

Self-Responsibility, Self-Integrity, and Freedom from the Guru

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It is difficult to find an item lost in pitch-black darkness by groping for it with one's hands, but there is no doubt that with the help of a brightly shining lamp one will find it. Similarly, it is difficult to find the most precious jewel that is the whole's (and by implication one's) creativity, lost in the pitch-black darkness of one's unexcited state, but one will find it by the precious communication that the gracious mien of the infallible bla-ma (lama) conveys.¹

—Padmasambhava

*Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, what e'er you may believe.
There is an inmost center in us all,
Where truth abides in fullness; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect clear perception—which is truth.
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Binds it, and makes all error; and to know
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without.*

—Robert Browning, *The Imprisoned Splendour*

MASTER-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP: AUTHENTIC AND COMMERCIAL

The master-disciple relationship is a special tradition that still survives in the esoteric circles of the religions of the world. In the Western hemisphere, George Gurdjieff and his schools, for instance, embodied this rarest of the rare traditions in a highly original manner.² What is striking is the fact that Gurdjieff and countless masters before him in the East as well as in the West would make it extremely difficult or well-nigh impossible for spiritual aspirants and seekers to become their students. Unlike today's self-proclaimed gurus in the West who often hire publicists to promote their enlightenment traps, authentic masters of the past tested their prospective students or disciples thoroughly and constantly so as to ensure the genuineness of their commitment to spiritual illumination. Many people today want to have spiritual enlightenment, whatever this term may mean to them, but very few are willing to do what it takes to unfoldingly become spiritually awake and alight. And still fewer are actually able to sustain the commitment in their evolutionary journey in spiritual awakening and illumining.

Therefore, on the one hand, we have people who want enlightenment without the willingness to do what it takes to become spiritually illumined, such as sacrificing their cherished suffering once and for all; and on the other hand, we have inauthentic gurus who are eager to supply whatever it is that the 'enlightenment market' demands. These inauthentic gurus provide, in the forms of books, tapes, and seminars, their adulating followers with shallow and artificial waters in which to swim like fish floundering in a drying pool, while proclaiming their concrete pools to be the vast ocean of spiritual illumination. Those who never have had the experience of spiritual awakening do not know what it is and what it is not, except having vague and wrong ideas of what it might be, and hence can easily be deceived by authority figures as well as by themselves. Like the smart teenager who recounts his sexual exploits to his peers based not on his experience but on the books he has read, inauthentic

gurus recount their pseudo enlightenment experiences with the air of an authority and the flair of a sophist. Like the average teenager who does not want to trail behind his peers, people take 'virtual enlightenment tours' through books, tapes, and seminars written and delivered by their (usually more than one) favorite authors, speakers, and teachers, some of whom cannot even write coherently good English in their celestial slumber or have no knowledge of, for instance, the Sanskrit language whose mysteriously unfamiliar words they use, as though they were Sanskrit scholars, but without knowing the real meanings of the words, and counting on the ignorance of their readers and audience.

According to the noted Sanskrit and Tibetan scholar Herbert Guenther:³

The word *guru* is both an adjective and a noun. As an adjective, it has the following meanings:

1) heavy, weighty (also figuratively), 2) great, large, long, extended, 3) important, momentous, great, 4) arduous, difficult (to bear), 5) excessive, violent, intense, 6) venerable, respectable, 7) heavy, hard (of digestion), 8) best, excellent, 9) dear, beloved, 10) haughty, proud (as a speech), 11) (in prosody) long as a syllable, either in itself (*a*), or being short, followed by a conjunct consonant (*a-ksara*), 12) valuable, highly prized, 13) grievous.

As a noun it means:

1) a father, 2) forefather, ancestor, 3) any venerable or respectable person; an elderly person or relative, 4) a teacher, preceptor, 5) a lord, superintendent, ruler, 6) The Supreme Spirit.

