forward to understand the power of tradition and the

growth and spread of traditions came various theologies or schools of thought that began to differentiate themselves, such as Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. In the Middle Ages, new syntheses arose with such comprehensive thinkers as Thomas Aquinas in Christianity, Moses

Maimonides in Judaism, Al-Ghazali in Islam, Chu Hsi in Confucianism, and Shankara in Hinduism.

In many of these cases, the new synthesis was created in response to the challenge of other religions—for example, Buddhism for Confucianism and Islam for Christianity. These new formulations became effective containers of the rich symbolic and ritual life of cultures around the world, inspiring visions for the spiritual yearnings of modern humans. Berry studied these historical patterns of religious development and began to focus as well on the challenge that the modern period presented to religious traditions. In addition, he became increasingly concerned with the effects of rapid industrialization on the ecosystems of the planet and the lack of response of the religions to this growing crisis.

Berry was profoundly aware of the deep alienation that had beset twentieth-century civilization, torn as it was by two world wars and confronted with an existential crisis of meaning. He recognized that religions and their larger spiritual visions have something of immense significance to offer humans in their struggle to manage the demands and tragedies life presents. While recognizing religions' shortcomings, he nonetheless hoped that religions would open up to modernity—to reinhabit their symbol systems and enlarge their embrace to grapple with modern culture and the environment.

Inspired by Berry, this is the work we have fostered in the Forum on Religion and Ecology. Thomas Berry urged the religious traditions into a deepening reflection on their dialogue with one another for the good of the entire Earth community. His vision will indeed live on.

For a fuller biography and some of Thomas Berry's essays, go to [thomasberry.org](http://thomasberry.org).

Two new books of Berry's will be published this fall: *The Sacred Universe* (Columbia University Press) and *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth* (Orbis Books).



(from left to right) Roshi Bernie Glassman and his dharma successor, Paul Genki Kahn. © Peter Cunningham

## A New Breed of Bodhisattva

**Roshi Bernie Glassman**  
is paving the way for a  
whole new generation  
of spiritual activists

BY JOEL PITNEY

**IT'S A RARE AND PRECIOUS GIFT** to meet a true bodhisattva—a human being who has dedicated his own life and spiritual liberation to something far greater than himself. Earlier this year, I had such an opportunity when I attended the seventieth birthday celebration for Bernie Glassman, the Brooklyn-born Zen roshi who is considered one of the leading figures in the “socially engaged Buddhism” movement.



Gathered together at a quaint Italian restaurant in Manhattan was an eclectic sangha of Zen students, Sufi priests, Christian nuns, and others who have been touched by Glassman's body of work. The guest list included leaders in Glassman's Zen Peacemakers order, such as award-winning novelist Peter Matthiessen and Prison Dharma Network founder Fleet Maull. New York's well-known interfaith advocate Rabbi Joseph Gelberman offered a heart-warming toast, and a Christian pastor who partners with Glassman's famous community service project, the Greyston Foundation, gave a touching speech. Glassman's good friend Jeff Bridges (who bears a striking resemblance in real life to his role as "the Dude" in *The Big Lebowski*) performed a rousing set of original blues tunes. By the end of the evening, when Glassman took the stage to respond to the string of tributes, it was clear that his own depth of awakening to what he calls "the oneness of life" has been infectious. "The fact that we are all one is not a theory," he said, transmitting a sense of awe and humility that only a truly great human being can generate. "This is what has driven me from the beginning."

I went to the party to learn more about Glassman's latest adventure—a Zen ministry program that he has created to bring his life's work to a whole new generation of spiritual activists. At an age when many are retiring to southern climes, Glassman has partnered with the Harvard Divinity School's Buddhist Studies program to form the first-ever Seminary for Socially Engaged Buddhism, a rigorous ten-month program that will prepare aspiring bodhisattvas to follow in Glassman's footsteps and start their own spiritually inspired service projects worldwide.

Glassman, it turns out, is not your average bodhisattva. A former aeronautical engineer who became a monk after meeting his teacher, the late Taizan Maezumi Roshi, at

the Zen Center of Los Angeles in the sixties, "Roshi Bernie" is as likely to be seen wearing jeans with pink suspenders as he is traditional robes and is known to create koans from his favorite *Lebowski* lines. Glassman is in many ways a perfect reflection of his time. Like many seekers who came of age in the East-meets-West renaissance of the sixties and seventies, he has been trying to take the insights of the spiritual tradition he was trained in and make them relevant to the sensibilities of the modern West—or as Glassman says, "to create new wineskins for spiritual practice." But while many of his

Buddhist ones. "My sense of the oneness of life is that we should be taking care of all of the segments," he says. The experience caused Glassman to rethink how spiritual transformation could serve the transformation of society as a whole. As he explains, "For a long period, Buddhism was new in the West, so for many of us it was all about 'me.' But if you're unfolding or evolving, that sense of 'me' becomes bigger and can't be constrained to a particular body."

Glassman's own spiritual evolution led him to found the Greyston Mandala, an innovative ecosystem of nonprofit and

**"The fact that we are all one is not a theory. This is what has driven me from the beginning."**

— Roshi Bernie Glassman

peers have followed a more individualistic spiritual path, Glassman's own philosophy could be summed up by the words of the ninth-century Zen Master Kobo Daishi, whom he often quotes: "The way you can tell the depth of a person's enlightenment is by the breadth of their service to others."

Much of the inspiration for Glassman's spiritual activism originated in the early eighties while he was leading the first of his now-famous "street retreats" in a rough neighborhood of New York City. Through these transformative "plunges," in which Glassman and his students live among the homeless for ten days at a time—begging for food and sleeping in abandoned houses—participants are put into situations designed to shock them out of their habitual ways of relating to life. During his first plunge, Glassman noticed something that disturbed him: There were many Christian organizations offering aid but no

for-profit social enterprises in an impoverished area of Yonkers, New York, that would eventually serve as the blueprint for the Zen Ministry. Greyston started out as a gourmet bakery that trained unskilled workers to make "some of the finest cheesecake in the city" and has since evolved into a thirteen-million-dollar foundation that includes an HIV clinic, a day-care facility, and a low-income housing project. But while the foundation has raised millions of dollars and touched the lives of thousands of people, the real testament to its success for Glassman is the spiritually charged *culture* that imbues all of its projects. As one visitor commented to him during a tour of the facilities, "You're not working on the individual as a practice; you're working on *society*."

With the new Zen Ministry project, Glassman and his dharma successor, Paul Genki Kahn, are looking to reproduce the



Glassman with the first cohort of Zen ministers (from left to right): Jeremy "Bear" Wardle, Rosalind Jiko Macintosh, Steve Kanji Ruhl, Bernie Glassman, Cynthia Seiho Brighton, and Ari Pliskin. ©Peter Cunningham

**"The way you can tell the depth of a person's enlightenment is by the breadth of their service to others."**

— Zen master Kobo Daishi

Greyston model on an international scale through a network of Zen Houses that will serve as incubators for his particular blend of spiritually informed activism. A Zen House is not necessarily a house at all. Like the Greyston Mandala, it is an interrelated web of service projects tailored to the needs of its community. As Kahn says, "They are native to their locale and are designed to respond to the unique conditions that any particular area poses." The first two projects, for example, are quite different from each other. The Appalachian Zen House was started this past April by the seminary's

first graduate, Steve Kanji Ruhl, in his native central Pennsylvania; the house is focused specifically on addressing the needs of the rural poor. Another house, slated to begin early next year in Boston, will be run by another of the program's first graduates, Cynthia Seiho Brighton, in collaboration with a Catholic homeless shelter and will focus on the unique challenges of an urban environment.

Running something as complex as a Zen House will demand a lot from its ministers. Through the seminary program, which is held at Glassman's Maezumi

Institute in Massachusetts, ministers-in-training will develop an entire tool kit of necessary skills, from leading meditation to running a nonprofit organization to teaching Zen classes (think Quickbooks and koans). At the core of their training will be the simple dharma that Glassman has developed over his long career as a teacher. Students are taught to enter into any given situation, be it a street retreat or a community environmental remediation program, using three tenets as their guide: The first, to come from a position of not knowing; the second, to bear witness to the stark reality of the problems they face; and the third (which he says arises naturally out of the first two), to respond with what he calls "loving action." As Ruhl explains it: "You approach each situation with no preconceptions or prejudices, and so when the loving action arises, it's perfectly suitable for that unique situation."

For Glassman, the ministry may be the most advanced expression of his passion to make spiritual practice meet the demands of a new era. He and Kahn are excited by its potential to meet a growing interest within the world of Buddhism and beyond in finding ways to make spiritual practice more than just something you do on the cushion. "Most of us, when we use the word 'practice,' have our own little box around what that means. But I'm trying to enlarge that box and develop new *forms* of practice that will lead to higher consciousness in the process of making a social contribution." And while Glassman claims that he'll soon be retiring, the fact that new houses are being planned in Switzerland and Western Massachusetts, and that the second generation of ministers-in-training is graduating next spring, is a pretty good indication that a bodhisattva's work is never done. ■

# Voices from the Edge



## What Do Women Want? Again . . .

A bold challenge for women to rise up and take the future into their own hands.

by Elizabeth Debold

**IT'S SUCH A TIRED QUESTION—"WHAT DO WOMEN WANT?"** When Freud first asked it, he likened women's consciousness to a dark continent both unexplored and presumably unknowable. Countless exasperated male writers and far too many marketers have wondered the same thing. But the question is popping up again. In a recent *New York Times* op-ed column entitled "Liberated and Unhappy," Ross Douhat reports on an analysis by economists Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers indicating that across race, marital status, economic bracket, and even country, women's subjective experience of being happy has declined both absolutely and in relation to men. Interestingly, in 1970—before the women's movement dramatically opened so many women's life options—women were generally *more* happy than men. So in the forty years since women in the West won their freedom to choose the lives that they want, they have become *less* happy. Fascinating, isn't it?

The authors of the report, which is entitled "The Paradox of Declining Female Happiness," don't come to any conclusion as to why this is happening, and why *now*. Of course,

conservatives will undoubtedly argue that this proves women were better off in their traditional at-home roles before they were liberated into unhappiness, and progressives will counter-argue that women's dreams of liberation have been thwarted by institutions and customs that have not changed enough. Douhat doesn't really offer any conclusions either. He only alludes to a connection between women's unhappiness and the rise in single motherhood, suggesting that it is a result of living in a world in which there is no obligation for men to stay with the women who bear them children.

But Douhat's argument is based on his sense that women's lives are almost exclusively linked to, and perhaps most fulfilled by, bearing and raising children. And, therefore, that women's happiness depends on being protected in that role. Yet this doesn't seem to be what is happening with the younger generation. I've been thinking a great deal lately about the bizarre twists our supposed sexual freedom has brought. An April *New York Times Magazine* article entitled "Keeping Up with Being Kept" presented a website that is a "down-and-dirty marketplace where older moneyed men and cute young women engage in brutally frank transactions." Many of the young cuties are co-eds, trading flesh for tuition and shopping spree "perks."

Then there is the beautiful young co-ed who tried to sell her virginity over the internet to pay for school. (The bidding apparently reached \$3.8 million, although it doesn't seem that the "transaction" actually ever happened.) This entrepreneurial virgin seems to be saying: "Hey, losing my virginity is supposed to be a moment that I will value forever, but it seems like what I am most valued for is my virgin body, so why not sell it? I'll surely remember that!" She sees herself as a smart actor in a materialistic culture that trades human values for cash value. She's not wrong. Certainly, Douhat's picture of women raising children alone and young women selling themselves to pay for school isn't a very happy one.

We women are at a strange point. Since the first hominids struggled upright, the role of women has been to bear and raise the next generation. Females have been charged with the





survival of the species, and our cultures have elaborated on that role, protecting women's capacity to bear children (and often prohibiting anyone but a woman's sanctioned mate from bearing children with her). For how many thousands of years has a woman's reproductive role been the source of her value and identity?

But women no longer have this unique role to play in culture. Bearing children has become optional — particularly for the most privileged among us. Being a mate and mother, which has been the source of our dignity and standing in

## Women have been freed of the necessity to reproduce, but the choices we've won have left us unmoored.

society since tribal days, is no longer an imperative. We are freed of the necessity to reproduce — liberated from our biological role — but the choices we've won have left us unmoored. Who are we, or who should we be, now?

I'm obviously not the first person to note this. However, most voices expressing such a view come from the right, urging us back to the safety and familiarity of hearth and home. I'm providing this context not to suggest that this is our God-given role, but to explain why we would feel discontent, unease, and even a lack of simple happiness because we don't have a clear, culturally sanctioned role to guide how we live our lives.

I'm arguing that we have further to go. Our ties to our biology are being broken, so that now, for the first time in femaledom, we can shape culture with men. It's funny that we often tend to see men as lustful beasts, driven by their sexuality, when actually men as a whole are less tied to reproduction for their identity than women are. Think about it: From one hundred thousand to about seven thousand years ago, males and females of our species lived in kin networks and small tribes where both shared in the work of procreation and survival. The roles of men and women alike were tied to food gathering and rearing children. This was not some idyllic, egalitarian state of being as we often imagine — they didn't have the capacity to do anything more than survive and procreate. The demands and needs of close cohabitation shaped their lives and options.

But whenever life conditions changed dramatically due to such things as rapid climate change, invasion, and food shortages, men (because they do not suckle children and are therefore freely mobile) stepped forward to innovate and create the new. Women and their children were protected so that the tribe as a whole could survive. For the past seven thousand years or so, men by and large have continued on that trajectory and been the primary creators of culture, thereby forging an identity for themselves based on something other than their role in reproduction. Women, on the other hand, have continued to create children, which is, again, our role in reproduction.

It's only been about fifty years since we women could control our fertility and begin to forge a cultural identity that goes beyond our biological role. Certainly, we've started down that path, but I'm speaking about something more profound and subtle. I don't simply mean "having it all." As important as that has been, what women have mostly done is to slot into the roles that already exist in culture in terms of work and family — usually finding themselves pulled in two directions, neither of which is wholly satisfying. But that's not the half of it. It's startling how many accomplished women who are doing important work — work that they themselves value — still feel that the true indication of their success *as women* depends on whether they have great mates and children. I'm speaking about really shifting our focus. Sure, we'll continue to have intimate partners and children. But what about holding as our deepest priority the responsibility for embodying a new order of relationship, creativity, and innovation that could evolve culture to a higher level?

To me, it makes sense that women are less happy. We're in a huge transition. There is no one really before us. The confusion, and even degradation, that women may find themselves caught up in are signs that the old is no longer working. It's actually a tremendous evolutionary opportunity — an opportunity to focus on discovering something new. And if we don't seriously engage with this potential, if we don't step up to the plate of cultural innovation with humility and energy, too many young women will be left adrift in the marketplace, selling themselves short. That's enough to make any sensitive woman unhappy.

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# Voices from the Edge



## Bystanders to Suffering

A young American journalist finds herself confronted with the stark realities of Sri Lanka's bloody civil war.

by Maura R. O'Connor

**THIS PAST FALL I TRAVELED TO WORK AS A JOURNALIST** in Sri Lanka, the island state known equally for its unparalleled tropical beauty and its violent protracted war. The conflict between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan government that finally ended this past May was one of the longest-running insurgencies in Asia. Despite this, the conflict and the country's deep ethnic crisis remain largely off the radar of the international media. If eighty thousand people die in an earthquake, it's big news. But if eighty thousand die over the course of twenty five years, as they have in Sri Lanka, it seems the world's interest cannot be sustained. As journalist David Rieff once wrote, it was an "inchoate idea about witness" that sent him to war zones and places of great suffering around the world. Similarly vague notions—of purpose and obligation, not to mention adventure—guided me to Sri Lanka, where I thought I might be able to use my reporting skills to cover an underreported war.

On the western edge of the capital Colombo, which abuts the Indian Ocean, are the colonial-era hotels where wealthy

people go to drink lime sodas and watch the equatorial sun set on the horizon. One evening I found myself attending a dinner at one of these hotels and seated next to a high-ranking UN official. He asked about my work for a local newspaper and then began to describe how enthusiastic he had been about his job when he first arrived in Sri Lanka. A few years later, exhausted by the bloodshed and corruption, he said he wanted to get out as soon as possible. "Eventually, you just realize, 'It's not my country. I can't change it. It's not my responsibility,'" he said. His comment rattled me. Three hundred kilometers north of where we were sitting, an estimated two hundred thousand civilians were stranded on a small beach without food, water, or medicine. Hundreds were dying each week from artillery attacks. Why, I thought to myself, was the UN in Sri Lanka if it couldn't help them? Indeed, why were any of us there if this man—who had decades of experience in places of conflict—was right: We can't change it and it's not our responsibility.

At the newspaper where I worked, I heard echoes of this sentiment from my younger colleagues. To them, it was as though I had squandered my privilege as an American to live there. "Why would you come *here*?" they asked with disbelief bordering on scorn. "Aren't there jobs in America?" No matter how I presented it, the idea that I would leave New York City for crowded, militarized Colombo struck them as the dumbest thing they'd ever heard. And, in a way, it was dumb. I left a country that had one of the world's strongest constitutional guarantees for freedom of the press in order to live in a place where local journalists were often beaten, or worse. I moved from the land of interstate highways to a land where you can't travel a mile without being stopped and searched by soldiers armed with assault rifles. Sometimes, sitting on a crowded bus in sweltering heat, inevitable paranoid suspicions of suicide bombers creeping around in my mind, the notion of "making a difference" seemed both ridiculous and irrelevant, a plan that could only be hatched by someone who knew nothing of brutality or survival.

The thing is, until I lived in a place where poverty, corruption, and violence are a daily experience for most, I was shockingly unaware of my own inborn sense of freedom,



opportunity, and optimism. I was naïve and spoiled, but I didn't know the true extent of it until I was confronted by an utterly different reality. Being American, it now seems to me, is like standing at the helm of a ship looking through a telescope and seeing unobstructed sea in every direction. Blue. Beautiful. The Future. You have to have the skill and wits to operate the ship, but it's yours! And you're entitled to do with it what you want. Before I went to Sri Lanka, I could not conceive of these things through metaphor—even that would have been too constricting. No matter how educated or interested I'd been in the world's problems, on some fundamental level I always assumed that freedom and opportunity were the wealth of humanity we all shared.

Over the months, I talked with Sri Lankans who came from a radically different perspective. I interviewed a former LTTE child soldier, a young woman who had lost her leg in combat as a teenager and was now afraid to leave her house for fear that her wooden prosthetic would give her away to the military and she would be abducted. I interviewed a priest who explained that

No matter how I presented it, the idea that I would leave New York City for crowded, militarized Colombo struck my colleagues as the dumbest thing they'd ever heard.

people who kidnapped civilians used to burn their victims on tires to get rid of the bodies. Now, he said, they're dumping the bodies in the sea tied to cement posts. I met an elderly journalist in a hospital the day after he was beaten by a group of men wielding cricket bats. In squalid displaced persons' camps that felt like prisons, I talked to people who had had their livelihoods, homes, and self-determination taken away. The ship they are standing on? They don't control it. They can only try and survive the journey. After these experiences, I felt cynical. What could I do about any of this? The problems were so protracted, so violent and complex, that they were beyond my control or understanding. Maybe it was arrogant to think I could arrive and be anything more than a bystander to suffering.

These ideas had taken hold of me when I met an American Jesuit priest, an eighty-four-year-old man who had volunteered to leave New Orleans and travel to Sri Lanka in 1948. Since then, he had lived in a remote town where he championed the local

community and witnessed every stage of the civil war. He kept records of thousands of human rights abuses, murders, abductions, rapes. Even when his brother in the Order who had traveled on the same boat from New Orleans was killed by a mob in 1990, he chose to remain in Sri Lanka. This priest is a favorite source for foreign reporters, and every time I visited his office in the attic of an old boys' school, he always claimed to barely remember me. At the same time, he spent more and more time talking about his experiences through the years. Finally, on my fourth visit, I asked him the question that I was desperate to know the answer to: Why had he stayed for so long? What made him different from everyone else?

He explained that when he became a Jesuit, the decision was rooted in the realization that he had a profound moral obligation to do more with his life. Even at the young age of sixteen, when he joined the Order, he knew that this was a lifelong commitment, and it didn't matter where they sent him or how difficult it was going to be. He had a "higher motivation." For more than sixty years, he said, he had seen the aid organizations, the UN, the

journalists, and the human rights people come and go. The difference was that his allegiance was not to an institution or a mandate or an idea. "Mine was a bigger commitment," he said. He never once spoke the word "God," but it was implicit that his relationship with his Maker was at the root of everything he had done.

Two months later, I came back to the United States. Save for a head full of stories and a keener appreciation for the overwhelming complexity of the world, I was broke, and I justified my departure from Sri Lanka as a wise financial decision. But I

nonetheless felt guilty—guilty for leaving the heat and insanity behind and being back in Manhattan 24 hours later, standing in Tribeca at a coffee shop, so seamless it was almost as though I'd never left New York in the first place. I could recognize the kernel of hard truth in what the UN official had expressed to me: In so many ways, we can't change things, and it didn't make a difference whether we stayed or went. At the same time, I can still feel glimmers of the incredible elation I experienced when I left the boys' school that evening in Sri Lanka. It was a sense of conviction that selflessness and sacrifice do exist in the world, despite the complexity, and that I *can* be more than a bystander to suffering. At that moment, I had a visceral sense of being released from doubt and an immediate, pressing, thrilling sense of responsibility that was purpose-driven, endless, and true.

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# The Second Face of God

In their latest conversation, Andrew Cohen & Ken Wilber discuss why having a relationship to a transcendent God is the only way to bring the postmodern ego to its knees.

Introduction by Andrew Cohen

**I'VE ALWAYS BEEN VERY INTERESTED** in what the word “God” means. If God represents the Absolute dimension of life, the highest spiritual reality we can conceive of, then what does God look like? And what does God *feel* like—what is the *experience* of God?

I was first introduced to God by an elderly German lady with a wooden leg. Growing up in a secular, upper-middle-class Jewish family in New York City, the Creator was not really a presence in my household. But one day, when I was five or six years old, I was sitting









### ANDREW COHEN: GURU

[n., Sanskrit]: one who teaches spiritual liberation from his or her own direct experience or realization.

