Afterword

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The theme of this important volume is "spiritual transmission"—the transmission of a special spiritual awareness from a teacher to a student—which is actually an issue that affects most forms of spiritual training. But its spiritual forms are especially associated with teachers known as "gurus" and with the entire path of Guru Yoga. And that overall path is what I'm going to focus on, because the whole topic of there being a "guru" or spiritual master is truly one of the most pressing and profound issues of our time.

The underlying idea of Guru Yoga is the notion that, in order to receive the guru's spiritual "transmission," you must surrender to the guru; you must voluntarily turn your life—or large portions of it—over to somebody else, somebody who allegedly knows more than you do in this area, and you choose to submit yourself to that person in order to receive that learning. At its base is the question of self-sovereignty and self-autonomy itself: when is it appropriate to

voluntarily surrender one's own autonomy and turn it over to somebody else, and occasionally in quite far-reaching and extensive ways?

Guru Yoga, in its developed forms, is several thousand years old. It appears wherever there is a major cultural/spiritual context that maintains that the typical human state is "ignorant," "fallen" or "illusory," and that this condition can be reversed with a state said to be "enlightened" or "awakened." To spell that out a bit, the belief is that human beings are born into an alienated, or dualistic and fragmented world that is inherently one of suffering and massive ignorance. In this fallen world, humans are identified with a very narrow, broken, and partial self-identity (often called the "ego"), which is said to be a major delusion, a false consciousness that drives suffering, pain, and almost endless torment. But, the major spiritual traditions further claim, humans have the capacity to awaken from this fractured dream and discover not only their own True Self or real Nature, they can also discover the glorious Ground of All Being itself—or pure Spirit. And what's more, their True Self is said to be absolutely one with this infinite Spirit—what the Sufis call the "Supreme Identity." This extraordinary transformation—from fractured ego-self to divine spiritual Self—is variously known around the world as Enlightenment, Awakening, Metamorphosis, Fana, Satori, Realization, Moksha, the Great Liberation—in short, "Waking Up."

The way that the Great Traditions pictured this transformation was based on what was called the "Two Truths" doctrine—namely, there are two basic truths, relative and absolute truth or ultimate Truth. Relative truth has to do with the manifest, finite world: human beings need food to survive; the sun rises in the east and sets in the west; water can exist in three states, as ice or water or steam; and so on. Those are all relative truths, and the Traditions don't deny any of those a relative reality. But there is also ultimate Truth which maintains things like, "Water and

ice and humans themselves are all direct manifestations of ultimate Spirit (or a Ground of All Being).” So the Great Traditions maintain that their specific Paths of Liberation (including Guru Yoga), help an individual transform from being lost in relative truth to being awakened to ultimate Truth.

In these various traditions (East and West), once a person has discovered their own True Self, they can in turn act as catalysts of this discovery for other people. Such a realized individual, in other words, can become a guru. The stated aim of a guru is to use various techniques (including direct transmission) in order to help their students awaken to ultimate Truth. To understand what that originally meant and what it still tends to mean, it’s important to remember that most of these traditions are at least two thousand years old. At that time, science had not yet been discovered; humans didn’t yet understand that the earth circled the sun; that evolution had a hand in creating all living creatures; knew nothing of brain chemistry and neurotransmitters and their profound role in altering awareness; slavery was still perfectly acceptable and often encouraged; women in general were second-class citizens, if that; life expectancy was around thirty years; poverty rate worldwide was over 95 percent.

But all of that ignorance was considered completely secondary to a much deeper and infinitely more profound ignorance: namely, ignorance of the primordial Ground of All Being—ignorance not of relative truth, but of ultimate Truth. No matter how correctly—or incorrectly—one understood various aspects of the relative, manifest universe, all of that paled in comparison to the fact that the entire universe itself was nothing but a manifestation of an ultimate Spirit, an ultimate Ground of Being, and if one was not directly aware of that infinite Ground and ultimate Truth, then one was hopelessly lost, no matter how much relative knowledge one might have.

And thus, in order to reverse this state of profound ignorance, a person needed to take up one of the authentic Paths of Liberation offered by the various Great Traditions—and a primary version of these paths was that of Guru Yoga. What all of the Paths of Liberation had in common was the practice of various exercises that decommissioned the ordinary state of egoic consciousness and its basic mental operations, and replaced them with a direct realization of the Supreme Identity and ultimate Truth in one's own case. The version of this "decommissioning process" that original Guru Yoga took included having the student consistently take up an attitude of, "Everything I think and do is wrong, and everything the guru thinks and does is right." That was either part of the actual instructions of the particular path, or it was the attitude that almost every student eventually ended up taking in the course of their training.