Language is dynamically fluid, and meanings of words arise only within particular contexts. Therefore, what the term *guru* may mean depends solely on the context in which it appears. The term *guru* used in the context of spiritual discipline as the embodiment of the universal awareness or the cosmic consciousness of Being-that-is-Light (the Supreme Spirit) is not and does not need to be in human form. In fact, the Sanskrit term *guru*, like its Tibetan Buddhist equivalent *bla-ma* (*lama*), does not denote a concrete human being but refers to the person's inner awareness of the forces of intelligence working inside himself and the universe as a syntropic (anti-entropic), order-creating, meaning-bestowing, evolutionary principle. Spiritual discipline is a process of creating an increasingly higher order within and without. To be a disciple means that one is able to recognize and cultivate the forces of intelligence, this syntropic, order-creating, meaning-bestowing, evolutionary principle, within himself and the universe. Therefore, a disciple is an individual who is able to recognize and harness a higher manifestation of the *guru* or the *bla-ma* in another person, who may then choose to act as his human guru. Thus, a disciple and a guru recognize one another, and co-emerge in the complementarity of a guru-disciple relationship.

The complementarity of a guru-disciple relationship is a manifestation of the *yin-yang* complementarity, which in turn emerges inside the cosmic *yin-yang-li* triunity. In the language of science, *yin* is the non-local (wave) aspect, *yang* is the local (particle) aspect, and *li* is the cosmic logic-intelligence aspect (which holds the complementarity of the local and non-local realities in and as the cosmic order) of the Kosmos. The guru is simultaneously both the non-local and the cosmic logic-intelligence aspects, while the disciple is the local aspect, of the triunity. The guru as a teacher is the embodiment of the non-local awareness; the guru as the Supreme Spirit is the cosmic logic-intelligence, which holds the omnicomplementarity of the Kosmos, underlying the syntropic, order-creating, meaning-bestowing, evolutionary principle. The disciple, who is still enclosed in his ego-centeredness, yet is already inspired and enlivened by the cosmic logic-intelligence, is the embodiment of the local awareness about to be illumined by the non-local awareness and utter openness of being embodied and exemplified by the guru. Therefore, the guru and the disciple are co-emergent and co-evolutionary partners, mutually interdependent but never psychologically dependent on one another.

In today's prevalent commercial "guru-disciple" relationships, however, there exists no sacred triunity of the guru, the disciple, and the cosmic logic-intelligence. While students are psychologically and intellectually dependent on their gurus, gurus are psychologically and financially dependent on their students. There is no cosmic intelligence inside this appearance-only triunity, but only an empty utterance of borrowed platitudes devoid of authenticity and bordering on nonsense. For instance, one famous Indian guru, now deceased, recounts

a story of his “*kundalini* awakening”⁴ experience, in which he regards, with all seriousness, the erection of his manhood as a definite sign of *kundalini* awakening. Should this be the case, the world would already be full of an enlightened male population, which, besides keeping themselves and the female population happy and satisfied, should have rendered all war and violence obsolete. A comedic example, until you realize that there were thousands who followed him, and there are still thousands who follow his successor. A blind man leading a blind crowd. Still more harmful are guru figures who are knowledgeable, of superior intellect, and ‘virtually enlightened’ without being authentically awake and alight. The business of spiritual enlightenment is a lucrative industry today—an excellent way to earn a good living and to achieve power and fame for someone who has a superior learning and intellect in spiritual literature and vocabulary. In the meantime, the unthinking public is constantly misled into believing that the muddy footsteps of truth are truth and the fantasy that is ‘virtual enlightenment’ is authentic spiritual awakening.

THE CAUSE OF MEDIOCRITY

What are the reasons for this sorry state of affairs? There are several different ways in which to answer this question. First, we will approach this question from the point of view of the conspiracy for mediocrity, as this sorry state of affairs is an exemplary case of the all-pervasive conspiracy for mediocrity existing in the world. What is mediocrity? Mediocrity is the state of being in which desires, aspirations, and inner strivings for one’s highest value and meaning in life are suppressed or dormant. Mediocrity is not the average but the *conformity* to the average in the absence of desires, aspirations, and inner strivings for one’s highest value and meaning in life. Since no human being is born with an intrinsic desire to be mediocre, but, on the contrary, with a desire and aspiration for greatness, a mediocre person has either to justify or to ignore his mediocrity in order to be and live with himself. That is, he has to live a life that is untrue to and out of integrity with his own deepest desire and aspiration. Shakespeare’s famous lines in Hamlet (I.iii.17), “... *to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man,*” remind us that not being true to one’s own self is also being false with other people. Therefore, a mediocre person is untrue to and out of integrity not only with himself but also with other fellow human beings. Here lies the inextricable link between the culture of mediocrity and the culture of inauthenticity.