Self-described “idealist with revolutionary inclinations” and widely recognized as a defining voice in the emerging field of evolutionary spirituality, Cohen has developed an original teaching for the twenty-first century which he calls Evolutionary Enlightenment. He is also the founder and editor in chief of *EnlightenNext* magazine.



### KEN WILBER: PANDIT

[n., Sanskrit]: a scholar, one who is deeply proficient and immersed in spiritual wisdom.

Self-described “defender of the dharma, an intellectual samurai,” Wilber is one of the most highly regarded philosophers alive today, and his work offers a comprehensive and original synthesis of the world’s great psychological, philosophical, and spiritual traditions. His books include *A Brief History of Everything* and *Integral Spirituality*.

on a windowsill on the second floor, watching the people and the traffic go by on Lexington Avenue, when our housekeeper hobbled over and sat down beside me. She pointed to the roof of the twelve-story apartment building across the street and, to my surprise, declared, “That’s where God lives. He lives in that corner apartment on the top floor, and he can see and hear everything you do and say!” She seemed so serious that I believed her—at least for a while.

When I was sixteen, I discovered God in another form altogether. It happened unexpectedly, late one night, when I was having a conversation with my mother. For no apparent reason, the doors of perception opened wide, and I lost any and all notion of boundaries. The entire universe and everything in it appeared as one vast conscious being, and I was not separate from that infinite cosmic unity. I was lost in awe and wonder at the majesty of the entire panoramic display, engulfed in a Love that was physically overpowering.


Although it quickly faded, that revelation was the catalyst for my spiritual quest, which culminated in India, at the age of thirty, with a powerful awakening. This time, I encountered an entirely different God, the God that the mystics and sages describe. Meeting my last teacher, I was plunged into the mystery of Being, the spiritual freedom that is always already present in the depths of our own Self, ever abiding beyond the world of time and form.

As a teacher, I have been inquiring into these different experiences and expressions of the Absolute ever since. So a couple of years ago, when my good friend Ken Wilber began to write and speak about what he called the three faces of God, I found the distinctions he was making both thrilling and clarifying. He articulated and put into a simple framework the different dimensions of the Divine that I had encountered: God as the great all-knowing Other, God as

the entire cosmic Process, and God as our deepest Self. And he connects these three very different expressions of Spirit to the three fundamental perspectives that integral theory is built upon: first person, second person, and third person, or I, You/We, and It. Spirit, or God, can be looked at through all of these perspectives, which (as Ken often points out) correspond to the perspectives found in all major languages. “First-person Spirit,” Ken explains, “is the great I AM, the pure radical subjectivity or witness in every sentient being. Spirit in second person is the great Thou, something that is immeasurably greater than you could ever possibly be in your wildest imagination, something before which surrender and devotion and submission and gratitude are the only appropriate responses. And Spirit in third person is the great web of life, the Great Perfection of everything that is arising.”

I continue to find these distinctions very illuminating. It’s all too common, I’ve observed, for people to have very deep spiritual experiences but not necessarily know *what* they’re experiencing or what it means. If we want to develop spiritually, we need both an intellectual or philosophical framework *and* an experiential grasp of what many of these very profound spiritual concepts mean. And what could be more empowering or inspiring for a sincere spiritual aspirant than learning to make these distinctions and then beginning to discover the actual manifestations of these different dimensions of Spirit within his or her own self?

This year, Ken and I held an online seminar, and we devoted our entire discussion to these three faces of God. For this issue’s Guru & Pandit dialogue, I chose a section that focuses on the second face, God as the great Other, because as I explain in the pages that follow, I’m convinced that while all three faces are important, this one in particular is essential for our time and culture and is all too often dismissed.

A person is shown from the back, kneeling in a dark blue, digital space. The space is filled with glowing blue lines that form a grid and spiral patterns, converging towards a bright, glowing point of light in the distance. The person's shadow is cast on the ground below them.

When we enter  
into an “I/Thou”  
relationship with  
spirit, the ego  
suddenly has  
no choice but to  
bend its knee.

ANDREW COHEN

**COHEN:** In your book *Integral Spirituality*, you defined three faces of God, or Spirit, in first, second, and third person. You observed that while first-person expressions of God (God as the Self, the great I AM) and third-person expressions of God (God as the Kosmic process or the web of life) are very popular in postmodern Western spiritual culture, notions of God in second person, God as *Other*, tend to be dismissed as outdated. People associate God in second person with the white-bearded old man up in the sky that we freed ourselves from back in the Western Enlightenment. As you and I have discussed in the past, I’ve always felt that this particular face of God does have a very important role to play in the spiritual evolution of the individual. But until *Integral Spirituality* came out, I had never heard you speak about this particular dimension. So when you wrote so clearly and with such conviction about it, I was relieved and also thrilled, as I told you at the time. Especially for those of us who have grown up in postmodern Western culture, the second face of God is absolutely essential. Without God as Thou becoming a living, felt dimension of our own experience of Spirit, without that great Other before whom we must ultimately submit, I wonder

if it’s possible for us to move beyond ego and our culturally conditioned tendency toward extreme narcissism in any kind of authentic way.

**WILBER:** I agree. This is one of the things that I certainly got an enormous amount of positive feedback on after the publication of *Integral Spirituality*. As I started speaking about this idea with various spiritual teachers, it just lit them up. People realized that they had left out Spirit in second person.

The point of what I call the three faces of God, or the one-two-three of Spirit, is that all three of these dimensions are true. There have been all sorts of arguments over which perspective of Spirit is correct, but the point integral theory makes is that *all* of these perspectives are important and need to be included as part of an integral spiritual path. They represent fundamental dimensions of reality. So in an integral approach, you want to awaken your true or higher Self, and you want to awaken an understanding of the web of life as being Divine. You *also* need to awaken to that great Other before which the ego is humbled—which, as you said, is a face of God that often gets missed these days.

Spirit in second person is an extremely important dimension because it is spirituality in its *relational* form, its inter-subjective form. When Martin Buber spoke about the I-Thou relationship, he was talking about God in second person. Awakening to this face of Spirit means being in dialogue with God, in direct communication with Goddess, face-to-face with the Creator of everything that's arising moment to moment. It's Spirit in a form that can be communicated with. I don't necessarily mean the little old white-bearded man sitting in a chair in Heaven. But second person means a *Being with intelligence*.

Many religions the world over conceive of spirituality in second person. They practice it, for example, with guru yoga, where you see your master as the embodiment of Spirit, and you use your interaction with your master to help learn how to interact with God or Goddess or Spirit. Your hesitations, your avoidances, your difficulties in that relationship are analyzed and used to help you become more in touch with Spirit. So Spirit in second person is a very important dimension of spirituality.

**COHEN:** I couldn't agree more. While all three are essential, this one is particularly important for our time. You have made the point, which I've also observed to be true, that one can have an experience of the first face of God as the absolute *subject* or consciousness itself, but the ego doesn't necessarily have to bend its knee. And one can have an awakening to the third face of God as this Kosmic evolutionary process, and the ego *still* doesn't have to bend its knee. But when we enter into the subtle or not-so-subtle paradoxical dualism of having an "I/Thou" relationship with Spirit, the ego suddenly has no choice but to bend its knee. That's why, in a truly integral expression and understanding of Spirit, unless the second face of God is given quite a bit of importance, no matter how many experiences of Spirit as absolute subject or Spirit as Kosmic process an individual may have, the postmodern, narcissistic, separate ego can remain firmly behind the wheel. Ultimately, to become an integrally and evolutionarily enlightened individual, the ego is going to have to come down at least on one knee, if not both.

**WILBER:** Absolutely. It is indeed the easiest thing in the world for the ego, the separate self, the self-contraction, to take up practices that deal with the first perspective of I-AM-ness and the third perspective of the great web of life, because neither one of those ultimately *demand*s a conscious surrender of ego. You can fool yourself in those practices. You can look

at the great web of life and just hold on to your ego while you're looking at it, saying, "Everything is one great evolutionary process, and I am one with it." You can say all of that but not really fundamentally submit the ego to the ultimate Divine. The same can happen with the practice of witnessing, interior meditation, asking "Who am I?" and so on. That can still leave the ego in place. But when you are orienting to Spirit in second person—to some aspect of Spirit that is *Other* to this separate self—that is what really breaks the ego down, what forces it to submit its own self-contracting ways. So the integral approach is to include all three of these perspectives, as I know you do. I've found that since I introduced that notion, so many Buddhists in particular have come up and said guiltily, "I was practicing and practicing, but ego was still intact because I didn't really think there was anything fundamentally greater than my own ego."

## THE POSTMODERN PREDICAMENT

**COHEN:** I think this applies particularly to our generation and our generation's children who have grown up in the Western world in the last half-century. For many years I have been saying that the postmodern narcissistic separate self-sense is the most fundamental obstacle to higher development. Many people thought that I basically didn't get it, that this was an outmoded way of looking at things. But you only really discover what an enormous problem the narcissistic self-contraction is in relationship to how profound your interest is in transcending it. If you have no interest in transcending it, it doesn't seem to be a big problem. But if you authentically want to try to get on the other side of it, you discover that it's actually quite significant.

This is a delicate subject because the postmodern variation of the ego is, on one hand, a great gift of the evolutionary process, but on the other hand, it's a significant obstacle. In a positive sense, our ego, our capacity for individuality, is what makes it possible to become an integrally informed, evolutionarily enlightened human being. The more profound our individuation, the more powerfully Spirit can shine through us. So being profoundly individuated is not a bad thing. It's a gift of evolution, a gift of God, if you want to put it in



theological terms. It's just that our narcissistic *identification* with the separate self, outside of any higher context, creates a big problem. The ego begins to see itself as the center of the universe, and the whole process inverts upon itself. Everything turns upside down.

When speaking about this problem, I always try to put it in this context and to make clear that it's nobody's fault, because culturally we have been conditioned to be narcissists. I grew

Spirit in second-person is extremely important because it is spirituality in its *relational* form, its intersubjective form. It's Spirit in a form that can be communicated with.

KEN WILBER

up in a secular family where there was no higher context for my or anybody else's existence. The basic message my parents and teachers repeatedly gave me was, "Sweetheart, you should do whatever is going to make *you* happy." So I was conditioned to see life as a vehicle for my pleasure, my happiness, and my success—well trained to be an absolutely self-centered human being. And I am not the only one. There are millions of us.

**WILBER:** That's right—the "me" generation. I've always gone out of my way to emphasize what I call "the many gifts of green"—green being a color code for the stage of development that we call postmodern, which is a relativistic, pluralistic stage. But the downside of that relativistic, pluralistic stage is that it doesn't allow any truths outside of my own egoic truth. Postmodernity says, "What's true for me is true for me, and you have no right to challenge it." So the ego is supreme in its castle of "what is true for me."

Now this perspective has a certain relative truth to it, but it also has a magnificent falsehood to it. Philosophers are finally realizing that postmodernism as a philosophy has come to a dead end. For a couple of decades, you and I and others who have been working mightily to undercut this postmodern stance have often been accused of being out of touch, attacked for not really understanding it. In fact, I rather fully understand it. I've written books

on it! And the fact is, there is a downside to it, and most people don't get that downside. The downside is that if nobody can say what is truth, then nobody can correct my egoic disposition. There is simply nothing that's going to let me grow, that's going to help me get over myself, that's going to point to a higher, truer, or more valuable stance than whatever I just happen to hold by whim. And this has been a problem in philosophy, in sociology, and in spirituality. Our educational system was redone according to this kind of relativistic "nobody can tell me what to do, because I'm perfect the way I am" mentality. And tests now show that the generation graduating from college is the most narcissistic generation ever tested.\* That's quite something given that it was the boomers that were named the "Me Generation"!

**COHEN:** I know. So we're at a very interesting point in the evolution of culture. On one hand, Spirit has the capacity to shine through us in ways that may be unprecedented because of how highly integrated and sophisticated our individuated self-sense has become. But the big problem is that our awareness has gotten stuck on and overidentified with this separate self and lost in its own separate world of extreme narcissism. The reason this is so tragic is that it makes it impossible for us to participate in life in the deepest and most profound way. To make a cultural revolution happen—which is something I'm passionately interested in and you are obviously deeply committed to as well—awareness has to be liberated from narcissistic self-fixation so it can overflow and discover who it really is as the Ground of Being and as the evolutionary impulse. So we can all begin to participate in the life process in ways that will completely change the leading edge of culture.

## THE EVOLUTION OF SPIRIT

**WILBER:** There are at least two major ways you can create cultural change. One is through the religions in a culture, and one is through the educational system. We have, unfortunately, failed at both.

In order to understand this, we need to recognize that spirituality, or religion, is its own line of development, which

\*See "The Narcissism Epidemic," p.77.

has progressed over time through stages of growth. We can use Jean Gebser's developmental terms for the different levels, because they're self-explanatory: archaic, magic, mythic, mental-rational, pluralistic, and integral.\*\* Like individuals and cultures, spiritual understanding evolves through those stages. So there's a magic spirituality, a mythic spirituality, a rational spirituality, a pluralistic spirituality, an integral spirituality, and beyond. At each of these stages, there are expressions of the three faces of God, of Spirit, in first, second, and third person. But in the West, the second-person view of Spirit developed from archaic to magic to mythic—with mythic being represented essentially by the Old and New Testaments—and there it got stuck. So for most people in the West today, Spirit in second person has become stunted and identified merely with God the Father, the old man with a white beard in the sky giving these dogmatic mythic commands. Other aspects of religion and spirituality developed through rational and pluralistic forms, but unfortunately, the only Spirit in second person that we have is stuck at mythic.

So we don't learn about this dimension of Spirit in our educational system, and we drastically missed the chance to have our larger cultural backgrounds of religion and education give us a head start on ego-transcendence. Even with the influx of Eastern traditions, people were attracted to third-person and first-person expressions of Spirit. They didn't go for second person because they didn't want to fundamentally submit. And they didn't know how; they didn't have role models for it.

**COHEN:** Yes. What it actually means to embrace the second face of God in a post-postmodern context is new territory. I think it's something that many of us need to get together and talk about. The postmodern self has been so conditioned to see its own interior experience and its own personal freedom as that which is most sacred, which makes it a delicate and subtle process to learn what it means for the ego to authentically bend its knee. I've noticed that often people can begin to embrace some kind of feeling connection with whatever their own experience of God as Other is, but they still do it from the safe vantage point of the ego. Or, they may turn to ancient practices that are not necessarily appropriate to our time and culture. Individuals at the postmodern stage may feel okay taking up traditional practices, but that may not be the most authentic way to embrace a second-person relationship with Spirit at their own stage of development.

\*\*For more on Gebser's stages, see *EnlightenNext* magazine, December 2008 – February 2009.

**WILBER:** And most of them, frankly, are not really embracing a second-person relationship with Spirit. You're exactly right. We've spotted the problem, but that is far, far removed from solving it. Even individuals who've realized they need to practice Spirit in second person too often go back to the only practices that are available, which unfortunately don't work.

**COHEN:** Because the practices are from an earlier stage of development, they feel inauthentic.

**WILBER:** Well, yes. They're reinforcing inauthentic modes—they're pre-egoic, not trans-egoic. And that is a huge problem. So we really have our work cut out for us. I know this is something you've come up against, because the fact of the matter is that guru yoga, done correctly, is a way the student faces God as Other. The guru is apparently other—his or her consciousness is other than mine. Therefore, I need to submit to that guru, but I need to do it in very specific and careful ways. It doesn't mean slavishly groveling or anything like that.

**COHEN:** No. Obsequious behavior in the postmodern West doesn't look good or feel good.

**WILBER:** Exactly. In authentic guru yoga, there is a very profound way of getting deeply in touch with the root of awareness and finding that it is One, that "my master is myself," as you wrote, and that is a fundamental way to transcend ego. When I realize a fundamental identity with the master, I am liberated from the master in a certain sense. But that's very different from how people imagine it. They think it is a slavish, devotional, obsequious slobbering.

**COHEN:** There is no liberation in slavery!

## EMBRACING HIERARCHY

**COHEN:** I've thought a lot about what it means for the postmodern self to embrace the second face of God without having to accept some outmoded traditional structure or mythic belief. And I think it boils down to something simple yet profound. It means embracing the recognition that the structure of the

entire Kosmos, all the way from its deepest interior to its furthestmost exterior, is *hierarchical*. Hierarchy is the fundamental nature of the Kosmos at all levels, including consciousness.

Now as we have discussed many times, the postmodern self *hates* hierarchy. So we have to ask ourselves: What does it mean for a highly sophisticated, educated individual to begin to embrace the reality that hierarchy is inherent in the fabric and structure of the Kosmos itself? First, we must allow that there's a hierarchy in terms of the evolution of life forms. Some are higher and more complex than others. Then at the level of consciousness, we must accept that some people are actually more developed, more evolved than others. When we embrace this, all we're doing is embracing something that is objectively true, but it does challenge the postmodern ego at a fundamental level. That is why it's such a powerful and rational way to begin to work with this whole notion of the second face of God. It's very immediate and doesn't require that we entertain an outdated mythical concept to do so. But we have to *authentically* embrace it and respect it. The postmodern self has conditioned itself to not really respect hierarchical differences, so I think teaching ourselves to recognize authentic differences—to acknowledge, honor, and respect them—is a very reasonable and rational way to worship the second face of God.

**WILBER:** The biggest problem that postmoderns have is that they confuse two fundamental types of hierarchies. I have talked about this a lot, but there's still a massive confusion and people *need* to hear it. I'm sure many people reading this will be shocked and will dismiss everything we're saying because they hear the word "hierarchy" and think, "Good God, that's fascist! That's oppressive!" But there are different kinds of hierarchy. One kind is called a dominator hierarchy, and it is indeed oppressive; the caste system is a typical example of this. But most forms of hierarchy are what we call actualization hierarchies or growth hierarchies. We also call them holarchies, because each higher level is more whole than the previous level. A classic growth hierarchy would be atoms to molecules to cells to organisms. Each one of those levels *transcends and includes* the previous level. Each higher level doesn't oppress the previous level—it loves it; it embraces it. Molecules do not go around oppressing atoms!

So the same is true in human stages of growth, which we can characterize in broad strokes as going from egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric to Kosmocentric. What we need are more and more individuals who are at worldcentric and Kosmocentric stages, because that means that within

themselves, they've overcome the dominating hierarchical impulse. The only stages that want to dominate are egocentric and ethnocentric. The higher the stage, the more embracing it is, the more love it has, the more care it has, the more consciousness it has. And to get postmodernists to understand this difference is one of the most important things in the world to do because then, among other things, they could, as you were

The structure of the entire cosmos, all the way from its deepest interior to its furthestmost exterior, is hierarchical. Hierarchy is actually its fundamental nature at all levels, including consciousness.

ANDREW COHEN

suggesting, use that understanding of hierarchy as a springboard to the second face of God. They would understand that when I'm submitting my ego, at whatever stage I'm at, I'm really submitting it to my own next higher stage.

**COHEN:** Right. It's so important, and it's a tricky business. This whole notion of embracing hierarchy becomes even more difficult in a spiritual context because often in post-traditional religion or spirituality, Spirit or God is interpreted as *that which we all share equally*. And while that is always true in terms of the first face of God, it's also true that as Spirit takes form and enters into manifestation, then "that which we all share" *changes*. As it enters manifestation, it embraces a whole host of different complex forms. Much of the work that we are both doing is really about making very important distinctions about the nature of difference in manifestation at many different levels. Because the more we are able to appreciate the real differences that exist, the more skillful we'll be at navigating this process and contributing effectively to its development.

**WILBER:** Absolutely. It is part of the paradoxical nature of Spirit. We could say that "all things are Spirit, but some things are more Spirit than others." Then the goal of the spiritual



path is to get up the hierarchy of development. This hierarchical perspective is not a way to put you down because you may be on a higher or a lower stage. It's a way for me to understand my own unfolding, to understand the number of perspectives that I can take into account and, in so doing, to help me grow, develop, evolve. That's all these actualization hierarchies are there for—to help communicate and understand growth and development and to serve as maps for those of us who want to make use of them. They are extraordinarily useful because they point out things that we just cannot see on our own.

**COHEN:** That's true. But to really put into practice this understanding of hierarchy and generate awareness of the second face of God, we need to enter into relationships with individuals who have demonstrated to us that they are more evolved

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KEN WILBER

than we are. It's important that we begin to have committed relationships with such individuals who we want to learn from, because that generates many of the qualities associated with the second face of God—things like humility and respect. Of course it's also important to be able to share these kinds of perspectives with a group of individuals who have the same higher aspirations as we do, because higher spiritual aspirations are not really part of our current cultural context. So when we create a new spiritually enlivened cultural context through our committed relationships with others, many of the qualities we're speaking about in relationship to the second face of God will begin to emerge between us because we're deliberately making room for them.

**WILBER:** Indeed. And those who don't have the advantage of working with a group or with a spiritual teacher can start this practice by just using a simple phrase like "consent to the

presence of God," just spontaneously letting that phrase go through their mind daily. Now of course people are going to respond to the presence of God in the way that corresponds to where their ego is. But if their heart is in the right place and they're doing this with true sincerity and humility, there will be some higher, deeper, wider aspects of their awareness that will kick in and that are in fact representing the Divine, representing the second face of Spirit. Consenting to the presence of God has a necessary component of submission, and that's exactly the component that the second face of God always requires. That's what gets it in trouble with people who don't understand it and who mistake it for authoritarianism. But, on the contrary, that's actually the component that is so deeply uprooting to the *ego's* authoritarian ways. The people who criticize these types of practices with teachers as being authoritarian are right, from a certain point of view. There is something that's authoritarian, but it's actually the ego of the practitioner!

**COHEN:** Absolutely. The practice of the second face of God is always fundamentally challenging to the ego. But you can tell when people authentically begin to awaken to this dimension of Spirit. Suddenly they begin to express and demonstrate respect, honor, reverence, love, and humility. They may even become hesitant to assert themselves in any way that might be inappropriate. This isn't a false humility; it's a natural result of developing a certain kind of introspective capacity that's very rare in our culture. They begin to pay attention to their own motives. They awaken to a sense of higher conscience, a moral context for their own existence, which of course a narcissistic individual always has trouble grappling with. It's a moral awakening for the postmodern self, because what emerges is an authentic care for a higher context and a higher purpose—a sense of an inherent meaning and glory in life, a respect for other people, and a fundamental respect for that which is higher.