After all, the guru is God-realized; and clearly, God doesn't make mistakes. This is, in effect, the basis for the voluntary surrendering of self-autonomy in order to transcend the ego and discover one's own True Self. And in some pragmatic cases, this practice works exactly as it is supposed to. Since most human beings are almost totally identified with their ego and largely ignorant of their True Self, by consistently undercutting the ego with that total self-deprecation, the ego could indeed be largely decommissioned, allowing the Self to more easily shine through. In these positive cases, the student goes from being totally identified with the ego—with all its misery and suffering—and starts to resonate with the True Self of the guru. The student then uses that resonance to start to recognize their own True Self, and with further practice, to shift their identity profoundly from their typical ego to that Supreme Identity, that ultimate Truth per se.

That ultimate Truth is certainly the basic core claim of virtually all of the world's Great Wisdom Traditions, and no matter how often that ultimate Truth was surrounded by relative truths that were in fact misconceptions, that core Truth remains the central offering of the Great

Wisdom Traditions. That ultimate realization is certainly the core of the truth that is claimed by Guru Yoga and therefore the point in fairly and effectively critiquing Guru Yoga—attempting to understand both its strengths and its weaknesses—is to do so while also accepting the fundamental existence and reality of these basic satori-like realizations. That is to say, that any effective, fair, and accurate critique of Guru Yoga will accept the existence of the Two Truths doctrine. If we reject an ultimate Truth altogether (that can be experientially realized with Enlightenment or Awakening), then there is nothing whatsoever that recommends Guru Yoga—it degenerates entirely into nothing but a type of indentured servitude. It takes no real thinking at all to simply reject any Guru principle on the grounds that it severely violates individual autonomy. Yet to point out the obvious, that's exactly what it's supposed to do (at least temporarily). But the real point is that when (as almost every critic invariably does), we make the rational ego into ultimate Truth, then anything that violates the ego and its absolute sovereignty is taken to be demonic or delusional—and that certainly includes Guru Yoga (and the rest of the Paths of Liberation). Merely reacting to Guru Yoga as a vicious "autonomy violation" is not much more than a platitude, and mindlessly reflects the typical modern notion that an independent and autonomous ego is the highest reality known to humankind, whereas, according to virtually all of the Great Traditions, it's simply the height of illusion.

So the only serious question in a genuine critique of Guru Yoga becomes: how adequate, how authentic, how effective is Guru Yoga when it comes to transmitting ultimate Truth? How good is Guru Yoga at helping individuals discover their own True Self and Supreme Identity, at realizing a genuine Enlightenment and true Awakening? What we discover, I believe, is that during the time that Guru Yoga was originally created (some two to three thousand years ago), the social and cultural conditions were such that it was largely an authentic and quite effective

version of the Paths of Liberation. But as humanity moved into the modern and postmodern era, with its increasing sociocultural evolution, the relative truths that surrounded Guru Yoga became less and less acceptable, so that finally, the core of ultimate Truth that it contained was surrounded by so many relative truths that were increasingly misguided, false, and damaging, that Guru Yoga indeed became reduced to almost nothing more than a useless and damaging violation of individual autonomy. Authentic satori was rarely achieved, and in its place were often anxiety, depression, and a badly broken relative self.

However, I will also suggest that if the relative truths surrounding Guru Yoga are significantly readjusted (while keeping its core of a valid Enlightenment and ultimate-Unity Realization), then Guru Yoga can indeed return to being a very viable—and especially effective—form of spiritual training and genuine Awakening.

The core of the problem, I believe, centers around the "totalistic" nature of the authority that many versions of Guru Yoga place in the person of the guru—namely the central stance of *infallibility*. A central reason that a student is willing to submit to the guru is indeed the idea that the guru can be fully trusted in this area—that the guru is infallible—and whether that claim is explicitly made by the Path itself, which it often is, or whether it is simply assumed by the student, which it virtually always is, the core issue remains the surrendering of self-autonomy by the student and the assumption of infallibility given to the guru.

The major foundation of this notion of infallibility was indeed the Two Truths: the guru might not know every little relative truth in the world that there is to know, but the guru does know ultimate Truth. This means that the guru's ignorance of relative truth simply doesn't ultimately matter, because the relative realm doesn't really matter.