What is the cause of mediocrity? Statistically in any field of human endeavor there are more people with an average talent than with a higher to exceptional talent. If we equate genius or greatness with what an aptitude or talent avails us, then most of us are doomed to be average with a slight, insignificant give or take. This is the situation in which the great majority of people find themselves in the course of their lives—that is, so long as they define genius or greatness according to external comparative standards—so long as they fail to realize the incomparable singularities of their being, the singular cosmic destinies that they are. The being of an individual is a whole. It is not a *quantity* but a *quality*; not *quantitatively* measurable but *qualitatively* knowable. Two individuals are different only qualitatively; quantitative differences between them, such as height or IQ, apply only to certain aspects of their being, abstracted from the wholeness that they are, measured by some external comparative standards set by the society to which they belong. Quality belongs to individuality; quantity belongs to commonality. Therefore, the cause of mediocrity is our mistaken identification of our worth and greatness with an externally measurable and comparable commonality, and our failure to recognize our worth and greatness in the light of the cosmic singularity that is our being as its-own-most-unique-ability-to-be.

When Walter Russell states that *genius is self-bestowed*, he means by the term ‘genius’ the finest quality of individuality that any human being can attain through his own effort in self-development. At the core of individuality, there lies creativity and a creative vision. Therefore, the finest quality of individuality means the finest quality of individual creativity in action for the fulfillment of a creative vision that summons an individual to the untrodden path of his singular cosmic destiny. The ability to *respond* to this inner summon is what self-responsibility means. The ability to live one’s life in a manner *consistent* with one’s creative vision is what self-integrity means. Thus, self-responsibility and self-integrity are the hallmark of authentic geniushood. When Russell states that *mediocrity is self-inflicted*, he means that if a person fails to cultivate self-responsibility and self-integrity, and thereby fails to awaken and live from his inner genius, he is likely to succumb to the dictates of the external world and its commonality-standards, and thereby to be afflicted with the pervasive conspiracy for

mediocrity, which affliction is tantamount to self-inflicting mediocrity. Thus, the difference between self-bestowing genius and self-inflicting mediocrity is that of looking within or looking without, of having an inner standard or having an outer standard.

People are *created* free and equal but they are not *born* free and equal. There are significant differences in conditions and talents in and with which people are born, the reason for which is explainable by the law of reincarnation. As we think so we become. Our present conditions, talents, and other external and internal endowments are the results of our individual thoughts that have been thought throughout many lifetimes. The issue of reincarnation is beyond the scope of this article, but there is an important lesson to be learned from it. That is, your spiritual, mental, and physical endowments are the product of your thought that was thought throughout your past lifetimes, and therefore your thought today will inexorably impact your future spiritual, mental, and physical endowments as well as the external conditions of life into which you will be born and in which you will live. Further, even more importantly, regardless of your past, you have within yourself the power which is your thought that can significantly alter you and your life within this lifetime. Reincarnation misunderstood leads to fatalism; reincarnation understood leads to freedom.

Thus, your genius, your greatness, does not depend on your endowment; it is not a matter of endowment but of *bestowment*. For instance, Antonio Salieri was likely to have been less musically talented than Mozart according to accepted standards, but his individual quality was distinct from and incomparable with that of Mozart. Assuming the movie *Amadeus* was historically accurate (which is doubtful), had Salieri recognized his own genius in the quality of his individual creativity, the finest attainment of which in its own way would have been as splendid as that of Mozart, he would not have succumbed to jealousy and envy as he did; rather, he would have celebrated the incomparable geniuses of himself and Mozart. By outwardly comparing himself with Mozart, one of the most talented composers/musicians of all time, Salieri fell into the trap of the conspiracy for mediocrity, and ended up self-inflicting mediocrity instead of self-bestowing genius. It is well to remember that you can never be the genius that Leonardo da Vinci was nor can Leonardo da Vinci ever be the genius that you are. You, like da Vinci or Mozart, are a singular cosmic destiny, utterly incomparable, uniquely significant, and *sui generis*.