**WILBER:** Which, after all, is only your own highest Self. And that is truly understood as that awakening unfolds. ■



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A dialogue between **Andrew Cohen**  
& **Dennis Genpo Merzel Roshi**

# Spirit Is Higher

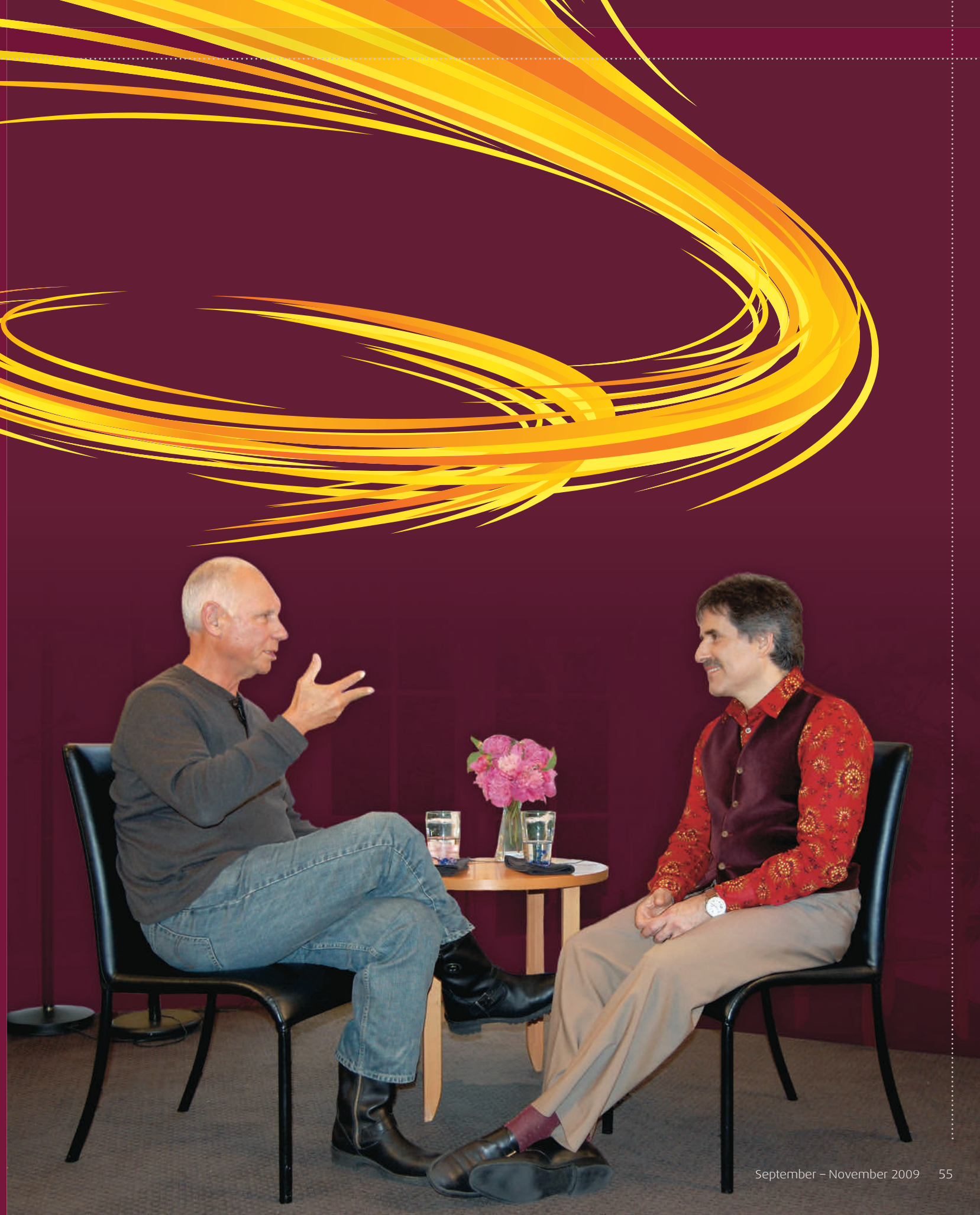
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*In their first dialogue together, Evolutionary Enlightenment teacher Andrew Cohen and Zen Master Genpo Merzel explore the dynamics of spiritual transformation, the future of Buddhism, and the role of the teacher-student hierarchy in a post-traditional world.*

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**ANDREW COHEN:** Genpo, our backgrounds are both in traditional Eastern paths—you're from the Zen tradition, and my final guru was a master of Advaita Vedanta. In those traditions, the concepts of spiritual authority, spiritual hierarchy, and spiritual attainment are assumed and taken for granted. It's understood that there is a hierarchy—that an individual can go from a lower state of development to a higher one—and that the role of the spiritual master is to facilitate this transformation.







Deep down inside,  
narcissists think they're  
awesome. Researchers  
can't find any sign of  
real insecurity.

fact that the kids who do well develop high self-esteem *as a result* of their achievement—not the other way around.

**EN:** *So you're saying that it's the willingness to work hard and to make an effort to achieve goals that breeds a certain kind of healthy self-confidence?*

**JT:** Exactly. And those qualities, which psychologists would label self-control or self-efficacy, also tend to lead to success. In other words, the willingness to work hard is self-control and believing that you can do it is self-efficacy, both of which are different from self-esteem. Self-esteem is: "I'm good. I feel good about myself." But, "I can go out there and make that basket or do that math assignment"—that's different. That's self-efficacy.

**EN:** *One of the interesting things you do in the book is challenge the popular belief that underneath their self-obsession, narcissists are actually quite insecure.*

**JT:** Right. There's a psychoanalytic theory that narcissists actually have low self-esteem and that their narcissism is just a cover. But the new research on this shows that narcissism actually correlates quite positively with self-esteem, even when

you look at self-esteem in a more implicit and subtle way. It turns out that deep down inside, narcissists think they're awesome. We can't find any sign of real insecurity. This has a lot of implications. It means that contrary to popular belief, you cannot cure narcissism with more self-esteem.

**EN:** *In your book, you lay out an overwhelming amount of data to show that narcissism has become a kind of cultural disease. What is the most significant evidence that led you to this conclusion?*

**JT:** There's evidence from a number of sources that narcissism is on the rise. The most serious and disturbing data comes from a National Institutes of Health study a couple years ago that looked at thirty-five thousand Americans to determine the lifetime prevalence of narcissistic personality disorder, or NPD. This is the clinical form of narcissism and is more severe than your garden-variety self-centeredness. For the study, they asked people of all ages whether they'd experienced NPD symptoms at any point in their lifetime. What they found was that only three percent of people over the age of sixty-five had ever experienced NPD while almost ten percent of people in their twenties had already experienced NPD symptoms.



**GR:** Well, I was seeing a lack of respect. As I said, from 1978 to 1994, I was a traditional Zen teacher. I was the roshi, and there was a lot of traditional respect, verticality, and so on, but there wasn't a whole lot of enlightenment happening. So I started to look for a new approach.

An event in May 1994 actually precipitated this. One evening after a particularly passionate dharma talk—one that I had really given my heart and soul to—I had just shared a meal with my students and was relaxing on my bed. But I could hear some of my students one floor down, and they were just joking around, having coffee, and smoking cigarettes. At that moment, something snapped in me.

**AC:** Because you felt they weren't taking you seriously?

**GR:** That's right. And I decided that I didn't want to put out that kind of energy anymore, where the result of my effort was dependent on whether people took it seriously or not.

**AC:** Over the years that I've been teaching, I have put more energy than I can express to you in trying to get people to take me seriously, to take themselves seriously, and to take their own potential for evolution seriously. As a matter of fact, I can't say there's been anything harder for me than simply trying to get people to take themselves seriously enough so that consciousness would be able to evolve in and through them. I think the issue we're speaking about is a particular problem as it relates to the postmodern self-structure. If you come from a traditional context and go to a Zen master, assuming there is genuine spiritual yearning, and the Zen master says, "Do X," you'll do it. Why? Because the master told you to. Because the master knows, and you want what the master's got, so you're going to do it. I know I'm oversimplifying, but compare that to today's hyper-individualized self who says, "Well, you know, that was kind of a cool idea. I was really inspired to do that a year ago. But, well, today I don't really feel like it. I'd rather go for a walk."

**GR:** Exactly. And as I said, I realized earlier this year that a number of my students who had only been with me since 1999 or later, during the Big Mind phase of my work, lacked a certain respect for the vertical. With them, everything has to be horizontal friendship and kinship, whereas the students who have been with me for twenty or twenty-five years have a much deeper respect for me as their teacher.

**AC:** And when a student doesn't have a fundamental level of respect for the teacher, and the teacher is supposed to be a manifestation and representation of Spirit, or the Buddha, or that which is higher, then what happens? Obviously, different teachers represent that role differently, depending on their own teaching style, depth of enlightenment, and authenticity. But what happens when that fundamental respect is not there?

**GR:** What happens is that the students are not empowered. I'll give you a simple analogy. Think of the faucet in your kitchen sink. You've got the faucet, and if you investigate further, that faucet is connected to a pipe, and that pipe goes to a bigger pipe, and it all goes back to the source of the water. Now, let's say that the dharma is the water, the teacher is the faucet, and the student is a cup. There are several things that can go wrong. One is that the students try to get beside the faucet and not under it. They try to have a horizontal relationship, they want to be buddy-buddy with the teacher, they want the teacher to be their friend. So they end up right next to the teacher, and nothing can flow through. Then there are some of us—and I was one of these—who want to be a cup standing on top of the faucet. We'd come into the *dokusan* room and arrogantly say, "Okay, here I am. Teach me." Well, nothing can happen in that arrangement, either, because I'm sitting on the teacher's head! So we have to find a way to actually submit, to actually

Recently, I started to realize  
that there was a  
shadow to the work  
that I was doing. It was the  
lack of verticality.

— GENPO ROSHI

come *under* the teacher. We have to make a commitment to the lineage and to the teacher where we deeply, consciously make a choice that we are going to put our own ego aside and surrender.

**AC:** Don't you think that something profound happens at a soul level when someone makes that commitment? Because no one forces you to do it. It's *freely chosen*. And, of course, when one makes that commitment, one doesn't really know what one is committing to. One only knows, "I'm committing myself to everything, to the Absolute."

**GR:** Yes, one doesn't know. One can't possibly know.

**AC:** But what one does know is that it's a commitment to that which is absolute, to that which is non-relative, to that which is inconceivable, to that which means *everything*, forever. That much one does know. And I've always felt that once someone freely



chooses to make that commitment, once one says yes to the Absolute, to God, there is no going back, even if one wants to reconsider later down the line. In other words, once that free choice is made from the depths of one's own soul, something happens at a karmic level that is eternal—an inner contract is signed. Yet many people, after they make that kind of commitment, aren't willing to follow through on it, which leads to all kinds of problems.

**GR:** It's the struggle between submission and resistance. You submit to the teacher, to the master, to the lineage, to the way, to it all, to the Spirit. You fully submit to that, and then all of your egoic resistance comes in. There's a kind of tension, a war that goes on. In a way, it wasn't until 1985 that I realized that during my previous thirteen years with Maezumi Roshi, I thought I was submitting to him when what I was really submitting to all that time was my own true nature. But that takes the form, objectively, of the teacher. In other words, you're submitting to the teacher in order to submit to your own true nature.

**AC:** Right. And of course, if a spiritual teacher or spiritual master is authentic, then they should be able to embody and manifest the kind of humility that proves or demonstrates, for people who have eyes to see, that they are on bended knee more than anyone else, so to speak, because of their deeper recognition of Spirit's true face.

In relationship to what you were saying with the faucet and cup analogy, I've had similar issues when my students got closer to me over time and became my friends. Many of them found it difficult to sustain the relationship with me because Spirit has always come first for me, and I've always been very transparent about that. Some of my students and friends were shocked when they found out that the personal relationship with me was actually, in the end, irrelevant if the truth of what our relationship was really based on didn't come first. If that comes first, then we can be friends. But if it doesn't come first, then our friendship is actually inhibiting the truth of who I am, as their teacher, and the truth of what their own potential is—and it inhibits the potential of our relationship to empower both of us and to potentially help enlighten the world. But a lot of people had trouble with this.

**GR:** Yes. I remember an experience one time in the *dokusan* room with my own teacher when he said to me, "You know, I don't care about you *at all* as a person! I only see you as a potential vessel for the dharma." Now this was in the seventies, the so-called Me Decade, and it really hit me *hard*. It was like a dagger into my heart.

**AC:** Into the heart of your ego, you mean, not the spiritual heart.

**GR:** Yes, but it felt like a dagger into my heart because my ego *was* my heart at that moment.

**AC:** I guess he had good aim then!

**GR:** He had terrific aim. As a Zen master, I often have the same feelings, and it's very painful for students to know that, in truth, the most important thing to me is that they become a vehicle or vessel for the dharma.

**AC:** So, in other words, your love for them is not for them as individuals but for them as potential vessels for that which is higher.

**GR:** And that is very hard for the ego to take.

**AC:** Right. But from a certain point of view, we could say that it's not possible to love a person more than that. You love them so much that you actually don't care about their ego at all. What you see, from the point of view of the dharma, is that the greatest gift we can bring to the world is another vessel for Spirit. Because the more vessels for Spirit there are, the more Spirit comes into the world, and then we're doing the greatest good. So a truly enlightened teacher sees all individuals who come to them as potential vehicles for Spirit and doesn't really care so much about the personal, psychological, emotional predicaments of the particular individuals and the predicaments of their egos.

**GR:** Or their personal selves. But it is very, very difficult for students to really get that.

**AC:** Especially in our day and age. In our culture, being a highly individuated personality is what we've been conditioned to believe is most important. So it can be a shock to suddenly be told that what we believe to be the most important part of ourselves actually isn't what's most important here. The real question to pose to students is, "Are you capable of humbling yourself enough so that Spirit will be able to move through you as it moves through me?"

**GR:** I think Christ spoke to this, saying there's no greater blessing than to be a vehicle for Spirit. And yet the ego fights it and resists it, asking, *Why me?* You know, *Why me, and why this life?* Because we all have our personal agendas, our personal self, and we want to fulfill that personal agenda. But eventually we see that this is all totally impersonal. I've often said to my students, "I don't know why I want enlightenment more for you than you want it for yourself." It's almost humorous, but it's also sad. I'm sure you find that very same thing.

**AC:** It's heartbreaking.

**GR:** It's heartbreaking because you actually want it for them. You want them to experience it for themselves—

**AC:** — desperately.

**GR:** Desperately, right? And they —

**AC:** — they usually don't get it. They say, *Why are you so desperate about this?*

**GR:** They don't understand.

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## T HE END OF ENLIGHTENMENT AS WE KNOW IT

**AC:** You were saying that in terms of your work with your students, you went from a vertical context where you were doing traditional Zen. And when that wasn't working, you went into a horizontal context with Big Mind, which also had its problems. So I'm curious about how you've responded to this. What do you think is next?

**GR:** Let me just say that I never completely threw out the vertical, that I've always been the Zen master in relation to my students. It's just the shift in emphasis that I've felt is part of the shadow. I've been emphasizing the horizontal and somehow, in the process, negating the absolute importance of the vertical dimension. So now I'm trying to shift it back by finding a new integration. If you picture a triangle, you have one corner of the base representing the vertical, or traditional Zen, and the other corner representing Big Mind, or a more horizontal approach. The apex of the triangle will be a higher synthesis of the two, but I don't yet know what that's going to look like.

One thing I've tried recently with my senior students, who are *senseis*, or dharma teachers, in their own right, is to cut them loose and set them free of their dependence on me. I said to them, "It's no longer my dharma that you're carrying. This is now your dharma, and you have to take full responsibility for it." In that, they have the opportunity to realize how important the relationship to the teacher actually is. It allows them to *choose* the vertical. There's no pressure from me for them to be students anymore; they have to choose it. Because all of a sudden, you pull the teacher away, and then you see what you're missing, right? For me, my teacher had to die for that to happen. Only after he was gone did I really see, for the first time, that it's all up to me.

**AC:** But wouldn't it also be possible for individuals to accept full responsibility for the dharma and be completely independent while *remaining* in a context of hierarchical relationship with others?

**GR:** Well, ideally.

**AC:** That's really what I'm trying to do in my work with my students. I'm trying to create a structure, or a matrix of relationships, that would be made up of a collective of individuals who ideally have attained some degree of enlightenment but where everyone is at different levels of development according to their actual merit and levels of experience. If we can do that within a *sangha*, or a committed hierarchical relationship with other people, then an intersubjective collective structure can emerge through which a new kind of dharma can be transmitted that could never emerge through one individual alone.

In other words, usually for a human being to be able to express their own liberated, creative autonomy, they need to step away from others or from their teacher or from their group. And in order to experience communion, which means oneness with the other, one usually has to sacrifice some or even all of one's own creative autonomy. But what I'm trying to teach is a form of *intersubjective nonduality*, in which individuals are able to come together in seamless communion beyond ego while also experiencing no limitations on their own individual autonomy. The autonomy does not inhibit the communion, and the communion does not inhibit the autonomy; instead, the autonomy and communion exist simultaneously in a context of natural hierarchy.

Natural hierarchy is very different from power hierarchy. In a traditional context, power hierarchy is enforced from the top down, and you just get slotted into your place. But in a context of natural hierarchy, the structure would be an expression of genuine degrees of actual, measurable higher development. So individuals in that context would have an inner recognition, acknowledgment, and respect for the authentic differences that always really do exist between individuals, whether or not we choose to admit it.

Again, I feel that the intersubjective or collective structure that could be created will be able to release a power of the dharma that could never be released by any one individual, no matter how powerfully enlightened he or she was. Why? Because it's only one individual. But if many individuals have sublimated the ego enough to allow Spirit to emerge *through* them, and they then come together, a kind of higher structure or matrix emerges very spontaneously that expresses something more profound, more miraculous, and more significant than any single Buddha could. It's something with the potential to truly effect change at the level of culture. That's what I've been working on with my students for the past fifteen years, and I'm telling you, it's the hardest thing I've ever tried to do.

**GR:** I believe you!

**AC:** It's much harder to do this with other people than it is to do it yourself. When you want to try to do something with other people

that you feel is more important than anything else, the difficulty is getting everyone else to experience the same level of urgency that you do. But if I experience the same level of urgency that you do, and if you experience the same level of urgency that I do, then we're together. We'll do anything we need to do in order to succeed. It's not because you tell me that I need to and it's not because I tell you that you do, but it's because we both freely realize it.

**GR:** And there is an urgency. My sense is that back in the time of the Buddha, twenty-five hundred years ago, there wasn't this urgency. Back then, one could be patient and sit meditating quietly for years. But we've evolved to the point where there are a lot of us out there realizing that time is of the essence and that the real battle right now is against time. How much time do we have before

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— ANDREW COHEN

a sufficient number of people evolve to a sense of what we might call global consciousness? There is a race going on, and it's a big one for us as a species. I think that's why all of us in this movement—no matter what our background is, whether it be Hinduism or Buddhism or Judaism or Sufism or whatever—are realizing that we have to join forces. We have to come together.

We took a huge step forward last November with the election of President Obama. I really think we took an enormous step and that in the next few years we will evolve, though we'll probably only know in retrospect. But I do believe we're going to make it globally.

**AC:** I've been feeling that too. Of course, it's not going to be easy, and it might not be pretty. But I feel that we *are* going to make it because the human spirit—or the inherent goodness of the evolutionary impulse that's awakening within us—is not going to let us all go down with the ship. It doesn't mean that we're not going to have to suffer the karmic consequences of our own ignorance.

**GR:** Or that things might not get worse before they get better. And I think we all have to throw our backs into it. We all have to be committed to this and do everything we can to ensure that we make it. If we just sit back and be complacent, that's not going to work. Again, I think there is an urgency now that simply didn't exist when traditional Buddhism came into being.

**AC:** Absolutely. The old enlightenment was only about transcendence, about letting everything be as it is, about the power of now. It was about attaining freedom from the world process. The focus was on the liberation of the individual, not the evolution of culture. But now we have this postmodern understanding. We've realized that the individual is a product of culture, and therefore the evolution of the individual is the evolution of culture. That perspective changes everything.

**GR:** Well, one of the things that my teacher used to say is that in the evolution of the Buddha-dharma, first it was all about the Buddha. In the time of the Buddha in India, as far as anything called Buddhism was concerned, the Buddha was *it*. Then at some point, the Buddha's teachings, or dharma, really became the focus. Now, in the West, we are entering the stage of the *sangha*, the stage of community. And again, to use the triangle model, we've got the Buddha at one corner, the dharma at the other corner, and the *sangha*—the fruition of the Buddha-dharma—at the apex. So what we are now entering into is the development of real *sangha*, where we see that actually the whole world and all sentient beings—even including inanimate objects, from an integral perspective—are all *sangha*. Right? They're all *sangha*. And, you know, the Buddha made a prediction that twenty-five hundred years after his death, the dharma was going to die, but what I think he really meant is the dharma *as we know it*. As we've known it up to now, the Buddha-dharma is going to die, and something new is going to evolve out of that, shifting the emphasis away from the individual, from I and me, to the whole notion of—

**AC:** —the Higher We.

**GR:** Of the Higher We. Exactly. And I think that's where we're heading right now. ■







# The Soul Is Already Illumined

An Interview with Sufi Teacher Aliya Haeri

By Elizabeth Debold

**WHEN A FEMALE COLLEAGUE** from the London EnlightenNext center told me that she'd recently met a woman who felt like a spiritual soul sister, I was, needless to say, interested—I'm always interested in knowing about women who have committed their lives to Spirit. But when she said that this woman was not only an American Sufi teacher living in South Africa but had married her own teacher, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri, becoming his third wife in a multiple marriage, I became completely intrigued. Remarkably, my colleague stressed the *liberation* and independence that this woman, Aliya Haeri, expressed in her being. It made me very curious not only about Haeri herself but about the path she is on.