This belief was easy to maintain, especially given the way in which a genuine satori seemed to clarify and fully handle all of the items in the relative realm. To enter nirvana was to touch a ground of Reality so real and so profound, it thoroughly dominated anything the relative world and its relative truths could say or do—and it certainly demonstrated that everything in the relative realm (known as "samsara") was truly illusory and unreal. It's important to realize that nirvana was not just a theological notion, nor a metaphysical idea, nor a mere philosophical belief. It was a direct, immediate, unmistakable experience, delivered directly to consciousness itself and fully reproducible in others. Nirvana could even overcome—in a very direct and provable fashion—the most intense pain known to humans. This wasn't just an exaggerated or boastful claim, it was literally quite true: enter the state of nirvana, a state of cessation that was totally painless, formless, empty—and in that state one was free of pain and suffering and ego altogether. We saw screaming, shocking examples of this purely formless painless state—and its incredible reality—during the Viet Nam War, when monks protesting the war sat in meditation posture, entered the formless painless state—entered "nirvana"—and had their bodies doused in gasoline and then set on fire; right there on live TV, in front of millions, they burned to the ground in ashes, and not one of them even flinched once. This very real nirvana state is in part behind many of the experiences found in Near-Death experiences, spontaneous spiritual peak experiences, and specific states of meditation, which is what makes so many of them feel so undeniably real.

The question is not therefore, as I've said, whether nirvana is real or not. Rather, the significant question, especially when it comes to Guru Yoga, is exactly what types of truth does a satori or Waking-Up experience convey in the first place? What does nirvana *actually tell you*? After all, the many cultures that had full access to Waking-Up experiences—and a very large

majority of the traditional great civilizations certainly did—still knew nothing about atoms, molecules, or cells; knew nothing about the functioning of television or radio or computers; didn't know the earth circled the sun or even that it wasn't flat; had no idea that women could be equal citizens or that slavery was immoral.

Those facts—namely, that the reality of nirvana seems to be an ultimate Truth—has remained true up to and including the Viet Nam War period, but many of the specific relative truths of earlier times have not stood up well at all, which means that the safest *generalization* about the Two Truths is that a Waking-Up experience will give you ample knowledge about ultimate Truth, but almost no knowledge about relative truth at all.

So whereas today's typical criticism about Guru Yoga is that it dominates an individual's ego and takes away their autonomy, a more cogent criticism would be that the guru's authority is limited to those areas dealing only with ultimate Truth—since ultimate Truth is the only truth that satori guarantees. Satori can tell us that we are perfectly One with that tree; but it cannot tell us a thing about the most elementary particles of that tree, including the fact that the tree itself is made of cells and molecules and atoms and quarks. Ultimate Truth is limited strictly to items having to do with the nature and qualities of ultimate Reality itself, and indeed the various Paths of Liberation are replete with treatises on just that ultimate Nature and its various characteristics But when it comes to qualities and factors that pertain to relative truth and to a relative finite human being per se, gurus (and their satoris) are extremely fallible. In terms of pure significance, ultimate Truth is infinitely beyond any relative truth. But when it comes to the sheer number of truths, relative truth is overwhelming—and, besides, when it comes to the ultimate One, there is only, so to speak, One of those to know, compared to trillions upon trillions of relative truths.

Furthermore, the nondual revolution that would soon sweep the spiritual world—beginning with Nagarjuna's astonishing treatises on *shunyata*—would profoundly change the understanding of the very relation between nirvana and samsara. According to Nagarjuna, nirvana is still a very real state, but it is not quite truly ultimate. In its original version, nirvana is completely split and divorced from samsara, and the aim of Realization is to totally get off (the "wheel" of) samsara and embrace only nirvana. It was, in other words, a deeply dualistic notion, with the universe split right down the middle into half real and half illusory. Nagarjuna points out that, although the nirvana state is indeed real, there is a yet deeper and even more real state, which he called "shunyata," which literally means "Emptiness," but in a special sense: it doesn't directly mean formless or nothingness. It means radically *unqualifiable*, totally beyond any characterization whatsoever; and it is radically beyond any characterization at all because Emptiness is the Reality that equally contains all of them. Thus, being radically all-inclusive, Emptiness underlies and embraces both nirvana and samsara. That is, nirvana and samsara are two different aspects of the same underlying Wholeness—a Wholeness Nagarjuna called "Nonduality," since nirvana and samsara were "nondual" or "not-two" or ultimately "one." As the Heart Sutra would soon put it, "That which is Emptiness is not other than Form, that which is Form is not other than Emptiness." In other words, that which is nirvana is not other than samsara, that which is samsara is not other than nirvana.