THE CAUSE OF INAUTHENTIC SPIRITUALITY

The process of spiritual awakening is the same as that of self-bestowing genius. In the metaphoric language of the rDzogs-chen master Padmasambhava, it is the process of finding "*the most precious jewel that is the whole's (and by implication one's) creativity.*" The difference is only that of emphasis: while in the case of self-bestowing genius the emphasis is on the *individual's* creativity; in the case of spiritual awakening the emphasis is on the *whole's* creativity. The whole's creativity, or the most precious jewel, as the cosmic ground of our being, is already and always within us. In this sense everyone is *en-lightened*. Yet, only a few are indeed *en-lightened*, and thus *alight and awake*. For, only a few are cognitively and spiritually in resonance with the supraconscious ecstatic intensity of Being-that-is-Light. Only a few are willing to go through, and are able to sustain their commitment to going through, the process of spiritual awakening to achieve the supraconscious ecstatic cognitive-energetic intensity of Being-that-is-Light. Why?

Why do people choose the misery and suffering of mediocrity instead of the glory and ecstasy of genius? Why do they settle for second-hand gods sold by glib but shallow second-hand gods salesmen and women instead of aiming for an authentic experience of Being-that-is-Light? Why do they look *without* for external authority and standards instead of looking *within* for internal authority and standards? Why do they forfeit their self-responsibility and self-integrity at the gate of self-transformation? Why are there only a few authentic and committed seekers who tread the path of spiritual awakening all the way to the attaining of the ecstatic cognitive intensity of Being-that-is-Light?

Human beings are meaning seeking: they constantly seek meanings in and from life, and would not devote themselves to a pursuit wherein they found no meaning at all. Therefore, the reason that there are only a few authentic and committed seekers is that most people find, within the present context of their lives, no real

meaning in the pursuit of authentic spiritual awakening, including self-bestowal of inner genius. Having gone astray from the kosmic ground of being in their forgetfulness or unawareness of the kosmic intelligence or the order-creating and meaning-bestowing evolutionary principle at work within themselves and the universe, not only do they not know *what* spiritual awakening is but also they do not know *that* they do not know what it is. One may seek, and find meaning in seeking, that which one *knows*, that which one *thinks* one knows, or that which one *knows* that one does not know, but one does not normally seek, and find meaning in seeking, that which one *does not know* that one does not know. For, that which one does not know that one does not know exists outside one's present cognitive context, which is what usually supplies meaning to one's life. Human beings are *en-lightened*, but most people do not know that they are thus *en-lightened*, and do not know that they do not know it. Therefore, they are *endarkened* of their own enlightenment—of their being luminous beings.

Thus, in the name of "spiritual enlightenment," people seek whatever they think it is, which is never what it actually is. When the desire for spiritual awakening and for Being-that-is-Light dawns upon them, they begin, unknowingly and unawaredly, the search for that which they do not know that they do not know—that which is outside their present cognitive context. However, if their present life still provides them with some sense of meaning, they will be inclined to find, within the context of their present life, within the realms of the known, *substitutes* for authentic spiritual awakening. These substitutes are all forms of ego-gratification such as becoming 'virtually enlightened' through accumulation of information, becoming guru-figures through practiced elocution, becoming followers of fake gurus by exercising latent but formidable stupidity, or immersing in all kinds of pseudo New Age rituals including channeling, chanting, and churning. The desire for authentic spiritual awakening would not be satisfied or fulfilled by the substitutes but only tamed or anaesthetized. This substitution is a manifest expression of self-inauthenticity or self-deceit, and a mechanism by which human beings remain within the confine of the known. Therefore, it is only when their present life ceases to provide any genuine meaning that people begin to surrender themselves to their deepest spiritual desire for authentic awakening to, in, and of Being-that-is-Light that awaits beyond the horizon of the known.

There is a saying: "Nothing succeeds like success." We could also say: "Nothing fails like success." If you are indeed honest with yourself, you will realize that the more spectacular your success is at the level of ego-gratification, the more empty and meaningless it will make your life appear to be. Therefore, people's incessant search for ego-gratification is a sign that they have not yet succeeded in their search for ego-gratification, that is, they have achieved at best only mediocre successes in their search for ego-gratification, and/or that they are not completely honest with themselves.