At first, I wondered if she had returned to a traditional religious context as a refuge from our chaotic, globalizing world, as quite a few seem to be doing. But the more I learned about her life, the less that seemed to be the case. In the 1970s, Haeri was a well-known researcher of the paranormal. After realizing that this endeavor would not give her the deeper meaning and knowledge that she was seeking, she came upon Sufism. Sufism, which is the mystical path in Islam, met both her heart's desire for depth and her mind's craving for understanding. After converting to Sufism, Haeri pursued advanced studies in psychology—receiving her master's degree in 1995 from the Institute of

Transpersonal Psychology. An avid reader of the latest philosophical and cultural theories, including integral psychology, she has developed her own integration of the spiritual and psychological that focuses on soul development, which she teaches as director of the Academy of Self Knowledge in South Africa.

As I came to understand Haeri's interest in the human psyche, her attraction to Sufism began to make even more sense. Sufism has very sophisticated and exquisitely precise teachings about the forces within the human psyche—the light and dark impulses—that make the human predicament so complex. And yet, as a traditional mystical path, it also unequivocally demands that Spirit



come first, because no amount of psychological understanding will free the soul. “Islam” means to surrender—to God or to the ALL. And in following the Sufi path to God realization, Haeri

discovered, and now embodies, the mystical paradox that surrender is liberation, and that profound submission actually results in true independence.

So it was with great pleasure that

I spoke with Aliya Haeri about the path she has chosen—and about how her embrace of this beautiful tradition has met her very contemporary need for understanding and freedom.

## THE MYSTICAL PATH OF SUFISM

**ENLIGHTENNEXT:** *You converted to a Sufi order of Islam in the 1970s, which was quite unusual at the time. What was it about Sufism that you found so spiritually compelling?*

**ALIYA HAERI:** Basically, the goal of Sufism is the same as any other spiritual tradition: direct experience of the Divine. Sufism teaches that you already have your illumined essence within you—you are already enlightened. All that’s veiling this enlightenment is the conditioned mind or self. The journey is moving beyond the conditioned self and all of the barriers that the self puts up to battle for its autonomy and that keep us from the enlightenment that’s already there.

In the Sufi tradition, we have a wonderful map for this process, called the Four Journeys. The first journey involves recognizing that what we call “life” is simply insufficient. We go after our desires and our passions and discover that not a single one of them will give us the long-lasting contentment, peace, and truth that we look for. So, for example, we find someone we love and we lose ourselves in that love to the point where we think the world revolves around that chosen person. And then that person’s personality changes or for some reason we lose that person, and we taste disappointment and suffering. The everyday events in our lives are constantly calling us to realize that all of the material pursuits we are running after will never, at the end of the day, give us the lasting happiness we seek. We become disillusioned to a degree in our pursuit of those ambitions and desires. And we begin to seek in earnest.

That is the first journey: turning away from this so-called world into the Divine or into Spirit. If we move through the apparent duality that seems to exist between ourselves and the spiritual reality that resides within us, we discover what we call enlightenment. We experience that the surface of life is just a veneer and that there is this deep ocean, this deep cosmos, beyond. The first journey comes to an end when one’s separate sense of self becomes inseparable with Spirit. One becomes what we call a real or a true being.

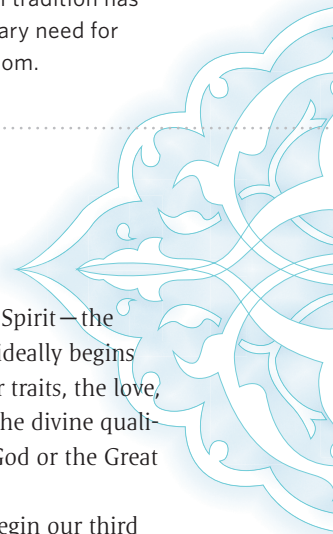
The second journey is going from Spirit to Spirit—the stage where, as a “real” or realized being, one ideally begins to express, through one’s actions and character traits, the love, wonder, truth, goodness, and beauty that are the divine qualities of that depth dimension, the qualities of God or the Great Mystery or pure consciousness.

With that experience and knowledge, we begin our third journey, which is the return from Spirit to Creation, back to this world. For some, this is a difficult journey because the bliss of being in Spirit is so intoxicating that they don’t want to return to society.

The fourth journey is being in the world, serving the world. It means living in this world with the ethical and moral commitment that the mystical experience gives you. It’s taking responsibility for what you can do in this world to honor the innate nobility of what the authentic life really is.

**EN:** *That’s very interesting, because some enlightenment schools focus on that experience of enlightenment—the depth of being that is the ever-present “now”—and regard the world as unreal or as play or illusory. But you are saying that Sufism teaches that this experience is not the end of the path but the beginning of a deeper engagement with life.*

**AH:** Yes, Sufism teaches that enlightenment is the beginning of living authentically. I would consider the experience of being in the timeless now as a state experience. That is why it seems static; there is neither time nor space in that state, because you have transcended this conditioned world of space and time. But if you do not come back into the world and do what we might call your service or your contribution or your work, the whole journey is completely static and actually regressive. It’s as though you were given a glimpse of paradise and you didn’t enter it. You see, we are guests in this universe, and we have to honor that and not say, “Oh well, it’s all *maya* and illusion.” No, we are brought here for a reason—to bring forward into the relative realm the divine qualities within us. We are the project in the theater of this universe.







## My Husband, My Teacher

**EN:** *In pursuing the Sufi path, you have made a choice that is very unusual for a contemporary Western woman—you've entered into a multiple marriage with your teacher. I imagine many people would say that your choice to become the third wife of Shaykh Fadhlalla is a step backward for women. How would you respond to that?*

**AH:** [Laughs] I certainly don't feel as if I've taken a step backward—quite the opposite! It is unusual, and it's not easy for people to wrap their heads

around a concept like this. I certainly can understand that. Let me say also that multiple marriage was never meant for everyone; it's always been the exception within Sufism and the Islamic religious tradition as a whole. I had incredible respect for Shaykh Fadhlalla as a human being, as a sincere and genuine teacher, and as someone whom I had seen for a couple of years living with his own families and leading a community. I trusted that this person, who is now my husband, wanted for me what I also had made a commitment

to, which is to live in higher consciousness. You see, choosing something as unusual as entering into a multiple family situation is a choice to live in another level of consciousness. That is what enables it to work out.

**EN:** *In what way is living in a multiple family about choosing to live in another level of consciousness?*

**AH:** The biggest challenge for many of us who truly want to live in authenticity is the fact

that our attachments distract us from the path and keep us connected to the outer world of separation. Our relationships are often a source of great attachment; most of us have the illusion that we own our partners. I went through, as did the other wives, all of the usual feelings of jealousy, fear, and insecurity. They're very normal. Thus, it can be a very powerful way to overcome these basic tendencies of the self that are rooted in attachment.

Really, the soul mate we all seek is actually the soul within us. That's what we've always been looking for. Once we recognize that what we're really seeking is union—the union of the self with the soul within ourselves—then that's very liberating. So whenever personal challenges have come up, I've wanted this union with that Source more than the sense of owning another human being or being the only wife. That makes it all possible.

**EN:** *Looking at this from the context of the past forty years of fighting for women's rights, doesn't multiple marriage inherently benefit men more than women?*

**AH:** I think I have evidence that it isn't so simple. In my observation, if a man has one wife, she serves him. That is how we have been conditioned, and it is still largely this way. But if a man takes on more than one wife, he serves his wives because he feels responsible for them. So in some way, I feel quite fortunate.

## INNER CONSTANCY

**EN:** Which teachings have you found to be most important on your path?

**AH:** What instantly comes to mind is that you must want the truth more than anything else. That truth is a sense of knowing that I am only a full human being when I am listening to the call of my soul. When you have that truth as a living reality within your breast, then you have an unchanging inner constancy from which to deal with the constant changes in this outer world. Accessing that inner constancy comes from the recognition that you already contain light and spirit within you; the soul is already there, illumined.

Never be complacent—that's another really good reminder for me. Never think that you're safe from yourself. As long as you're breathing in this world, you can never, ever be safe from yourself. There was a time when I would fall into a hole, so to speak, and I might wallow for days. But now whenever I fall into distraction or forgetfulness, it's for a shorter time. It doesn't take me as long to come back to that place of inner constancy. Consciousness is evolving. We do change; we do grow. But it takes constant vigilance, and no one can say it does not.

**EN:** When you say that you can never be safe from yourself, the self you're speaking about is what we might call ego. In your tradition, I believe you call this "the tyrannical nafs."

**AH:** Yes, in Sufism, the tyrannical *nafs* is the first or lowest of the seven stages of the self. We often describe this stage as the "terrible twos"; one is totally self-centered. It's said in the sacred tradition that the further you mature on the path, the more vigilant you have to be, because in the cloak of spirituality, you will find a lot of undesirable qualities—like pride and hypocrisy—disguising themselves.

**EN:** The forms that the egoic self takes evolve along with us.

**AH:** Yes. In fact, at the start of my spiritual training, I asked my teacher with all the exuberance of a novice: "How can I

become enlightened?" My teacher remained without speaking. Then, with deliberation, he raised his hand and lifted his forefinger to his forehead, then reached down and placed his finger on the prayer mat before him, signifying *prostration*.

## NOT A FLAW IN THE UNIVERSE

**EN:** Can you speak about how you became a teacher?

**AH:** In our tradition, as soon as you learn something, you are obligated to share it with someone else. Even if you learn one little aphorism or verse in our scripture, it is incumbent upon you to go and pass that on to someone else, because unless

Never be complacent. As long as you're breathing in this world, you can never, ever be safe from yourself.

you empty out, you can't be filled up with new knowledge. But you become a Sufi teacher by being granted permission from the Shaykh of the Order, who recognizes the degree of your readiness.

I had been teaching informally in circles of women, and later men, within our own community, as well as in other Sufi groups. One day I awoke feeling overwhelmed with gratitude for the generosity of life. I recall how everything struck me as perfect—not a flaw in the universe. You see, my husband, my teacher, has unshakable trust in a perfect Creator and the perfection of all things. By perfection, he does not mean "good" as we normally use it, as the opposite of "bad." Perfection is what *is*, beyond duality. From him I have learned to see with the eye of unity that there is no fault in this universe. On that particular morning, I remember thinking, "If I were taken from this world at this very instant, it would be perfect." This was July

3, 2004. That evening, my husband, Shaykh Fadhlalla, and I were sitting in the living room of my home. He became extremely quiet, reflective, and sober. Then he spoke: "You must take authority. You have the *idhn* [permission] for this work with *Haqiqat* [Reality]. You will heal and be the voice. In a few years' time, people will want the truth of the prophetic way. They will tire of terrorism and the political onslaught. They will want to go beyond religiosity. People want hope. Take any opportunity, openings, that come to you. You have the *idhn*."

**EN:** *As a Sufi teacher, do you think the spiritual work required today is different than it was in the past?*

**AH:** I think it can be harder today. The onslaught from material culture is much heavier. Yet because of this, people are deciding more quickly that they want more from life than what's being thrown at them. I see more people today actually expressing an interest in committing to the cultivation of their inner spirituality. To reach the minds and hearts of today's seekers, we need to make available the spiritual teachings stripped of cultural accoutrements and habits.

**EN:** *My observation is that there's a great deal of interest, but a deep soul-level commitment is still a very rare thing, which probably has always been the case. Particularly given that today we have so many spiritual options. We can choose to engage in Sufism this week, and then next week try Kabbalah, and then the following week try a little bit of Buddhist meditation.*

**AH:** Yes, I agree with what you're saying one thousand percent. When my husband's in a novel frame of mind, he'll say, "One day we'll hold a bazaar and every spiritual master will have his own booth, and people could come and shop!" There have always only ever been a few who are prepared to make a full commitment. I've been exposed to three different Sufi communities, and there are never more than a handful of individuals who really have that loyalty to truth. But even if people are swimming around the different retreats and the different meditation camps, that's better than simply being lost out there. At some point, hopefully before they're on their deathbed, they will awaken to the fact that this is *life*. It's not a game, and they're using up their allotted time. So something positive can happen.

**EN:** *Do you see any differences between men and women on the spiritual path?*

**AH:** Yes, I do. There was a time when I saw women as being much more spiritually ahead. My husband always used to say that some of his best students were women. I remember

I have learned to see with  
the eye of unity that there  
is no fault in this universe.

visiting enlightened teachers in India, and one said, "Why is it that the only people who come asking for spiritual practice are women?" But there is a biological factor that hinders women up until the age of menopause. Although I've seen young girls doing *dhikr* [Sufi meditation] really beautifully, there's a point where hormones and childbearing come into the picture. That takes them away from formal Sufi practice, although childbirth can be very spiritual because you have to be in utter surrender to give birth. But once the children arrive, even with the best intention to treat the raising of the children and the maintenance of the home as a spiritual path, it's not that easy to maintain. For a period, women get quite caught up in the material world, having to see to the children and such, whereas men, even if they are dutiful and support the family, can go off and do meditation all night.

**EN:** *What do you think the secular West could learn from Sufism?*

**AH:** One of our great masters has said, "You were not created at random or in jest, but marvelously made and for some great end." I think in this postmodern age we need to remember who we are and to know that we actually are, on this earth, representatives of the Divine. We have to bring the light of that highest consciousness into this world, to practice bringing into the relative realm all of the absolute qualities within us, such as love, compassion, gratitude, forgiveness, justice, and true power (not force). If we do it with awe and wonder and genuine humility and gratitude, it's a priceless gift. As my husband, my teacher, says, "Enlightenment has become yet another project. People are running after it. But you cannot get enlightenment. It has got you!" ■



# The Making of a Modern-Day Zen Master

With **Jun Po Denis Kelly**

by Ross Robertson

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*[I am] a man among men, dedicated to a life of meditative awareness. I am a man of Argentine tango, a man of organic wine, a man who makes his own biodiesel, a man in love with a beautiful woman, a man of intense passion, a man who harvests and eats wild mushrooms, digs clams, and collects seaweed at the ocean, a man who feels and loves deeply, a man devoted to the idea of Zorba the Buddha, a man mending relationships, a man with a lot of opinions, a man growing and learning. A man whose heart aches and soars . . . an ordinary man, a man like you.*

*Jun Po Roshi, interviewed by Doshin M.J. Nelson for the ManKind Project*

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**JUN PO DENIS KELLY** is a man of many things—Zen Buddhist roshi, Ashtanga yogi, psychedelic pioneer, former federal prisoner, cancer survivor, and noted modernizer of the famed Rinzai tradition of samurai-era Japan. He's a man of rare strength and sweetness, whose character combines an unusually powerful self-confidence with a striking sense of defenselessness and deep vulnerability. Most of all, perhaps, he's a true man of the sixties, and his life cuts a colorful arc through the era when the discovery of new layers of self and consciousness swept an entire generation beyond

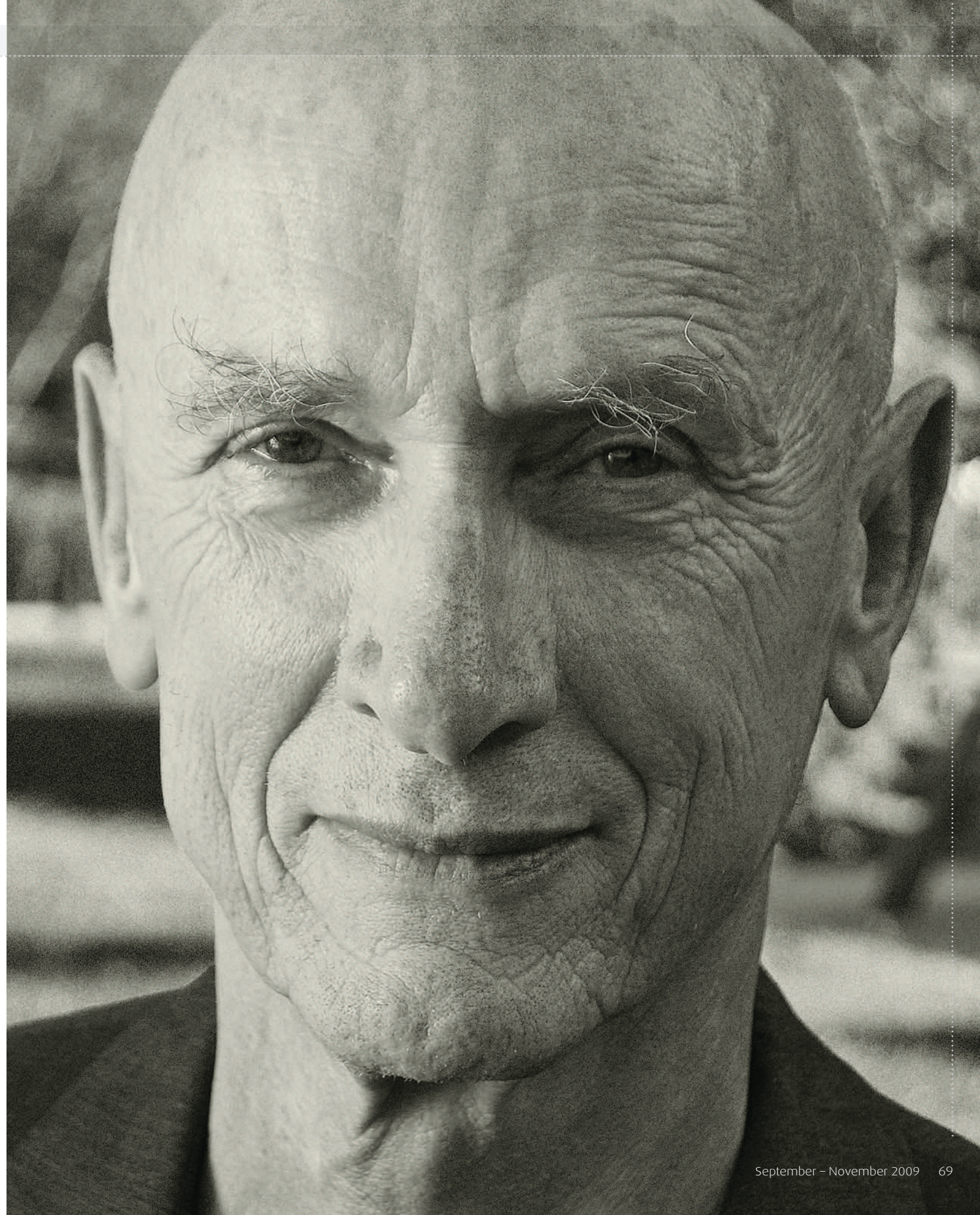
the limits of the familiar and into a deeper confrontation with the meaning of life and the nature of reality.

Kelly was born to a military family in northern Wisconsin on April 14, 1942. A troubled youth and an early spiritual hunger led him west to California in 1963, where he was quickly taken up in the exploratory ferment of the counterculture. He became a first-generation psychonaut and self-described "urban shaman," a friend of Alan Watts and the Grateful Dead, a contemporary of Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters, and one of the freewheeling inventors of

the legendary Clear Light "Windowpane" LSD. He also began a dedicated study of Buddhist meditation, spending time with both Shunryu Suzuki Roshi and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche before finally meeting the man who would become his teacher, Rinzai Master Eido Shimano Roshi of the Zen Studies Society in New York.

After fourteen years of intensive training, Eido Roshi eventually recognized Jun Po as a Zen master in his own right, making him his first dharma heir as well as the heir to his monastery, Dai Bosatsu. But Jun Po's path was destined to take a different course.







Desperate to make sense of the Rinzai tradition for his own time and culture, he decided to leave Dai Bosatsu to pursue an experiential education in Western psychotherapy. Soon, he also began translating many of the traditional Japanese teachings he'd been given into modern Western forms. He later joined the ManKind Project, a prominent international men's movement,

and started leading seven-day Zen retreats for men. Ultimately, he went on to found his own lay Buddhist order, Hollow Bones, and develop a contemporary Rinzai path called Mondo Zen, updating the traditional Zen koan study with a new dialectic "ego deconstruction/reconstruction" dialogue process born of his own innovative blend of East and West.

Today, at age sixty-seven, Jun Po is a wise soul who recently survived stage IV throat cancer. He is still teaching and leading retreats, still reaching in new directions, still wildcrafting mushrooms, dancing the tango, practicing zazen. He's doing it all with grace and generosity, and this is his story—told in his own words, as taken from a recent series of interviews with *EnlightenNext*.

**I HAD MY FIRST EXPERIENCE** of nondual consciousness when I was only one or two years old. I think I was still in diapers. I was raised in the 1940s and '50s in northern Wisconsin, and my father came back from the war with an alcohol problem. So it was a difficult childhood, with a lot of drinking and violence. One day when he was home on leave, I was hiding under the bed in a state of absolute terror—not from physical violence but from the emotional violence between my mother and father. I was backed up into a corner, lying in a little pool of my own urine, and whatever structures or emotions had been formed in my tiny egocentric brain simply dissolved. There was this blur of fear, anger, and confusion. It became so intense that I just disappeared back in, back in, back in, into a pristine silence and clarity.

I had no idea what it was, of course—not until I encountered lysergic acid diethylamide [LSD] many years later and had the same experience of moving into that causal space. I had no language for it at the time, but I think that moment was really the motivation for my whole spiritual path. To be able to suddenly find myself, simply because of stress, in this experience of nondual mind . . . There was just nowhere to place it. The idea of traditional religion certainly didn't line up with that deep insight. Growing up, it just created this huge question of *What?* If you asked me, "What do you mean, what?" all I could say was, "*What?*"

To experience nondual mind is to transcend ego, and in transcending ego at that age, I had the sudden intimation that there's nobody here. That in truth, mind is empty. Mind is pure. I didn't understand it, but it deconstructed me. It left me nowhere, and I desperately had to try to figure things out. That was the beginning.

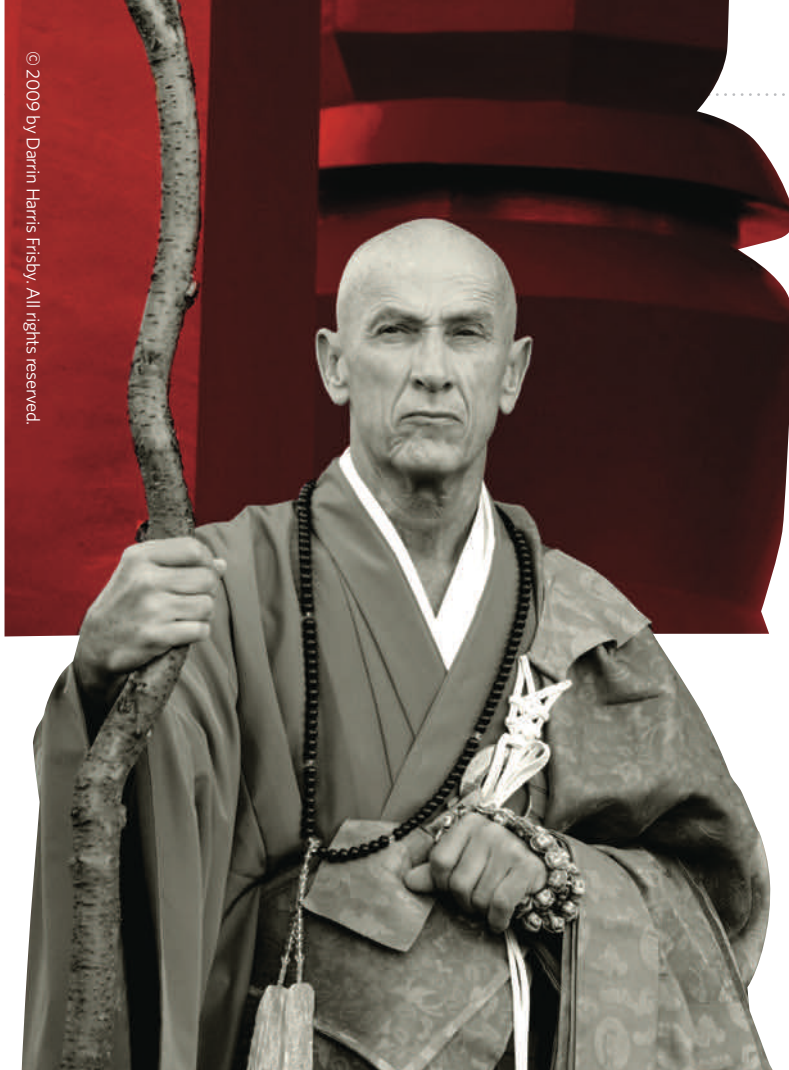
**I WENT TO CALIFORNIA OUT OF FRUSTRATION.** I certainly couldn't find any help in the 1950s and '60s in northern Wisconsin. So I went to the West Coast and discovered that there was this whole other universe, a whole other way of being and looking at things. I got into a relationship with

a woman who introduced me to mescaline, and I began to have these extraordinary subtle experiences—vivid hallucinations, that whole classic experience of the subtle realm. When I looked through those eyes at the world, I could not *believe* America. I could not believe how people behaved or how they understood the nature of their emotional body or intentions. I went on to experiment with other compounds like ayahuasca and dimethyltryptamine [DMT], but it wasn't until I encountered LSD in San Francisco that I finally penetrated back into that causal state again and slowly began to understand and realign for myself that experience I'd had when I was a child.

I was in my early twenties at the time. 1965. The kids were younger than I was; they were all teenagers, it seemed. Eventually, I got invited within the psychedelic community in San Francisco to consider getting involved in manufacturing LSD, and I thought of it as a vehicle for bringing deep and profound insight to our culture, so I agreed. I became the head of a "family"—an extended community in the psychedelic world—that produced a product called Clear Light, and then later Windowpane. There were twenty-eight people spread out around the world, mostly in the United States, and we made around thirty million doses over ten years. We gave away large, large quantities at concerts. This was very common during that time, with the Grateful Dead and Janis Joplin and the Airplane. We'd go to the parties, the big concerts, which were the gatherings of the tribes, you know, the psychedelic music fairs, and the different families would come and give their LSD away.

I was the one who built up our distribution network. I hung out with the Grateful Dead. Took a few drum lessons with Bill Kreutzmann, as a matter of fact. I had a backstage pass, meaning I'd just walk in and out of the place. We called ourselves the Order of the Golden Toad. I melted down a seventeenth-century French Roman Catholic chalice and had it cast into golden frogs. We'd have a ritual initiation after you were with the family for a while, and everyone got a golden frog. So we all wore these frogs on chains. That was our symbol. I still have it on a necklace that I wear occasionally.





In the great  
void, there's  
no one here;  
there's no  
*there* there.  
But what  
*is* there is  
potentiality.

I WAS AN URBAN SHAMAN for about ten years. And I learned that the whole chronology of subtle states and hallucinations, practices and visualizations, were all extraordinarily interesting, but they were all just products of mind. That's what a hallucination is. It's more real than our conversation right now, but that doesn't mean it *exists*. Subtle states exist intersubjectively only as temporary products of mind. Mind is what exists. And to experience that in ritual form, so to speak, was my next step in seeing and directly understanding the nature of mind.

It was the chronology of seeing through the myth of ego, of experiencing one's surface or relative mind as only a superficial flickering of identification, and experiencing that not as a *self* but as a function of mind. Once I really learned how to do that, I stopped the investigation because I realized that if I continued, I would die. I mean real death, not just ego death. It was becoming obscene and unreasonable; all I could find were a few gossamer threads with which to pull existence back together again. I don't recommend it to anyone, but this was my particular path: to take massive and more massive quantities in order to establish a kind of absolute death and absolute certainty. In that realization, one experiences the mind in which all experience is taking place. It still has a sense of self to it, but now it's the Self seeing *through* the self.

And it goes further. You can actually lose *that* sense of self, where there is no reference in awareness, no direction or weight in any way. Then, finally, you lose *that*, and there's only the great darkness, the great void. There's no one there; there's no *there* there. But what *is* there is potentiality. I like that in physics now they say that before the big bang, there was nothing except potentiality. I always laugh when I hear that, because of that experience. You're gone, absolutely gone, and nothing of *you* remains.

EVENTUALLY, I BEGAN TO SEARCH for some kind of order and structure to all of this. Instead of just being a reasonably enlightened urban shaman in our culture, I needed to know what was going on. So I looked into various schools of thought, and eventually I went to Zen because it was the most interesting to me, the cleanest and tightest system. I wanted to find out whether or not the samadhi and the insight with the pure psychedelic, with LSD, would be the same as or similar to that of meditation.

My first experience with formal training and practice was with Shunryu Suzuki Roshi at the San Francisco Zen Center in 1965. A friend of mine who was a pothead, drug addict, alcoholic, and

Beat poet-philosopher said to me, “You’ve got to come to this Zen lecture!” This was when Suzuki Roshi was still ministering to the Japanese Buddhist community, down at the Bush Street Temple, before the Beats discovered him and he became popular. So I went and sat through this lecture given in Japanese, and my friend said to me, “Wasn’t that great?” I said, “Great? I didn’t understand a word!” He said, “Who cares? Just *listen*.” And I went, “Oh boy, I’m in trouble now.” That got me. That’s what opened the door to Zen training, and I just went off into practice land. But I never really connected with Suzuki Roshi. You know, I’m a wild person, and they were Soto. They were just a little too puritanical for me.

**B**Y 1970, MY FACE HAD BECOME KNOWN, and I had to go underground. For the next ten years, I was actively being sought by the Drug Enforcement Administration, with a fifty thousand dollar cash reward for information leading to my arrest. So I disappeared into the forests of Oregon. My partner took over the distribution network, and I joined my other partner in the lab in actually synthesizing LSD.

I remember having several arguments around the issue of purity with Owsley Stanley—the Bear. We didn’t want anyone to adulterate our LSD; it had to be 250 micrograms of 100 percent “D-normal” so that you could have a nondual experience. It had to be perfectly dry and absolutely pure, and we were quite dedicated to that. To control the purity, we’d cast it in a thin layer of gelatin. Then we’d cut it into tiny one-tenth-of-an-inch squares that you could look right through, which is why it came to be known as Windowpane. So you could no longer adulterate the product. But now it would be subject to light, and LSD will equilibrate when light hits it. It flips from the D-normal to the “isomer,” and that makes LSD speedy. This was the argument I had with Owsley. He felt strongly about not subjecting it to light, and I was more interested in preventing people from polluting the product. Who leaves their LSD lying around in the sun anyway?

During that time, I also traveled around the country a lot. I went off to various spiritual retreat centers for training. I went to India and studied Ashtanga yoga with Pattabhi Jois a few times, and eventually did my teacher training at the Iyengar Institute in San Francisco. I studied Tibetan Buddhism with Trungpa Rinpoche and the Karmapa, but it was way too baroque for me. It’s like the Roman Catholicism of Buddhism, and there seemed to be no exit strategy. I saw how people were just helplessly bound to *abhisheka* [devotional practices and rituals] and this whole idea of the *guru-chela* [student] relationship. It never ends in that system. You’d have to live ten lifetimes sequentially to get through it all. So I always stayed on the periphery. I did a few retreats, cooked a few Japanese meals for Trungpa and the Karmapa, but eventually I had to return to my Zen roots.

**FIRST MET EIDO ROSHI** through an article that he wrote. You know how you can “meet” someone before you meet them? He was talking about students coming to see him, and he said, “Don’t send me any more PhDs. They already know everything.” I found that enormously interesting—his understanding that a little too much knowledge can be a huge barrier. This is why in Zen we say, “Just shut up and empty your mind and turn to the wall.” So I went up to his monastery in New York, Dai Bosatsu, and sought him out. I moved in for three months and started my training. That was in 1978.

Over the next nine years, I trained intermittently at Dai Bosatsu. To clean up my past, I eventually spent ten and a half months in federal prison in 1981. In 1984, I was ordained, and I opened the Kanzeon Zen Yoga Center in Marin County, California. I loved threes, sixes, and nines, so I taught three hours in the morning and three hours at night, 6:00 to 9:00, 6:00 to 9:00, six days a week for four years. It was one of the most extraordinary periods of my life. When you’re practicing six hours a day, *everything* just works. But I was still having problems with my own ethical interpretation of reality, and that pulled me to return to the monastery for classical training. I’ve always been a reasonable, kind person, but occasionally I would do something really stupid, and I needed to know how I could integrate the deepest nondual insight I’d had into my life 24/7. How did all of that work?

When I asked Eido Roshi if I could be trained, he just grinned and said, “Jun Po, I think you’re worth civilizing.” So I went back to Dai Bosatsu and spent six years at the wall. First I was head monk, and then vice abbot until I resigned in 1993.

**Z**EN AS A FORMALIZED MEDITATION PRACTICE is absolutely exquisite. There’s nowhere to go. You turn everything back in, and you penetrate, finally, to nondual mind. And it’s guaranteed. We can’t say when, but it’s hour after hour, day after day of relentless returning inside your koan practice of concentrating the mind. Let that concentration be absolutely *perfect*, and in the perfection of that moment of concentration, we find stillness.

Zen does that exquisitely. It authenticated my whole life—my search and my drive and my psychedelic period as well. It really did, because the states were identical, but one is biochemically induced and the other is discipline induced through volitionally holding the mind still. They are different gateways. The place is the same, but one is “going, going, gone,” and the other is “very, very slowly slowing down, slowing down, slowing down.” You’ve *done* one. The other was *done to* you. But the states are identical.

Of course, the question then is, So what? Why bother? I’m not above it all, you know. Unfortunately, you have to come back



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from that nondual state. You think this tremendous insight experience is what transforms the ego, but seeing *through* my habitual tendencies to react from an egocentric perspective is not the same thing as reorganizing, redefining, and reconditioning them. If you don't do that, your habitual tendencies will just represent themselves again as a reactive pattern. Something happens, and all of a sudden you realize, "I've forgotten. I'm no longer awake." And what I discovered was that although my insight into nondual reality was deep enough, the depth of my ability to behave ethically and compassionately, particularly around my sexuality, was still quite lacking. That promiscuousness caused this pain in other people's lives that, as a conscious ethical being, I found unacceptable.

In the traditional model, the *arhat* [enlightened one] is basically above ethical or moral consideration. "I can do exactly what I want to do." And from an absolute point of view, that's perfection itself. There is only karma unfolding, and any idea of evaluating it exists only in the mind of man. But having that insight puts you in a difficult situation, because the solution to a philosophical quandary or emotional dilemma like this is not "back to the Zendo." That's the tradition — go back to the Zendo and sit through it. You can get to this exquisite state of denial where you're above it all and it doesn't matter, but that's not true to the human condition, or the Mahayana. The Mahayana is the marriage of wisdom and *compassion*, not just isolated wisdom where you're above everything and nothing matters.

**I**N OCTOBER 1992, Eido Roshi made me his first dharma heir. I was going to take over the monastery. He and I had discussed this in detail: He would be around for another decade or two, but I was going to take that burden off him after thirty years. But I couldn't go through with it.

Receiving *inka* from Eido — transmission of mind and recognition as a master — was a huge shock. It was like a wake-up call, an experience of overwhelming responsibility and chilling humility. Now all of a sudden I'm supposed to be a *Zen* master? What does that *mean*? I knew I could not embody the negative aspects of the ethnocentric Japanese perspective; I did not want to perpetuate those cultural forms. What I wanted to know was how do we accomplish what we need to accomplish? Why do we practice? What is enlightenment? What is *dhyana*? What do these terms mean, and how do I see them manifesting through myself and my culture?

Eido Roshi would say there is no Zen outside of Japanese culture, and I'd say, well, that's partially true, but help me out here! I'm an American. I'm not Japanese. How is this going to work? And he wouldn't say it, but he'd look at me like, well, it's easy, you just become Japanese! But I couldn't pass that on to my culture. I couldn't pass on my *responsibility* either. He is unquestionably one of the best Zen teachers of this century, and this was not a casual relationship. To break it was really quite wrenching — we wept together. But I couldn't rely on Eido anymore; I couldn't rely on the Buddha. I realized *I have to do this*, and I have to do it my own way. It was a different kind of insight.



I WENT TO BOULDER, COLORADO, and entered a two-year program of bioenergetic Buddhist-oriented psychotherapy called the Alaya Process, with Thomas Huffman and Reta Lawler. They were Gestalt therapists, and they'd both been with Osho Rajneesh for years. We went through classical psychotherapy, a lot of expressive work—catharsis, gestalt, shadow revealing, looking into the foundations of one's psychological structure. It was a small community, and it allowed me to study all the patterns and shadows of my own psyche. I'm a recovering narcissist; I think that's the best that a so-called spiritual teacher can hope for.

Meanwhile, I was converting all the Rinzai teachings and forms from Japanese into English. Later, I joined the ManKind Project, where I felt like I had found my family, my tribe, and I realized I'd been preparing my whole life to bring this treasure of Zen training to the Western world.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOTO AND RINZAI Zen is in the style of practice. The Soto school has a primary practice called *shikantaza*—just sit. Just sit, just sit, just sit. Do nothing; just sit. It's like Dogen said: "Think no-thinking." In Rinzai we say: Okay, you must sit, but you must also *penetrate* and *awaken*. You must awaken, you must awaken now! Show me, demonstrate, awaken now, with enormous passion and effort and energy in your sitting practice. But we also do koan practice. We say: Hold that koan constantly, continually, relentlessly, with the idea that this will allow you to awaken. If you talk to teachers in both traditions, they'll say both Soto and Rinzai are correct. If you ask them how long it's going to take in either school, they'll tell you about twenty years. So the difference is in style. Some Soto teachers use koans too.

My form—Mondo Zen—is really Rinzai for our time. It's not an ethnocentric structure but a worldcentric/kosmocentric one. I've created a path that has five training elements: sacred stewardship, philosophical reindoctrination, emotional maturity and integrity, conscious embodiment, and genuine insight. And that's just a modern way of looking at path, or *marga*, in the yogic or the Buddhist tradition. It begins where Rinzai training begins, with a koan—in our case, a dialectic dialogue where you sit down for a couple of hours and have a conversation that takes you through twelve koans. Rinzai was a radical. We love him because he was a table flipper, and he really challenged everything, in every way. He was a little bit rude in my opinion at times, but he was unshakable, fierce, direct, confrontational. And that's the koan process. It's eyeball to eyeball. All I'm doing is going back to the old "dharma combat" public debate forum from the Chinese tradition where a new teacher would show

up in town, he'd come to the monastery, he'd debate with the abbot, and then the monks would vote. If he won the debate, the abbot would leave and the new guy would take over. That's the origin for the Mondo process, and I find that this sort of public dialogue works extremely well to deepen everyone's insight and understanding.

Mondo Zen also modernizes and updates the classical Rinzai koan system with *emotional* koans that can be utilized and practiced daily. At one point, Ken Wilber said he thinks that this is the first serious innovation in Rinzai Zen in a thousand years. With classical Rinzai, the solution to emotional problems is the martial attitude of subjugation and control. It's not awakening and seeing *through* them and transforming them, but developing such a degree of discipline and will that you are no longer subject to them. The problem is that then they become shadow states. You can try to control them through will, but you're just using violence to prevent violence, and I discovered I couldn't do that.

THREE YEARS AGO, I WAS DIAGNOSED with stage IV throat cancer. Through deep meditative practice, I've had the so-called classic insights. Through psychedelics, I've had the rocket-ride insights. But cancer added an element of death that really surprised me. The cancer itself is easy. It's the radiation and the chemo that are the problem. Chemotherapy actually dissolves the neural connections in your brain. You start to die in a very different way—slowly, physically. They really march you right down towards death's gate.

During four months of treatment, I watched myself slowly die and go into states of dissociation and confusion. By the time it was done, the chemo fog and the radiation burn had actually changed my psychology. I became seriously depressed, which was a very interesting experience. I would try to practice. I'd drag myself to the cushion or try to do my yoga or something, and I would fall over and just lay there. And then slowly, slowly, you know, I came back out of it. I had actually seriously considered suicide. Not out of self-pity, but just because it felt totally unacceptable for an intelligent man to continue dragging a carcass and half a brain around. If you had any character, you'd kill yourself.

That actually frightened me. But out of it came a new degree of compassion and empathy and a real letting go, hopefully, of the last remnants of my arrogance. Through moving in and out of this death pattern, I had the realization once more: There's no *there* there. After everything I've been through, to watch my little ego and all my temporary self-referencing dissolve away all over again was something quite exquisite. ■







# The Narcissism Epidemic

An interview with **Jean M. Twenge**

by Joel Pitney

**WHEN HISTORIAN** Christopher Lasch published his classic book *The Culture of Narcissism* in 1979, it was already clear that a new kind of human being had been forged in the cultural fires of the sixties—one who was more socially conscious, more free from traditional norms, and more thoroughly self-obsessed than in any previous generation. Now, thirty years later, the Me Generation has given birth to Generations X and Y, for whom phrases like “Building self-esteem,” “You’re special,”

and “Be all that you can be” have, for many, become instilled as foundational principles of existence. Indeed, with this new breed of budding narcissists, the cultural phenomenon that Lasch first defined has both expanded and intensified, causing many to question whether the trend toward individualism may have gone a bit too far. Primary among these critics has been thirty-seven-year-old San Diego State University psychology professor Jean M. Twenge, whose 2009 book



*The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement* may be the best and most comprehensive diagnosis to date of what she calls a “cultural disease.”

It would be difficult to find a person who cares as much about those who care mostly about themselves as Twenge does. Her interest in narcissism was piqued during graduate school in the nineties while doing psychological research on how changing gender roles were affecting young people, particularly women. Twenge found that in addition to the new level of equality and individual empowerment that women were experiencing, there was an accompanying degree of self-infatuation that was, ironically, holding many back from expressing their full potential as human beings. Her interest in the subject blossomed, eventually leading her to publish *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—And More Miserable Than Ever Before* in 2006. The book, which

garnered attention from a wide range of major media outlets including the *New York Times*, the *Today* show, and National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, launched her into the national limelight and established her as one of the world's foremost experts on the narcissism phenomenon.

With *The Narcissism Epidemic*, Twenge has taken her research to the next level. Filling more than three hundred pages with psychological data (much of which comes from original research) and examples from pop culture, she makes a strong case that we are in the midst of a narcissistic renaissance. From her discussion of new “personal paparazzi” businesses (which give anyone with a few grand the opportunity to feel what it's like to be an adored celebrity) to her original graphs (which show a significant increase in the appearance of narcissistic language in newspapers), Twenge paints a stark picture of our current cultural predicament



**Jean Twenge, PhD**, is a psychology professor at San Diego State University.

that is both shocking and implicating for those of us who have grown up in the self-reflective afterglow of the sixties. But Twenge isn't just a critic. She's on a mission to educate people about the harmful consequences of this disease and to help provide a much-needed objectivity on our own collective condition. Playing the role of cultural epidemiologist, Twenge explores the root causes of the narcissism epidemic, gives an overview of its many symptoms, and offers her own set of prescriptions for how she thinks we can treat it.

**ENLIGHTENNEXT:** *What is your definition of narcissism?*

**JEAN TWENG:** Narcissism is an inflated sense of self. If self-esteem is confidence, then narcissism is overconfidence. It's human nature for people to want to preserve self-esteem and feel good about themselves, but someone who's narcissistic takes that to the next level and thinks that they're better than they actually are. They don't have a realistic view of themselves or their abilities.

Because they think they're great and the world revolves around them, narcissists have trouble with relationships. They lack empathy for others, they have difficulty taking somebody else's perspective, and they tend to get angry and aggressive when they're insulted. It's a trait that causes a lot of problems for other people and for society.


**EN:** *It's important to be clear here that normally when we speak about having self-esteem, it's considered a positive thing, whereas narcissism tends to be a negative trait.*

**JT:** Yes. Self-esteem is a good thing in some situations. It has a lot of benefits. It's correlated with happiness. It's correlated

with perseverance. These are obviously both very good things. But it's also not the be-all and end-all that a lot of people thought it was twenty or thirty years ago. In fact, new research seems to show that in most contexts, self-esteem is actually neutral—it doesn't hurt you, but it doesn't really help you that much either.

**EN:** *Why is that?*

**JT:** There are a couple of studies that have come out on this. When you look at performance in the workplace or at school, there is a correlation between self-esteem and performance, but a lot can also be explained by other variables. Take academic performance, for example. Coming from a middle-class household tends to lead to both higher self-esteem and higher academic performance. But you can't necessarily conclude, as many do, that it was the self-esteem that led to higher performance because there are many other factors that come along with being from a middle class home that could account for the improvement. If you take those variables out, then the relationship between self-esteem and academic performance is a lot smaller, and what's left can mostly be explained by the



Deep down inside,  
narcissists think **they're**  
awesome. Researchers  
can't find any sign of  
real insecurity.

fact that the kids who do well develop high self-esteem *as a result* of their achievement—not the other way around.