Metaphorically speaking, an ego is a mirage, and ego-gratification is an illusion within that mirage. Your ego is like a character in a drama shown on your TV or movie screen. No matter how much you identify yourself with the character, and no matter how much gratification he seems to derive from the food or the sex he is shown to eat or have in the drama, in reality you are not he, and you yourself are not fed or sexually satisfied. The character is not the viewer-witness, nor is he even the actor. Therefore, the meaning of *your* life can never be found on the screen of life wherein your ephemeral ego reigns as the star in the drama of your own making.

Precisely speaking, the ego is the concretized self-identification sentence-structure: "I am that I am X," constructed and designed for its own perpetuation. The self-identity is the predicate "X" in the sentence "I am that I am X." (For instance, I am that I am "spiritual," "intelligent," or "beautiful.") The ego is the misplaced concreteness that is placed upon this self-identification sentence-structure, which is as fleeting and evanescent as any sentence uttered in a conversation, because it is indeed nothing but a sentence. The ego is this concretized self-identification sentence-structure "I am that I am X" with the concretized predicate "X" whereby you *sentence yourself for life* to a self-identity "X." However, no sooner is a sentence uttered than it disappears; likewise, no sooner is a self-identity identified than it disappears with the sentence. Ego-gratification is a way of repeating a self-same predicate in a self-same sentence in order to perpetuate your fixed self-identity.

That which is constant in the sentence "I am that I am X" is "I am that I am," whereas the "X" is variant. "I am that I am" is Being (Being-that-is-Light), whereas "I am X" is becoming (Light-lighting-up). The "I" in "I am (that I am)" is the Self, while the "I" in "(I am that) I am" is the self and the "X" in "(I am that) I am X" is the self-identity. The ego arises with the mistaken identification of the subject with the predicate; it arises with the

mistaken identification of the Self with the self, and of the self with the self-identity. That which identifies (Self/self) is not that which is identified (self/self-identity). Being-that-is-Light in its transformation into becoming-that-is-Light-lighting-up undergoes the process of stepping-down of its cognitive intensity, resulting in this two-fold mistaken identification of the Self with the self and of the self with the self-identity. The process of spiritual awakening is the return journey with increasingly greater cognitive intensity from the self-identity (the character in the drama) to the self (the actor) and to the Self (the viewer-witness). Meditation, in this regard, is the art of being "I am that I am" without having any particular predicate; it is the process-state of the Self being in identity with itself without any mistaken identification. Yet, so long as you are caught in your ego-identity by identifying the subject "I" with the predicate "X" in your forgetfulness of Being in becoming, so long as you still manage to find meaning in a drama featuring your ego-identity as the star, you are unlikely to find any meaning in your possible return journey to the Self or Being-that-is-Light.

The question is: do you see the utter meaninglessness of life based on ego-gratification? This is an important question, but no one can force you to say yes to this question. When you can say an authentic yes to this question, however, you will already have embarked upon your journey for spiritual awakening into Being-that-is-Light. Then, you will know that that which makes life genuinely meaningful is not the perpetuation of self-same sentences with self-same predicates but the constant voidance of old sentences and the continual creation of new sentences without allowing any permanent predication to form or persist.

That which bestows true meaning to life is an opening to the unknown. Who you are, your self that is the Self, is not your ephemeral ego but Being-that-is-Light that lights up as your life and your world. The unknown that beckons you to the journey of spiritual awakening, when it is known, is known always as *a priori* knowingness — as *recollection* of that which is always known *a priori* in the full dimensionality of Being-that-is-Light. This is why the journey of spiritual awakening is a return journey. You have forgotten your true identity as Being-that-is-Light, and gone astray into your mistaken identifications. Thus, your trip has literally been an ego-trip through and through. Therefore, the question is: when are you going to end your ego-trip and instead come home to Being-that-is-Light?