**EN:** *So you're saying that it's the willingness to work hard and to make an effort to achieve goals that breeds a certain kind of healthy self-confidence?*

**JT:** Exactly. And those qualities, which psychologists would label self-control or self-efficacy, also tend to lead to success. In other words, the willingness to work hard is self-control and believing that you can do it is self-efficacy, both of which are different from self-esteem. Self-esteem is: "I'm good. I feel good about myself." But, "I can go out there and make that basket or do that math assignment"—that's different. That's self-efficacy.

**EN:** *One of the interesting things you do in the book is challenge the popular belief that underneath their self-obsession, narcissists are actually quite insecure.*

**JT:** Right. There's a psychoanalytic theory that narcissists actually have low self-esteem and that their narcissism is just a cover. But the new research on this shows that narcissism actually correlates quite positively with self-esteem, even when

you look at self-esteem in a more implicit and subtle way. It turns out that deep down inside, narcissists think they're awesome. We can't find any sign of real insecurity. This has a lot of implications. It means that contrary to popular belief, you cannot cure narcissism with more self-esteem.

**EN:** *In your book, you lay out an overwhelming amount of data to show that narcissism has become a kind of cultural disease. What is the most significant evidence that led you to this conclusion?*

**JT:** There's evidence from a number of sources that narcissism is on the rise. The most serious and disturbing data comes from a National Institutes of Health study a couple years ago that looked at thirty-five thousand Americans to determine the lifetime prevalence of narcissistic personality disorder, or NPD. This is the clinical form of narcissism and is more severe than your garden-variety self-centeredness. For the study, they asked people of all ages whether they'd experienced NPD symptoms at any point in their lifetime. What they found was that only three percent of people over the age of sixty-five had ever experienced NPD while almost ten percent of people in their twenties had already experienced NPD symptoms.

Another piece of evidence is the work that my coauthor Keith Campbell and I have done to measure narcissism in a normal population where this tendency toward self-centeredness hasn't reached a clinical level but still causes problems. We used nationwide results from a questionnaire called the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), which includes forty pairs of statements—one narcissistic and one non-narcissistic—asking people to choose the statement from each pair that best describes them. We looked at the results from two

Everybody thought that if you raised your kid's self-esteem, it would be good for them. But when parents and teachers try to increase self-esteem, they usually end up increasing narcissism.

groups of college students who completed the NPI in 1982 and 2006—a total of sixteen thousand people—and found a significant increase in the scores over that time. In 1982, about one out of seven answered the majority of the questions in a narcissistic direction; in 2006, that number nearly doubled to about one in four.

The other interesting thing is that the data showed women's scores on narcissism increasing at a much faster rate than men's scores.

**EN:** *Why do you think that is?*

**JT:** I think a lot of the cultural changes that have happened in the United States and other Western countries in the last few decades can be explained by an increase in individualism. Individualism has an upside and a downside. The huge upside is more freedom and autonomy for women, more opportunities for minorities, and more tolerance of alternative lifestyles. That's the upside of focusing on people as individuals rather than applying arbitrary social rules. But every cultural system also has its downside. The problem with this trend toward individualism is that it's gone too far and has resulted in the self-centered narcissistic culture that we have today.

**EN:** *So did this rise in narcissism start with the cultural ferment of the sixties?*

**JT:** We found that it probably did have its origins in the sixties, because that's where this increasing individualism really got started. But back then, there was much more of a sense of higher purpose. It was much more about creating a social movement. It didn't have quite as much of the self-centeredness and the "I'm in this just for me" element that we see today. It also focused much more on looking inward and self-exploration. These are different from narcissism, because they're focused on learning about oneself rather than just saying "I'm awesome. I already know it. Now let's show the rest of the world." In the sixties and seventies, people saw the baby boomers as more narcissistic than the previous generation. But then their kids took it to the next level. It's almost like that sense of higher purpose boiled off and left us with this empty narcissistic shell in most of the culture.

**EN:** *One of the most fascinating things about the book was your chapter on parenting, in which you show some of the ways that the ideals of the boomers helped to shape the narcissism epidemic that we're experiencing now.*

**JT:** Yes. The saddest part is they did it with such good intentions, and I don't mean that sarcastically. I've spoken to a lot of parents and have done a lot of reading, and I found that everybody thought that if you raised your kid's self-esteem, it would be good for them. It would be good for their psyche. It would be good for their success, and so on. So everybody just ran with that idea before the research data came in.

But what we've found since then is that when parents and teachers and media sources try to increase self-esteem, they usually end up increasing narcissism. These self-esteem-boosting strategies create more of a narcissistic overconfidence than true self-esteem, because they're often not based on reality. Take, for example, telling children things like "You can be anything you want to be." Well, it usually takes a lot more than just wanting something to succeed in life. You need to try hard, and you need to have the talent for that to happen.

The same is true with overpraising. When a child does something, it's important to praise them. But a line is crossed when it seems like *everybody* gets rewarded no matter how well they perform. We want to encourage effort, especially among young kids, but the "everybody gets a trophy" mentality basically says that you're going to get rewarded just for showing up. First of all, that's not how the real world works.



Second, that won't build true self-esteem; instead, it builds this empty sense of "I'm just fantastic, not because I did anything but just because I'm here."

**EN:** *What are some of the differences in the way narcissism expresses itself in the older generations like the boomers versus their children in Generations X and Y?*

**JT:** That's a great question because it points to something really important. The truth is that there's narcissism in every generation. It's showing up more among the young because this is the only world they've ever known. But there's plenty of narcissism among older people too. The increase in plastic surgery is one interesting example; a lot of that increase is attributed to things like Botox, which of course is not very common among twenty-year-olds. We see the same with overconfidence. It wasn't the wild overconfidence of young people that bankrupted the economy. It was people in their thirties, forties, and fifties who were running the banks and taking out the mortgages. That's one of the reasons we ended up in this recession.

So narcissism definitely manifests itself differently in different age groups. Among the eighteen-year-olds you see it more in their obsession with appearance and with a lot of what's happening online. Take Facebook, for example. My colleague Ernest Gradstein did a great study showing that narcissists thrive on Facebook: They have more friends, and they put up more attractive pictures of themselves. It's a venue that is great for keeping in touch with friends. But if you go on there you notice there is also a minority of people who are trying to seek as much attention as possible for wearing as little as possible. Even the people who are clothed are emphasizing the narcissistic parts of their identity instead of anything about deep relationships or intellectual interests.

What you also see among young people is a strong sense of entitlement. This is what older people complain about to no end. There was a survey done last year asking college students about their academic experiences. To the question "If you explain to your professor that you're trying hard, should he or she increase your grade?" *two-thirds* of college students said yes. I'm a professor and I *study* narcissism, and I was still shocked by that number! So how is all of this going to play out in the workplace? This is what makes me worry. Most of my students are fantastic—they really are—but this attitude of entitlement is just not going to serve them well in the future.

**EN:** *How has your research been received?*

**JT:** When I talk to college students, either in my own classes or during speaking engagements at universities around the country, I always cringe a bit when I tell them the results of my research: that their generation is more narcissistic than college students of past generations. But to my surprise, they almost inevitably say, "You're right. You got us. We see it in the culture. That's definitely the case." Then they say something like, "But we *have* to be narcissistic because the world is so competitive." Of course the problem with that argument is that

To the question "If you explain to your professor that you're trying hard, should he or she increase your grade?" *two-thirds* of college students said yes.

narcissism doesn't actually help them succeed. This is where they are genuinely shocked because they have been told their whole lives that being confident, self-centered, and self-promotional will lead to success. When I tell them that putting themselves first doesn't always work out and that even self-esteem isn't really correlated with success, their jaws completely hit the floor. They just can't believe it.

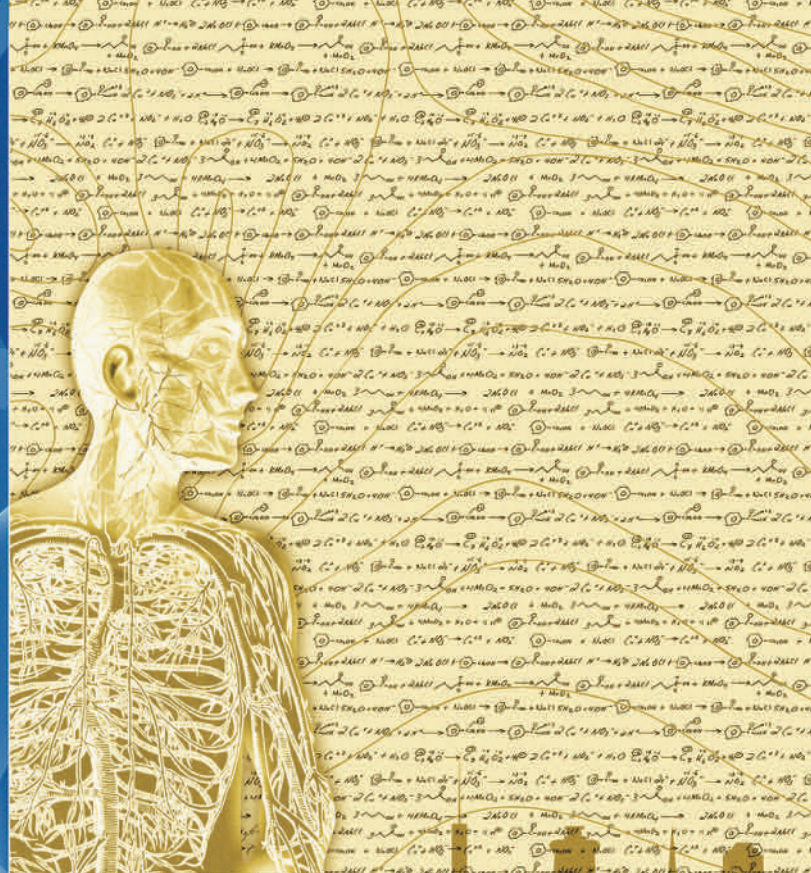
**EN:** *So what is the cure for the narcissism epidemic?*

**JT:** Obviously, the first cure is just raising awareness that this is a problem and that it's actually possible to have too much self-regard. The other thing I think we need to do, based on my conversations with students, is to dispute this notion that you have to be self-centered to succeed. Not only is it not true, but getting along well with other people, having empathy for them, and being able to take their perspective are actually more likely to lead to success. People *do* talk about this point, but it isn't being emphasized nearly as much as it should be. So this is something we need to be teaching people, and we need to emphasize how truly important it is. ■



Listen to the full interview with psychology professor Jean Twenge at [enlightennext.org/twenge](http://enlightennext.org/twenge)





# Cross-Training for the Soul

Integral Life Practice stakes its claim as the best new method for developing mind, body, and spirit

An interview with Terry Patten  
by Carter Phipps

**THERE HAS BEEN MUCH TALK** in the West about the “spiritual but not religious” generation. But what does it really mean to be a seeker of spiritual truth at a moment in history when all the mystical scriptures, religious revelations, and secret teachings of time immemorial are not hidden but rather are categorized, digitized, “blogetized,” “twitterized,” and organized by Google’s omnipresent virtual mind? Indeed, it seems as if seeking today is more about sifting, sorting, and surfing, about separating the truly profound from the merely informative. In this new world of ones and zeroes, we need more than spiritual guides. We also need spiritual gatekeepers, those who can help us venture into the whirlwind of information and emerge with clarity, direction, and purpose.

Integral Life Practice (ILP), developed by spiritual practitioner, teacher, and coach Terry Patten (in close collaboration with his co-authors, philosopher Ken Wilber, scholar Marco Morelli, and educator Adam Leonard) aspires to be exactly this kind of twenty-first-century gatekeeper. Its cutting-edge methods are outlined in a new book titled *Integral Life Practice: A 21st-Century Blueprint for Physical Health, Emotional Balance, Mental Clarity, and Spiritual Awakening*. Developed under the umbrella of Wilber’s integral philosophy, which is itself a powerful approach to organizing and integrating the world’s many knowledge systems, ILP was designed with a singular purpose—to bring the deepest insights of the East and West together and make them relevant for individuals seeking

to live a more enlightened life. “Integral Life Practice is *Integral*—which means comprehensive, whole, and balanced,” writes Patten in the introduction. “It’s a synthesis of the ‘best of the best’ that our traditions have to offer, combined with the most state-of-the-art transformational techniques.” It is surely a bold claim, but after perusing the nearly three hundred and fifty pages of well-organized and carefully chosen practices for cultivating mind, body, and spirit, one begins to appreciate the impressive achievement of these integrally minded authors.

Patten is well suited to be the spokesperson for ILP, as he himself is no stranger to higher human potentials or the serious work it takes to achieve them. Indeed, he has been actively pursuing transformation since



the early 1970s, beginning with his time as a student of the recently deceased American spiritual teacher Adi Da. Da pushed his students hard, and while Patten would eventually leave the community in the 1980s, the insights he gained over the many years of rigorous practice and experiential inquiry became the foundation for his later work as writer, entrepreneur, and teacher.

In the 1990s, Patten turned his attention to business, working with and selling new technologies for personal transformation. He moved to Marin County, California (where he still resides), and participated in the local Integral Transformative Practice (ITP) group founded and facilitated by two legendary figures in the human potential movement, Michael Murphy and George Leonard. This

northern California ITP group was one of the first to actively pursue an experimental synthesis of practices and to conduct scientific research into the nature of transformative practices and their effects. The success of their endeavor helped inspire Wilber, Patten, and others to join together to develop their own synthetic system, and a decade later Integral Life Practice was born.

With the 2008 release of *Integral Life Practice*, Patten is rapidly becoming a teacher and integral leader in his own right, and interest in ILP is growing. But the self-described “radically inclusive” nature of this new system presents new challenges as well. For example, how does a system of practices with such wide-ranging *breadth* still maintain the *depth* essential for real transformation? Can the



**Terry Patten** is a professional life coach and a founding member of the Integral Institute.

do-it-yourself nature of ILP provide the structure and discipline needed to make practice truly effective? I recently visited Patten at his home in the golden rolling hills just a few miles north of San Francisco and asked him to share with me his vision of leading-edge spiritual practice at the dawn of the information age.

**ENLIGHTENNEXT:** *First of all, congratulations on the book Integral Life Practice. Can you describe in broad strokes what you are trying to communicate with this book and what distinguishes it from other books about self-development and spiritual practice?*

**TERRY PATTEN:** Integral Life Practice is not about practices. It's about practice itself. It's something that begins to spontaneously manifest at a certain stage of human development—when individuals notice that they've grown in awareness, that they've become capable of caring in a way that they could not before, and they appreciate how healthy that is. It's when they realize, “Awareness and care are important. I want to be more fully present, more caring, more aware, more of the time.” There's a spontaneous impulse toward wholeness and growth. It's a little like the urge we have when we're hiking to get to the top of the next hill, to get that big panorama. Well, there's a similar interior panorama, in a sense, that emerges as we evolve.

We don't have to believe in any metaphysical presuppositions in order to be interested in cultivating wholeness, health, and fullness of being. A Christian who is devoted to Jesus Christ can express that through an Integral Life Practice. So can a Zen or Tibetan or Theravadin Buddhist. So can a devotee of any particular teacher or guru. So can a conscious agnostic. Integral Life Practice is not meant to be an alternative path; it expresses the universal principles of every path, every conscious way of life. So it should not be mistaken for the latest, greatest approach to self-improvement.

ILP draws on the lesson that's been articulated by human-potential-movement pioneers George Leonard and Michael Murphy—there is no quick fix. They offered hundreds of short transformational experiences at Esalen. But no matter how transformational and successful, after the weekend, or the weeklong or the month-long or yearlong, at a certain point—a few days, a week, a month, a season later—people would crash. No high state, no insight, no far-out enlightenment experience is

sufficient. Sustained transformation requires a life of sustained practice—waking up every day and bringing as much awareness and care and presence to every moment of living in order to have the capacity to do that more fully in the next moment and the moment after that. It's a lifestyle choice. That's how to understand Integral Life Practice.

**EN:** *Can you explain to me what the word “integral” means in Integral Life Practice?*

**TP:** The spirit of Integral Life Practice is integral in both key senses of the word. First, we mean integral as related to the word “integrating,” which connotes the inclusion of all important parts, so that they are rightly related to one another. Second, we mean “integral,” like the words “integer” and “integrity,” which point to a single, seamless whole. But the essence of that whole is not expressed through busily sorting through parts. It's experienced and known directly as a seamless unity. So the wholeness of the spirit of practice needs

to be captured if one is to have a right relationship to ILP. Then all of the very valuable, discriminating distinctions that we make are contextualized in a way that doesn't have you nosing through the details and losing sight of the forest for the trees.

**EN:** *You're saying that it can't be just this smorgasbord of wonderful practices that one is choosing to fit into one's life. There has to be some deeper context, an almost singular orientation that is informing it all.*

**TP:** Yes, that's the great thing about ILP. It's founded on an intuition of non-separation. But individuals can begin ILP with many different motives. In fact, the first chapter asks, "Why practice?" And the answer might be "to get over yourself" or "to be true" or "to give your gifts more fully." There's a whole list of possible motivations. The honest truth is that some people take up practice because they want to be cool or maybe because they want to lose weight or be thought of as a conscious person by others. People can begin with very basic, egoic motivations. But if they really practice, they will experience transformative changes. As practice transforms them, their motives will naturally evolve. You don't have to begin with a motivation at the top of the developmental scale. Any entry point is valid. And the nature of sincere, sustained practice is that it will, eventually and inevitably, evolve you.

The highest motive for ILP is a fusion of two bottom lines. We have a self-actualizing impulse. "I want to be all of what I can be. This acorn wants to become an oak. I am urged organismically, almost biologically, toward my fullest expression." And then we have another impulse to serve, to contribute, to make a difference. "I have a connection to the whole, a knowing of my non-separate identity with this larger world and I hear a call asking for my service, my contribution, my gift." There is a sense, you might say, of both nobility and duty that



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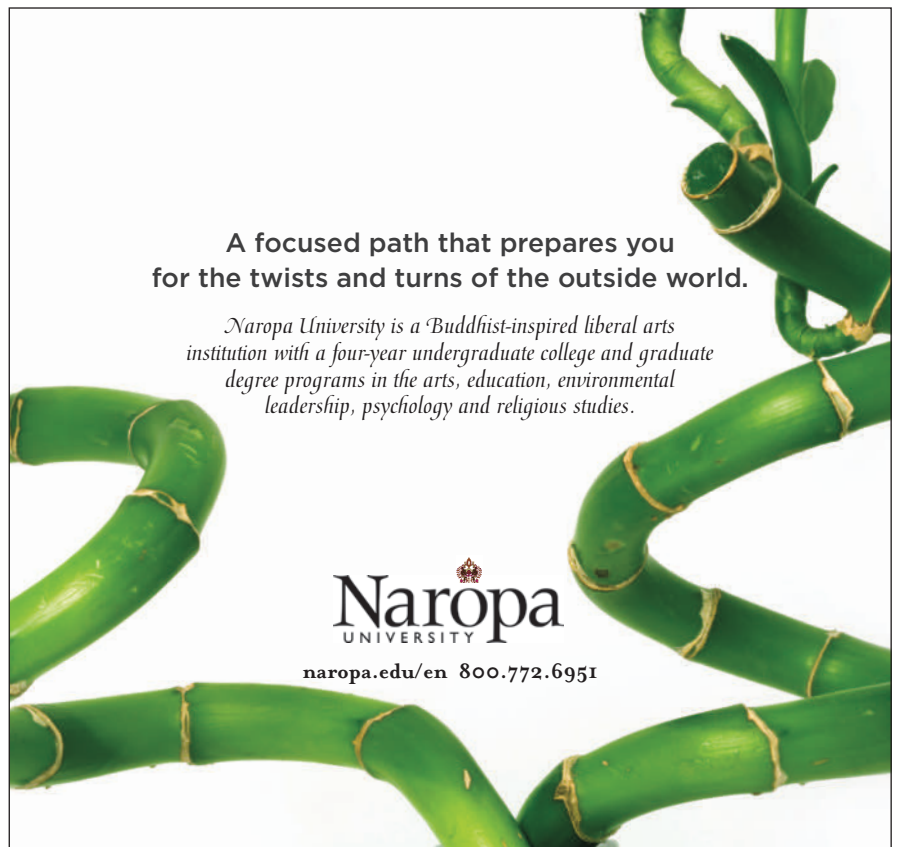
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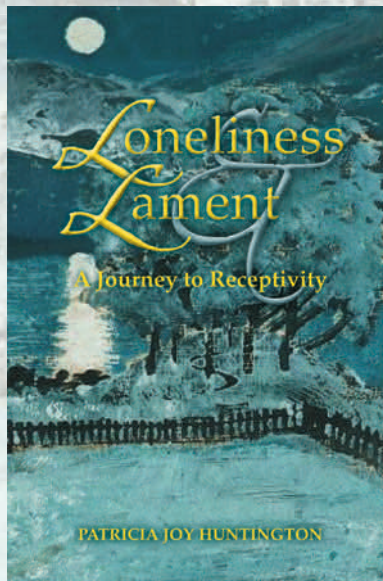
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merge as a seamless motive. I think that the practice evolves to that higher motive spontaneously and naturally for those who stick with it over time.

**EN:** *That's certainly the ideal, but it also seems like people can do spiritual practice for years and years in all kinds of ways, and it doesn't necessarily reach that level. That kind of motive doesn't seem to be an inevitable result of just continuing to do spiritual practice over time.*

**TP:** Yes, I agree. Some practitioners don't grow. Some practitioners work at the edges and essentially stay narcissistic and self-focused. So I would concur. But I would also say that the reason the practice does not naturally and inevitably lead further is because this is condoned by immature cultures of conversation that surround them. Some individuals are part of communities that express and preserve cultic attitudes that limit growth. If they were practicing in a truly integral context in which much more positive voices were present, I think it would naturally and spontaneously lead to a different result.

**EN:** *So the collective or cultural context of your practice is incredibly important.*

**TP:** It may even be determinative. Truly transformative practice, by its very nature, will draw you to serve and contribute to the world, but that emergence can be severely retarded if it is not reinforced by your *sangha* — your teachers, the coaches, the people who are affecting your view. Your view is going to determine it. And your view is culturally co-created.

**EN:** *In the book, you identify a number of different modules that people can engage with, including everything from artistry to community service to nutrition to sexuality. But there are four core modules that form*



*the foundation of Integral Life Practice — Body, Mind, Spirit, and Shadow. How did these emerge? Can you take me through each one?*

**TP:** The core modules provide a foundation of regular practice that anchor, order, structure, and help create a healthy integral life. These core modules are core because we have to cultivate them all in order to be able to respond in all the indefinable, nuanced, spontaneous, unpredictable ways in which practice must show up in every moment. The core modules are about your body, mind, spirit, and shadow. The additional modules rest on the foundation of these core modules.

**EN:** *In terms of the body module, I noticed that the bodybuilding author Shawn Phillips was on your team as well.*

**TP:** Yes, Shawn teaches Focused Intensity Training, a highly-effective, conscious approach to strength training, which is core to Integral Life Practice. But structurally, we also emphasize cardiovascular exercise and neuromuscular conditioning (like basketball, soccer, and certain kinds of dance, that require split-second neurological, brain-to-muscle coordination.) And that's just the gross body. Then there are all kinds of important exercises which address the subtle body and the causal body.

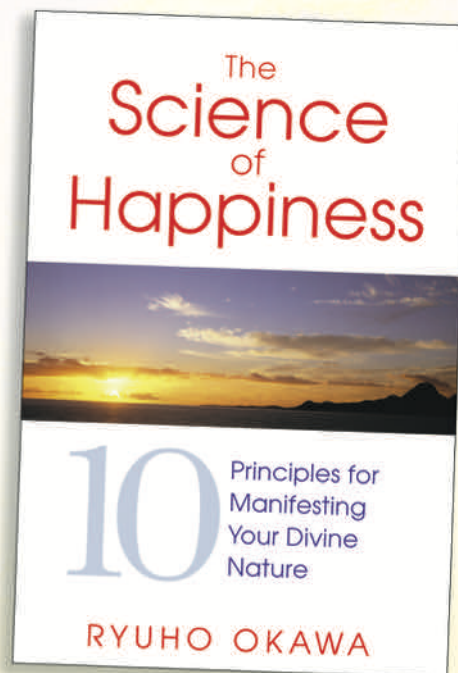
**EN:** *Can you give me short definitions of the subtle body and causal body?*

**TP:** The subtle body could even be called the subtle *bodies*, because it includes all the gradations of subtlety that are subtler than the physical. Every single one of the chakras reflects a level of subtle energy. That includes energies that are very close to the physical, such as the etheric energies that are addressed by acupuncture. Then there are the finer subtle energies (sometimes

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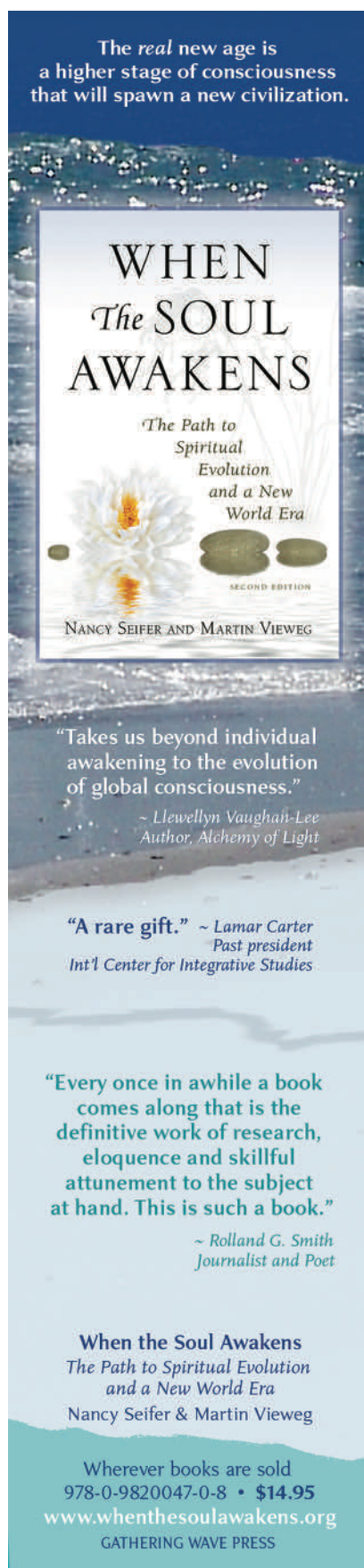
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described in a spectrum that corresponds to the seven chakras) which have names like “emotional,” “mental,” “astral,” “psychic,” and the “bliss body.” We can develop our awareness of these energies and harmonize them using practices like yoga, chi gong, tai chi, and shamanic arts. Developing a conscious relationship to subtle energies is an important part of practice.

you have to be able to relax and let go of those perspectives. You need the flexibility to meet a moment without any preconceptions, and to be able to generate a framework for understanding and seeing it in a way that’s appropriate to the context. Our ability to be that flexible is the fruit of the practice of the Mind Module. Someone who’s not actively practicing that process

## Shadow was not fully understood in the ancient spiritual traditions. They didn’t understand repression and the unconscious.

The causal body is the origin even of the subtle. In the esoteric traditions, it’s often said that all form in every moment is constantly manifesting out of the Unmanifest and returning to the Unmanifest. The causal is the still, silent aspect of manifestation which is next to the Unmanifest, just barely manifest; it has no motion or content. It is embodiment prior to any form or movement. That’s why it’s called the “extremely subtle” in the Tibetan tradition.

of taking and releasing perspectives misses something core in their whole life. It’s a core module of individual practice.

**EN:** *What about the Shadow Module?*

**TP:** Shadow was not fully understood in the ancient spiritual traditions. They didn’t understand repression and the unconscious. Freud’s core insight came later. He saw that the human psyche represses feelings and drives that seem to threaten its survival, and that these feelings and drives live outside of our awareness, often subverting our conscious intentions.

When a child has powerful emotions that create conflicts, the dilemma is resolved through repression. For instance, there are times when a child might feel, “I hate Mommy, but Mommy is my link to food, warmth, comfort, and nurture. I’m furious with Mommy: I want to kill her. But that would threaten my survival!” The psyche just can’t deal with feelings that threaten survival. The anger is repressed into the unconscious. The child grows up with repressed fury, showing up sometimes as depression or terror. We lay down these basic fault lines when we’re very

**EN:** *Can you tell me about the Mind Module?*

**TP:** The Mind Module is the practice of taking more and more nuanced, flexible, and accurate perspectives. One valid Mind Module practice is the intellectual study of Ken Wilber’s integral theory (which can certainly be psychoactive; it can wake you up to a more complete and more dimensional view of reality). But there are many Mind Module practices. The module includes any activity (reading, studying, writing, etc.) that expands your ability to take more adequate perspectives. Life moves fast; it’s like whitewater rafting. Sometimes you have to be able to take very complex, nuanced perspectives. Sometimes



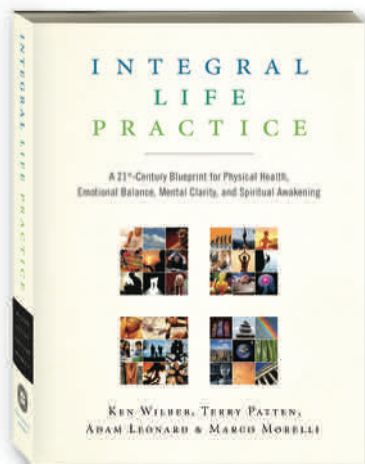
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young, and we keep doing it throughout our lives. So shadow practice is necessary throughout life.

That doesn’t mean that we should indulge endless narcissistic self-obsession in the name of “shadow work.” I’ve had some interesting conversations with members of the EnlightenNext community about how, justifying it as shadow practice, people can indulge their preoccupation with their own inner content in a way that actually

**EN:** *What about the Spirit Module?*

**TP:** For most people, the Spirit Module is the center of their practice, the source of the rocket fuel that powers everything. People practice because they want to awaken to higher levels of consciousness. They want to awaken to reality more fully. This is what we mean by spirituality. But what is Spirit? It’s a mystery — the deepest and most irresolvable and most essential

## What is Spirit? It’s a mystery—the deepest and most irresolvable and most essential mystery of all.

prevents growth. I acknowledge that there’s a potential for abuse. But there’s a fruitful, honest way of looking at what you can’t see. The shadow is what you can’t see, but it’s not just that you can’t see what you can’t see. It’s deeper than that. It’s that you can’t see that you can’t see it. You’re *committed* to not seeing it. So shadow work requires not just insight but courage.

**EN:** *How does shadow relate to the more traditional conception of the ego or pride or even narcissism? What’s the connection there?*

**TP:** When life reflects to me some new and unflattering dimension of myself, I always have a choice either to pretend I didn’t see it and avoid that opportunity for growth or to take it in, let it change me, and work with the cognitive dissonance that it produces. The reasons that I will make one choice or another are often hidden from my own view. Avoidance is egoic, yes, but it is not just a present-time affair; it often expresses early life patterns. So transcending negative ego and doing shadow work are deeply interrelated; they cannot be separated.

mystery of all. Spirit is, by definition, beyond definition. It is That which we cannot know, see, or touch.

Nevertheless, we can identify three basic forms of spiritual practice: third-person, second-person and first-person. Third-person spirituality involves a relationship to divinity as an object of one’s attention. When we’re contemplating some expression of Spirit *over there* and we are simply viewing or noticing it, dealing with it as a third person, that’s third-person spirituality. And there are two basic types of third-person spirituality that most of us engage with. One of them is nature mysticism. Right now we’re sitting outdoors in California looking at God’s body in some sense. We’re hearing the bird calls or seeing the luminous intelligence in the eye of a deer. That’s the body of Spirit. The second type of third-person spirituality is philosophical or theological mysticism. When we do philosophy, we notice “patterns that connect” our inner and outer worlds, and this also draws us into a deeper intimacy with the mystery of existence. Theology is third-person spirituality. We’re contemplating *It*. We’re seeing *It*.





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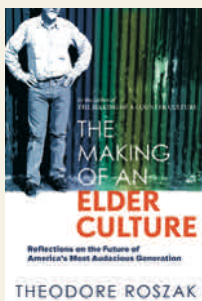


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Most contemporary spiritual paths are actually forms of first-person spirituality. This includes Advaita Vedanta, many Buddhist paths, and many popular nontraditional teachings like those of Eckhart Tolle and Byron Katie. Successful practitioners of first-person spirituality wake up, at least for moments, as the Self, the "I AMness" of all things. They arrive at a causal, or nondual, awareness, realizing non-separation from all of their experience. There is no subject and object; there is no *other* at all. First-person spirituality is rich, it's essential, it's radical. In fact, all radical spirituality tends to be first-person spirituality.

Many contemporary practitioners are pretty familiar and comfortable with third-person and first-person spirituality, but most are much less comfortable with second-person spirituality. Second-person spirituality is problematic because all the monotheistic traditions focused on a conception of God that was metaphysical and mythic. And as people rejected a mythic conception of God, we became confused. "If the white-bearded guy in the sky doesn't really exist, who am I praying to?" The sense that there was an "Other" to pray to became suspect. For most people, second-person spirituality simply had to be let go of because the only way that we could practice it was to reassert some metaphysics about a Divine Other that we didn't really believe in. So we threw out all second-person relationship with Spirit, and this has left us with profound spiritual wounds.

**EN:** *In the second face of God, at least in the traditional sense, there's a vertical element. One looks up to something, to a "You." There's a spiritual hierarchy built into the system.*

**TP:** Yes, but you've got to remember who that "You" is. That You is the entire universe. That You is so much bigger. The me-ness is tiny. The You-ness is vast. Second-person spirituality is not about

a relationship of two equals. This is a relationship to the One from whose loving arms I was birthed, into whose arms I will die, who is determining, through processes incomprehensible to me, all the apparent accidents of fate and luck that shape my life. This is the One on whom I'm dependent for every blessing and every grace, the One who knows me best and who has always been present in every moment of my life, the One to whom every sincere gift I give is given. This One sees through all the games I might play. Second-person spirituality is my relationship to my deepest Beloved, my Divine Companion. This is the most primal relationship of Other-ness possible. It transcends and includes every archetype of relationship.

**EN:** *What is the difference, if there is one, between the panoply of practices that have come to us from all different traditions at different stages of cultural history, and practices that are native to integralism itself? The book seems to contain practices that are native to integral consciousness, practices that simply couldn't have been conceived of in earlier stages of culture. So how do you distinguish those practices from the ones that came to us from earlier times and places and are now being embraced in an integral context?*

**TP:** We've thought a lot about this. Many traditional practices presume obsolete metaphysics, so there's a value in doing practices that express a trans-rational, contemporary, integral perspective. In the book, we identified certain "Gold Star" practices that are expressions of integral consciousness. We also indicated "One-Minute" modules, because not only do we need native integral practices, we also need time-efficient practices appropriate to our busy lives.

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alternative but as a fuller expression of existing paths. At the same time, I think a new school of native integral spirituality is developing. This integral path will be a church without a pope, a new open-source tradition. My work as an integral coach and a teacher of Integral Life Practice does not root itself in one of the traditions. It roots itself in integral consciousness itself. Integral is the first full religio-spiritual path that cannot be called a "faith." It's beyond believing in anything. It's about living and practicing consciously in ways that produce results. This is a form of spirituality that can stand up to the critiques of rational agnostics, atheists, and the deconstructive critiques of postmodernists. I think integral spirituality offers a skeleton

*everyone. So in an integral context, where the individual is usually still at the center of their own integral life project, how do we find the much-needed hierarchy that transcends the narcissistic self and supercharges our practice?*

**TP:** I have two responses. First, if somebody discovers Integral Life Practice and as a result they bring more order to what they do and practice in the ways suggested and adopt a more integral perspective, then I think it is positive, even if they generate everything themselves. Something might be missing, but they will still grow in important ways. I agree, however, that there's a structural design problem, because you are the one person in the world with the least

## I think a new school of native integral spirituality is developing. This integral path will be a church without a pope, a new open-source tradition.

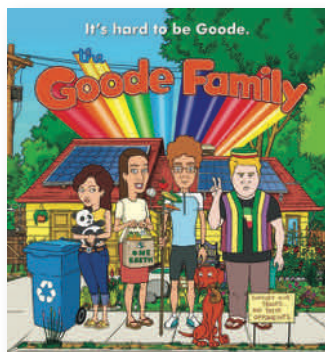
key that can cut through the barriers that tend to divide the balkanized communities of practice. That's why we emphasize integral approaches to all paths, as well as a stand-alone integral path. The fact that it can cross all those boundaries is just as important as the fact that it represents a brand new tradition all by itself.

**EN:** *One of the challenges presented by any post-conventional system of practice such as this is: How do we transcend the self who is at the center of it all and is picking and choosing the different ways in which we are engaging with these practices? Is there some larger orienting context that we can follow? I have a spiritual teacher, and that provides a hierarchical context for practice that is quite powerful, but that's not going to be true for*

insight into your blind spots. We address that in the book; we suggest that people get feedback, that they get a coach or a support group or find a *sangha* or a teacher. We don't recommend that everyone function as their own teachers with no checks or balances. We point out that the path is fraught with pitfalls and people tend to delude themselves. You rightly have pointed out places where it can and probably will be subverted, but to my way of thinking these are not flaws in the design of Integral Life Practice. There's no way to guarantee that individuals won't find ways to undermine their practice. None of the traditional paths have eliminated delusion either. Integral Life Practice is not idiot-proof. But I think it is as close to idiot-proof as anything that has come before. ■

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and Dave Krinsky

(ABC, Fridays, 8:30 pm ET)

Earlier this year, I could hardly believe my eyes when I watched the season premiere of *The Goode Family*, a new animated sitcom on ABC by Mike Judge (along with John Altschuler and Dave Krinsky). The show, which chronicles the trials and tribulations of an environmentally responsible, culturally sensitive middle-class American family, was absolutely hilarious. But it wasn't Judge's usual sense of wry cultural commentary that got me (see his other creations like *Beavis & Butt-Head*, *Office Space*, and *Idiocracy* for that). My amazement had more to do with the culture that he was commenting on. Let me explain.

Comedy shows, from *Saturday Night Live* to *The Daily Show* to Judge's own *King of the Hill*, have made a habit of satirizing the views and values of conservative America. But this new show has targeted a whole new demographic: the vegan, eco-conscious, politically correct, ever-concerned-about-the-global-impact-of-their-every-choice crowd that has made Whole Foods one of the most successful companies in the world

and played a significant role in electing America's first African-American President. And while I found the show to be ingenious (I'm a green, Barack Obama-idolizing kind of guy), it has received some pretty scathing critiques from reviewers of the more liberal persuasion who may not be able to handle it when the joke's on them.

The premise is fantastic. Helen Goode, a middle-aged activist who sports a "Meat Is Murder" T-shirt for most of the episode, and her husband, Gerald, an administrator at a local community college who rides his bike to work (of course!), are trying to navigate the contradictions inherent in raising their family according to the less-than-a-decade-old moral philosophy of WWAGD? (or "What Would Al Gore Do?").

They adopted their sixteen-year-old African son, for example, in an effort "to fight racism and inequality in the world." But much to their bleeding hearts' dismay, during the adoption process they forgot to check a box on a form and received a child from South Africa—a blond-haired Afrikaner baby whom they named Ubuntu.

Their daughter, Bliss, is a classic case of Gen-Y cynicism, tech-savviness, and sarcasm (not to mention her perfectly slumped text-messaging posture), and she is constantly poking holes in her parents' worldview. Last but not least is the family dog, named "Che," after the South American revolutionary and countercultural icon. Che has been put on a strict vegan diet and—unfortunately for the neighborhood pets—is constantly looking to supplement his protein-deficient, organic golden-flax-seed chow with a parakeet, cat, or goldfish.

While the premiere episode was chock-full of penetrating one-liners and awkwardly insightful scenes, one moment in particular stood out from the rest. Helen decides it's important for her and her daughter, Bliss, to be more open with each other about sexuality. But her plan backfires when Bliss, who is creeped out by the idea of talking sex with her mother, rebelliously joins a Christian-sponsored chastity group. Infuriated by the idea of a Goode family member fraternizing with "those abstinence people who wear American-flag pins," Helen voices her concerns to her husband, hoping for sympathy. But Gerald's response presents her with one of the hilarious contradictions faced on the path to perfect political correctness: "Maybe we shouldn't be so judgmental," he says. "Don't we always try to celebrate people's differences and learn from them?" To which Helen responds, "Sure, if they're, like, Native Americans or backwards rainforest tribes. But not *these* people!"

Ouch! With scenes like this, which are so implicating for a dyed-in-the-wool liberal that one can't quite decide whether to laugh or squirm, it's no wonder that many reviewers have claimed that the show is a conservative attack on progressive values—another battle in the culture war in which liberals are finally getting a dose of the ridicule that they've been dishing out for years. But in actuality, the show's creators are anything but anti-green. In fact, their own ability to perfectly convey the mood and subtle contradictions of this worldview stems from the fact they themselves grapple with and embody everything that





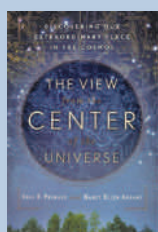
# Books for Evolutionaries

with Connie Barlow



A biologist by training, **Connie Barlow** is best known as a writer of popular science books that explore the intersection of evolution and ecology with philosophy and religion.

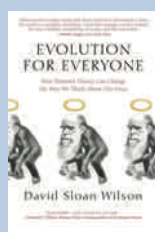
**Q: What are the most important books on evolution that you've read in the last decade?**



**The View from the Center of the Universe: Discovering Our Extraordinary Place in the Cosmos**

by Joel R. Primack and Nancy Ellen Abrams (2006)

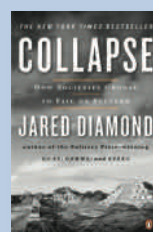
A renowned astrophysicist (Primack) and cultural historian (Abrams) celebrate elegant and meaningful interpretations of mainstream understandings of cosmic evolution. There is no more delightful way to nurture a sense of the cosmos as beloved home—and a sense of oneself as utterly welcome here.



**Evolution for Everyone: How Darwin's Theory Can Change the Way We Think About Our Lives**

by David Sloan Wilson (2007)

This is a superb look at the biological expression of evolution and why understanding it is exceedingly relevant and vital to our lives. One of the leading evolutionary biologists of our time, Wilson is also a leader in translating evolutionary wisdom into educational and cultural reform.



**Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed** by Jared Diamond (2004)

The human phase of the epic of evolution of the past twenty thousand years must be understood if we are to stand a chance of lasting even a tenth that long into the future. Profoundly depressing yet at the same time surprisingly hopeful, this book delivers poignant truths via unforgettable storytelling.

**Q: What's the best book you've read this year?**



**Remarkable Creatures: Epic Adventures in the Search for the Origins of Species** by Sean B. Carroll (2009)

In these riveting stories of the great discoveries that birthed and honed an understanding of evolution and the deep-time frame that it requires, one comes to viscerally understand why the openness of science to new ideas (the liberal impulse) is necessarily tempered by the skepticism of those who have a stake in then-current understandings (the conservative impulse). This book gives the reader a profound appreciation of both.

appears on the screen. Watching interviews with the writers, animators, and actors reveals a familiar and sophisticated sort of insight into the postmodern condition that could only come from their being tortured by it themselves and thus searching for some way to gain objectivity on it all. As Altschuler said in a recent CNN interview, "The whole show is about the knots we've

found ourselves put in." (Che, for example, is based on his friend's vegan dog.)