AUTHENTIC SPIRITUALITY

Unfortunately, because of the inherently subjective nature of spiritual experience, the spiritual world is fraught with charlatans who capriciously make all kinds of claims without the burden of proof. Even around the spiritual organization founded by authentic teachers of which I was CEO (the University of Science and Philosophy, founded by Walter and Leo Russell), I saw or heard, amongst so-called students of Lao Russell, self-proclaimed "channelers" who claim that they "channel Lao," as if Lao Russell in her current disembodied state has nothing better to do than to speak to those misguided people who have not developed the requisite intelligence as well as diligence to understand the Russellian Science and Philosophy and its far-reaching vision. Becoming a self-proclaimed psychic or channeler is a convenient way of manufacturing an air of spiritual superiority for those who suffer from very low self-esteem but are too lazy to discipline themselves to transcend their painfully mediocre mentality to acquire authenticity, spirituality, and self/Self-knowledge. As I made it clear in my letter to R.R. in "An Appeal for Simplicity,"⁵ my foremost commitment in life is to authenticity. For, the Russellian Science and Philosophy and all genuine esoteric knowledge of the world, past and present, are reserved only for authentic seekers and thinkers, and can be understood and appreciated only by authentic seekers and thinkers.

Authentic spirituality is highly demanding; it demands that you sacrifice your ego and its cherished suffering through genuine understanding; it demands that you cast away the known and venture into the unknown; it demands that you committedly respond to and consistently live with the call of the creative vision that you are; and it demands that you be psychologically free from all forms of gurus or external authorities and that you enter the temple of transformation all alone. Authentic spirituality thus demands self-responsibility, self-integrity, and inner freedom from the guru. As defined above, self-responsibility is the ability to respond to the creative vision that you are that summons you to the untrodden path of your singular cosmic destiny; self-integrity is the ability to live your life in a manner that is consistent with this summons and thereby with the creative vision that you are. Freedom from the guru entails that you are possessed of inner authority and authorship and remain independent of all forms of external authority in the matter of thinking and knowing. Paradoxical though it may

sound, it is only those who are psychologically and intellectually free from the guru, who can utilize, when necessary or beneficial, someone who is possessed of a higher-order inner awareness of the forces of cosmic intelligence (*guru*) working in the universe as a syntropic, order-creating, meaning-bestowing, evolutionary principle.

The creative vision that you are is the singular yet universal call of Being-that-is-Light from the dimensions beyond the known; it is an opening to the unknown which is *within* you yet *without* your present cognitive context. As in the case of a closed physical system within which entropy continuously increases, a person who is closed to the unknown is also closed to the possibility of spiritual development, which is the conscious process of creating an increasingly higher order or greater syntropy within. The term *Buddha*, which is usually translated as the “awakened one,” is this living syntropic (entropy-dissipating) process-structure that attains, because of its inner syntropic dynamic, increasingly higher order or self-organization, wherein darkness (entropy) continually dissipates and light (syntropy) ceaselessly spreads. In the spiritual context, order or self-organization is synonymous with wholeness. Therefore, spiritual development is the attainment of increasingly greater wholeness of being—of increasingly more holistic unfolding of Being-that-is-Light. This is what it means to be a *Buddha*, not, as the usual mistranslation implies, to be an “awakened one,” which is a ‘thingification’ or ‘entification’ of a dynamic living process, but to be an *awakening, order-generating process*. Self-responsibility and self-integrity are the essential keys that unlock the opening for this syntropic process of spiritual development and awakening—the opening of the “*way whence the imprisoned splendour may escape.*”

NOTES:

- 1) Guenther, Herbert, *THE LAMA: FROM AUTHENTICITY TO THEATRICALS*, to be published in *THE COSMIC LIGHT*, Vol. 3, No. 2., May, 2001, The University of Science and Philosophy Press.
- 2) Ouspensky, P.D., *IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950.
- 3) Dr. Herbert Guenther’s personal letter to the author in response to his inquiry.
- 4) This Indian guru will remain unidentified. For an authentic account of the kundalini awakening experience, see *LIVING WITH KUNDALINI, THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GOPI KRISHNA*, by Gopi Krishna, Shambhala, 1993, available from The University of Science and Philosophy.
- 5) Kimura, Yasuhiko G., “An Appeal for Simplicity,” *THE COSMIC LIGHT*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 2000, The University of Science and Philosophy Press.