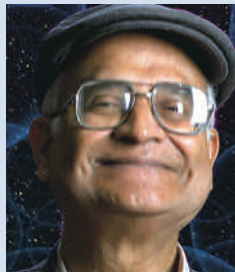
The show's creators believe that *The Goode Family* is a perfect response to the cultural zeitgeist in which moral dilemmas like those faced by the Goodes (Paper or plastic? Organic or local? What should we call minorities?) have become commonplace. But a flurry of reviewers—most

notably those from *National Public Radio*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *New York Times*—have begged to differ. The *Times*' Ginia Bellafante called the show "aggressively off-kilter with the current mood" in her review, suggesting that poking fun at wind power and organic food is oh-so-mid-nineties, and wondering why anyone would want to criticize ideals that

# Speaking of Books

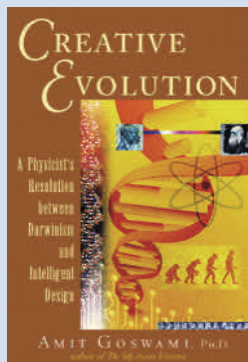
with **Amit Goswami**, author of *Creative Evolution*

Interview by Carter Phipps



In the mysterious world of quantum physics, nothing is quite as it seems. And for those unschooled in the ways of tangled hierarchies, retrocausality, and collapsing wave functions, it can be a rather disorienting place.

But this complex and subtle territory is where theoretical physicist Amit Goswami (best known popularly for his role in the film *What the Bleep Do We Know!?*) is most at home. In the following interview, Goswami speaks about his new book, *Creative Evolution: A Physicist's Resolution between Darwinism and Intelligent Design*. Weaving together his usual blend of quantum insights and Eastern dharma and adding a touch of intelligent design, he proposes an original theory of evolution that accounts for both the material and spiritual dimensions of reality.



(Quest Books, 2008, paperback \$26.95)



Listen to the full interview with Amit Goswami at [enlightennext.org/goswami](http://enlightennext.org/goswami)

**ENLIGHTENNEXT:** *Why do you believe it is so important that we develop a post-Darwinian theory of evolution?*

**AMIT GOSWAMI:** Most people consider evolution to be synonymous with Darwinism. Darwin made a fantastic discovery—he found that living creatures have adapted over time in order to survive tremendous changes in the environment. Without these insights, we wouldn't know about genes and DNA, which have helped us

to understand how form is actually made. But Darwin's theory does not include consciousness, and as a result, many Darwinists have trivialized evolution by saying that it is merely a material process guided by chance and necessity. The whole idea that random mutation and natural selection alone could generate meaning or ideals such as love, beauty, and justice is preposterous. Meaning cannot be processed by material interaction.

Darwinism is really a theory of adaptation, not evolution. Later in his life, after publishing *The Origin of Species*, Darwin started to change his thinking about this, and he became very puzzled about how a complex organ like the eye could be produced merely by random genetic changes. He was puzzled about how the obvious purposiveness in evolution comes about. I mean, any little kid can look at the fossil data and conclude that that there is a clear biological arrow of time. Many scientists are aware of this, especially nonbiologists, but because of the highly politicized feud between creationists and intelligent design

theorists, most consider it heresy to speak out against Darwinism.

In addition to Darwinism, the book includes one of the basic ideas of intelligent design. By intelligent design, I don't mean the type put forth by many Christian theorists, because they make the mistake of discarding evolution altogether. But if you take evolution to be valid, then intelligent design just means that there is a direction in the evolutionary process, namely, from simplicity to complexity, and the design gets better and better. The beauty of evolution is that starting with very simple creatures like amoebae, we've developed complex beings like humans, with brains that can make representations. In order to account for all this, you have to introduce concepts, which are much more than just matter and material interaction. You have to introduce the concept of consciousness that can choose and that can create. So my theory combines intelligent design with Darwinism and quantum physics to give us a theory of biological creativity that is based on the primacy of consciousness.

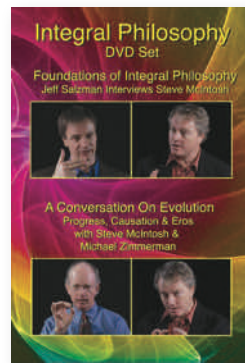
have become broadly accepted. Others have said that the premise is too easy a target and that the jokes will soon get old.

But I think that the reviewers miss a pretty significant point when they write the show off as merely outdated and tired. (Perhaps the show makes fun of a world that, for them, hits a little too close to home.) What is most interesting to me about *The Goode Family* is that it shows how the once countercultural values of the sixties have become so popular that an entire network TV show is dedicated to poking fun at them (much like *King of the Hill* poked fun at the older and much more established “barbecue and Jesus” culture of Middle America). In other words, it seems that what we consider mainstream has evolved, and now those who are pushing the mainstream edge may no longer be progressives who are dissing conservatives but those who are starting to see through the progressive worldview itself—from the inside out. As *Variety* magazine’s Brian Lowry points out, “Assuming liberals can laugh at their own foibles, ABC might just have TV’s first true Obama-era sitcom on its hands.”

The premiere episode’s final scene perfectly sums up *The Goode Family*’s fundamental mood. When Ubuntu takes the family Prius out for a ride and apologizes to his father for wasting gas, Gerald offers some fatherly advice: “That’s okay, Ubuntu. The important thing is that you feel guilty about it.”

The show may not offer any grand solutions, and it will no doubt ridicule some pretty noble causes. But the fact that it dares make fun of a worldview that, as Mike Judge says in the trailer, often leaves its adherents feeling “forever guilty about being a human being on the planet” gives it a five-star rating in my book.

Joel Pitney



## Integral Philosophy

Steve McIntosh with Jeff Salzman and Michael Zimmerman

(2-DVD set, produced by Boulder Integral, published by Now & Zen, \$19.95)

Boulder-based integral philosopher Steve McIntosh is fond of saying that rigorous philosophical inquiry has, in many ways, become a lost art form. Gone are the days of Socrates dialoguing with his students on the streets of Athens. And you’re pretty unlikely to walk into the local Starbucks and find yourself in the midst of a fiery debate over the finer points of

two passionate dialogues with Boulder Integral founder Jeff Salzman and University of Colorado philosophy professor Michael Zimmerman. Titled, respectively, *Foundations of Integral Philosophy* and *A Conversation on Evolution*, the DVDs are intended both to convey the fundamental pillars of the integral worldview and to explore how this emerging new perspective helps solve many of our most nagging philosophical dilemmas, from the hard problem of consciousness to the question of whether evolution has direction. But even more than providing an overview of integral thought, the

One of the most important tenets of the integral worldview is the idea that evolution is not a random process but has a direction.

Voltaire’s latest treatise, as might have been the case in an eighteenth-century Parisian coffeehouse. But this kind of high-level relentless creative pursuit of the truth is exactly what McIntosh brings to the table with his new DVD set, *Integral Philosophy*, published earlier this year.

Shot against the black Charlie Rose-esque backdrop of Boulder Integral’s beautiful new recording studio, the DVD set features McIntosh engaged in

DVDs offer a glimpse of philosophy-in-the-making, as these three thinkers push the margins of their own understanding in what ends up being two very creative conversations.

In the first session, Salzman interviews McIntosh about the foundational insights of integral philosophy—most notably, that consciousness evolves. McIntosh, who authored *Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution* (2007), starts by laying out a historical context for the



emergence of the integral worldview. He explains how it represents the next step in human consciousness and culture beyond the traditional, modern, and post-modern worldviews that currently shape the lives of most people on the planet. He then goes on to explore the rich “internal ecosystem” of values and perspectives that peering through the integral lens reveals.

One of the most important tenets of the integral worldview is the idea that evolution is not a random process but has a direction — namely, from simpler forms of matter, life, and consciousness to more complex ones. In the second DVD, McIntosh and Zimmerman discuss how this teleological understanding of evolution will define the twenty-first century and radically change the way we think about spirituality, science, and morality. Laying out a fascinating history of evolutionary theory, McIntosh and Zimmerman explore the true essence of evolution and make the case that any future theory must, at its core, include an appreciation for consciousness.

Conveying something as subtle and ephemeral as a new worldview, which has its own assumptions, terminology, and ways of making sense out of reality, is no small task — especially in two hours. And the concept-rich, stream-of-consciousness nature of both conversations will likely make it hard for the uninitiated to keep up. But for anyone familiar with basic integral concepts, that fluidity is also part of the charm, and the DVDs transmit the dynamic co-creative nature of the process that these philosophers are engaged in. I wouldn't necessarily give this to my grandmother as an integral primer, but I would highly recommend it to anyone who wants to see for themselves what the leading edge of philosophy looks like today.

Joel Pitney



## Postsecularism The Hidden Challenge to Extremism

by Mike King

(James Clark and Co., 2009, paperback \$52.50)

Mike King is that rarest of breeds: an original thinker. An artist, graphic designer, and animator, he is also a self-proclaimed *jnani* or knower of Truth, a Reader at London Metropolitan University, and a director of the Scientific and Medical Network, a UK group that combats scientific materialism. *Postsecularism* is King's sequel to his acclaimed first book, *Secularism*, which traced the historical roots of the rise of secular society. In his new book, he unites the strands of his diverse interests, making a powerful analysis of the rise of extremism — from the fundamentalist right in Christianity and Islam to an increasingly vitriolic atheist elite. Carefully argued, erudite, and often dense, *Postsecularism* holds out hope for a way to move beyond this polarized extremism to a *post*-secular world that King sees emerging.

King's take on extremism, observed in both the traditional religious right and in the secular liberal atheists, is fascinating and perceptive. He claims that we are at a cultural impasse, where each side of the debate is blind to or rejects out of hand the assumptions of the other. Western culture moved out of medievalism into modernity, he explains, by creating a “détente” between science and religion, viewing

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them as “non-overlapping magisteria,” or parallel domains that never meet. Yet, since 9/11, there is an increasing urgency from each side to prevail over the other. Some of this, he suggests, comes from the fact that there are fundamental epistemological and spiritual questions that are unresolved in Western culture, creating a dualistic split between mind and body, spirit and matter.

In fact, one of King’s most unique points is that the Western Enlightenment—from Voltaire through the German idealists—was a failed “religious revolution . . . rather than the success of a secular revolution [which intended] to destroy religion.” [28] The true goal of the Enlightenment philosophers, according to King’s reading of their work, was to move Western culture from a devotional religious context that denied the world to a context that emphasized direct knowledge, or mysticism, and embraced the life process. But the project failed, resulting in a split between devotional traditionalists and an “autistic” secular scientific community that cannot discern the sacred or deeper dimensions of experience. King argues that the way forward is through a rational mysticism that would both validate the sacred depth dimension and encourage true intellectual rigor in engaging with it. Through a series of chapters in the last part of the book, he points to evidence for such a perspective in the domains of physics, consciousness studies, transpersonal psychology, the New Age, the arts, and more.

King’s opus is often difficult, demanding familiarity with his complex and multi-dimensional terrain, but is always worth the effort. Every few pages there is simultaneously a revelatory shock of recognition and the realization of how new King’s view is. *Postsecularism* offers a transformative analysis that doesn’t simply revisit the calcified positions that have contributed to our cultural lockdown but illuminates a potential integration that could contribute significantly to resolving the entire debate.

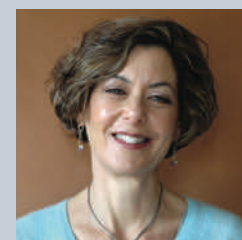
*Elizabeth Debold*

## Bringing Your Soul To Light

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## RELEASE THE POTENTIAL OF EVOLUTIONARY VALUES

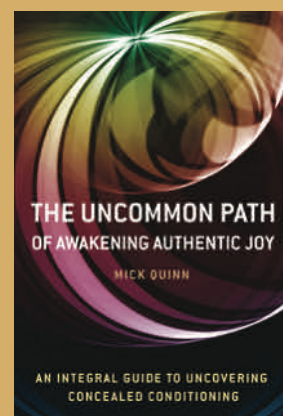
In this radically refreshing opus, Mick Quinn clearly exposes the kaleidoscope of metaphysical distractions orchestrated by concealed conditioning—those words, actions, and ways of being that keep us well clear of authenticity and transparency, directly pointing us toward our next levels of individual and cultural development.

Quinn’s first awakening occurred with Andrew Cohen in the summer of 2001. He is married to Debora Prieto who assists in his workshops using Genpo Roshi’s Big Mind Process.

**The Uncommon Path**  
**An Integral Guide to Uncovering Concealed Conditioning** by Mick Quinn.

Available from Amazon:  
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“Gripping and informative”  
Gary Renard, bestselling author of *The Disappearance of the Universe*.

“Like silence making music”  
Raquel Torrent, founder and ex-president of the *Spanish Integral Association*.

## WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?

How many of your “brightest minds” envisioning the future are female and how many are male? As usual, it seems the ratio is about three women to eighteen men.

If enlightenment is supposed to change reality, how about starting with your own magazine? That would be an evolutionary revolution of major proportions. Why not set a deadline for December 21, 2012, to have fifty percent female and fifty percent male contributors? Imagine waking up on January 1, 2013, to a world where equal numbers of women and men contribute to your magazine on enlightenment and sit on the top floors of office buildings or in parliaments. Can you imagine that?

Sue  
Africa



Issue 43  
March-May 2009

## THE TIP OF THE VOLCANO

I enjoyed your thought-provoking and sophisticated issue on sexuality enormously, especially the comparison of David Deida to Tarantino! I would

describe the artist Damien Hirst in the same way: shocking, clever, and meaningless.

What interested me the most in the issue was the orgasmic community One Taste, because it sounds to me like the women there are becoming empowered through exploring their sexuality. As Maura O'Connor states in her article, most women in the West are still relatively sexually repressed. For six thousand years the feminine has been devalued, desecrated, and shamed. Women have been subjugated to meet men's needs, sexual and otherwise. At best we've been treated as chattel; at worst, burned, hung, stoned, or drowned for daring to own our power.

Since the sixties, feminine sexuality has been on the menu, and there seems to be an expectation that women should, by now, have gotten over six thousand years of subjugation by the patriarchy. But fifty years out of six thousand is nothing, especially since only a tiny percentage of women are engaged with this issue. Where we are now in the collective psyche, in terms of feminine sexual power, is just the tip of the volcano. And I believe that once women heal their wounds and own their sexual power, then sex can truly be a path to God.

Sapphire de la Terre  
Totnes, Devon, UK

## THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON ORGASM

In “Their Stroke of Insight,” Maura O'Connor asked if the practice of orgasmic meditation

(OMing) and regular meditation have the same effect on the brain. While I would first offer that OMinig, as I understand it, is not really about spiritual evolution (which implies we have a place to get to other than here), I was curious enough to investigate this question myself.

What I found was that while many different areas of the brain are activated (and deactivated) during orgasm and meditation, there is at least one similar effect reported: a deactivation of the amygdala, which is the region involved with fear and anxiety. Neuroscientist Gert Holstege and colleagues have reported this effect during orgasm from clitoral stimulation. Dr. Paul Ekman at the UCSF Medical Center has referred to meditation as “taming the amygdala.” In *Zen-Brain Reflections*, Buddhist neurology professor James Austin noted that “the great death” is a phrase often applied to the total loss of self that occurs acutely during kensho-satori and is often likened to “the little death” (la petite mort) of orgasm. Given what we are learning about how immensely interconnected our bodies and brains are, there will surely be a lot more light shed on how different forms of meditation or mindfulness practices affect our whole beings in the future.

Yvette Piceno  
Oakland, CA

## BIRTHING ENLIGHTENMENT

As someone who values discussions of evolutionary consciousness and enlightenment,

I found your Sex issue to be oddly sterile, airless, and very Male/Menopausal. Where are the children? How can you talk about sex without at least hinting at childbirth?

You'll seem to be modern Gnostics in that your enlightenment is sealed away from the messy, sensual, authentic realities of childbirth and all its inherent potential for meaning and expanded consciousness. There is something so mind-blowing about choosing to bring souls into the world and then, more importantly, choosing to raise them with empathy, according to the evolutionary continuum of experience.

My experience is that childbirth is a continuation of sexual pleasure that morphs into a world of constant sensual pleasure and warmth, from the smells of salty sweat, blood, milk, and sweet baby skin, to the comfort, years on, of feeling one's children snug in the family bed. I can't help but feel pity for the “One Tasters” with their latex gloves and tick-tick-ticking clock. I agree that most adults were raised in a state of sensual deprivation, but I strongly disagree that the limbic approach is the ideal answer, as opposed to mature, attached, empathic parenting.

Parenting can be, I think, the ultimate pragmatic pathway to enlightenment. So please, blow me away with an issue all about enlightened or integral childrearing!

Jennifer Anderson  
Napa, CA



## Your Heart, Hormones, and Emotions

by Peter Ragnar

**HOW MANY FOLKS** do you know who are fuming over economic conditions? Are you one of them? Have you noticed how addictive and contagious anger is? Maybe you secretly feel that the emotion is justified. After all, who wouldn't be angry watching their 401(k) or IRA shrink like an unpicked vegetable?

Those who try to justify negative emotions rarely see the damage those emotions do to their hearts and other organs. I sometimes think folks would rather die than see their emotional explosions as unjustified, irrational, or dangerous. But findings from a 1989 study at Harvard Medical School should be sobering to those of us who have a tendency toward emotional tirades. Researchers interviewed 1,623 heart attack victims four days after their attacks and discovered that the heart attacks had taken place a mere two hours after angry venting and that anger had actually *doubled* their risk of an attack.

For most people, statistics like these aren't powerful enough to override emotions. Indeed, we can only counteract negative emotions with positive ones. Why is this? It's because we're dealing with very powerful chemicals called hormones. As we explore this further, keep in mind that all your thoughts are chemical reac-

True strength of character is measured by how skillful you are at gently letting go of your demands, addictions, and attachments.

tions processed in your brain and body. When you're assaulted by the negative emotions of anxiety, depression, and frustration, you are also ramping up the production of free radicals and increasing your levels of the stress hormone cortisol. (As research by Dr. Sapolsky of Rockefeller University in New York has found, cortisol levels also spike upward two to seven days before you die.) Even if you're lucky enough to survive this cortisol spike, your immune system will be greatly impaired because your body's production of disease-fighting antibodies will shut down while the few remaining antibodies will be destroyed. Not a rosy picture at all.

So what can you do about anger? Here are a few time-honored basics: get on a regular exercise program, learn to meditate, improve your diet, learn some new jokes, and smile more. Remember, no one needs a smile as much as those who have none left to give.



**Peter Ragnar** is a natural-life scientist, modern-day Taoist wizard, author, and self-master par excellence. A martial arts practitioner for more than fifty years, he is renowned for his teachings and writings on optimal health and longevity. His latest book is *Serious Strength for Seniors—And Kids Under 65*.

Let me share a little experience I had back in the 1970s. I was alone on a beautiful forested ridge on a blue-sky day in the fall, building my log home by hand. I had no bills, no worries, no real concerns to speak of—in other words, not a single reason to get angry about anything. Yet I did, and it stopped me in my tracks. On such a perfect day, how could I experience this emotion and not have a clue about where it came from? Baffling! Then I realized that I was insisting that my project move faster than it was. I was demanding that life occur in a specific way, a way that happened to be out of harmony with the way events were actually happening. I suddenly had a good laugh over the fact that my suffering was all caused by my own mind as I realized my life wasn't ever going to meet my mental model of perfection. True strength of character is measured by how skillful you are at gently letting go of your demands, addictions, and attachments—a 401(k), an IRA, a job, a home, or a spouse. Look at all the things you have to be thankful for. Bear in mind that there are many people who emotionally accept what you're making yourself upset about, even if it currently seems unacceptable to you. There are only two things involved here: the outside event and your mental programming. Which do you think might be easier to change?

The secret to staying alive and regaining peace of mind is to convert your demands into *preferences*. After all, if you downshift your emotional addictions to things you simply prefer, will you throw a fit if you don't get them? Of course not. Nothing changes except the space you are coming from, and in reality, it's only from this space that real change can take place. So give the world a sincere smile—it costs you nothing but creates so much! Good health to you! ■

## Daring to Bear Witness

by Andrew Cohen



**IT'S A BIG CHALLENGE** being a spiritual teacher in a secular culture. What could be more disconcerting than being a religious authority in a world where there is no consensus about whether God actually exists! In traditional cultures at least, there was some agreement as to who God was and where He lived and how He could be reached. But for those of us who live in a post-traditional worldspace, the Creator has long since disappeared from the sky above, and with Him has vanished any sense of that which is higher than, or transcendent to, our earthly existence. The “rational” values of the culture that we live in may have freed us from the myths of the past, but unfortunately they have also undermined our capacity to have

Our rational values may have freed us from the myths of the past, but they have also undermined our capacity to have faith in the unseen metaphysical domains of our innermost interiors.

any faith in the unseen metaphysical domains of our innermost interiors. So any individuals who are bold enough or crazy (or sane?) enough to assume the position of being representatives of that which is transcendent, within this culture of secular relativism and scientific materialism, are putting themselves in a very difficult position indeed.

I remember soon after I became a committed seeker in my early twenties being asked by a casual acquaintance what I “did.” After briefly describing to him my day job, I then proceeded to explain what I was really up to and what I was trying to attain. His puzzled look seemed to go on forever. Then there was the beautiful blonde I’d been flirting with at around that

same time. All was going well until we went out to dinner one fateful evening and I inevitably shared my passion for enlightenment and higher consciousness and spoke of how fascinated and compelled I was by all the Eastern masters I was meeting and spending time with. That was the last time I ever saw her.

Awakened men and women are those who have recognized spiritual domains as being more real and true than anything else. But if our shared culture doesn’t have the eyes to see what they see and know what they know, such men and women usually end up being perceived as irrational, self-deceived, and deluded—as representatives of the false. Indeed, authentic holders of timeless spiritual truths are often thought to be hucksters and con artists because they boldly dare to bear witness to the unseen.

In the ancient premodern world, that ultimate context was validated by shared myths and religious beliefs and was empowered by the supercharged energy of awakened consciousness in inspired prophets and seers. Today we no longer have myths to rely on to validate our spiritual illumination. Together we need to create a post-traditional consensus about the great significance and place of Spirit in the human experience, and this has to be generated by those of us who have seen beyond the veil of appearances and have experienced those deeper metaphysical domains to such a profound degree that we’re willing to bear witness in public. But to be taken seriously, we must do so in a way that points us not only beyond the myth and superstition of the ancients but also beyond the naïve idealism predominant in so much of New Age thinking. We must be ruthless in our rationality in order to authentically transmit the light of the *trans*-rational God in the twenty-first century. This is an enormous task, but our willingness to take it on will slowly but surely make a profound difference.



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