This really changed everything. Heaven (nirvana) was no longer a state that was totally beyond this Earth (samsara). Heaven, or Spirit, was still totally transcendent to this finite relative world, but it was also completely *immanent* in it. Infinite Spirit both transcended and fully included the relative universe—they were nondual. For Buddhism, this meant the ideal was no longer the Arhat, who disappeared into nirvana while the realm of samsara and all its sentient

beings burned to ashes. The new ideal was now the Bodhisattva, who promised not to disappear into nirvana but to find that prior Wholeness that allowed nirvana to be fully realized while the world of samsara was also fully arising, and what's more, to therefore be able to help all sentient beings in samsara find their own Enlightenment. All subsequent schools of Buddhism and especially those of Tantra fully accepted Nagarjuna's shunyata doctrine (it became, as T. Murti's book title has it, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*. Most of the truly influential spiritual schools around the world would eventually adopt some version of a nondual position.)

And this meant the Two Truths were nondual as well. It was still necessary to have a satori or moksha Realization in order to know ultimate Truth; but relative truth could no longer simply be tossed in the garbage can. The entire manifest universe was a direct manifestation of Spirit itself, and was to be celebrated as the radiant luminosity of a radical Emptiness or pure Spirit. The relative world is now illusory or truly unreal *if and only if* it is perceived apart from Spirit; but when seen as it is in reality—namely, a direct manifestation of Spirit itself—then it is indeed a perfect expression of ultimate Reality.

Satori still showed a person nothing but the ultimate Truth component of nondual Reality—it was fully one with, but it did not disclose a single bit of, relative truth and the relative world. Relative truths had to be uncovered using the methods and techniques of the relative realm itself (from telescopes to microscopes to X-ray chambers to photographic plates to empirical tests in general). And this is where Guru Yoga (and the Paths of Liberation in general) started to get into real trouble. The guru was assumed to be infallible, and yet actually that was only the case when it came to ultimate Truth—it was categorically false when it came to relative truth. And that might have been fine when the relative realm in its entirety was thought to be

nothing but a useless illusion; it's a completely different story when the relative reality is not-two with ultimate Reality.

This is a problem that actually affected every spiritual system in existence, although it was especially noticeable with Guru Yoga. When it comes to ultimate Truth, most of them are fairly well grounded; when it comes to relative truth, they are all on very thin ice.

And this is exactly the area that satori or Waking Up couldn't help them out with one bit. But over the next one thousand to two thousand years, things were learned in the relative realm about the human psyche that are of staggering importance, especially for those on a path of Waking Up. The most crucial of these facts were discovered only one hundred or two hundred years ago, yet they alter to the core how Waking Up is understood—and so far, not a single spiritual system anywhere in the world is aware of these stunning facts. This ignorance includes Guru Yoga; and this massive ignorance is exactly responsible for the problems that Guru Yoga today tends to get into such as sexual abuse and cultism—as we will clearly examine below….

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So what we have at this point historically is that, in ways that matter, the guru is no longer infallible, no longer "always right." Previously, what the guru didn't know in the relative realm was not a matter of concern. It was the massive growth in relative truths (which could no longer dualistically be denied in their entirety), which especially began to pour out of humanity with the rise of modernity and the Western Enlightenment, which increasingly made what the Guru didn't know in the relative realm become a real problem. Previously, what the guru didn't know in the relative realm seemed largely inconsequential since the realm itself was considered illusory. But now, what the guru doesn't know in the relative realm could kill you—more or less literally. This was always the case, of course, but the point is that, with ongoing evolution, humanity was beginning to realize just this fact. With the rise of modern science, all of the

"relative truths" surrounding religion began to actually be tested using relative science—which is exactly, as we've seen, the area in which religious and spiritual "facts" do not hold up well—as the modern and postmodern world thoroughly discovered.

One way to better understand "what the Guru didn't know in the relative realm" and how it would eventually severely impact Guru Yoga itself—and, at the same time, to understand the types of relative truth that Guru Yoga simply *must include* if it is to become viable again—is to look at how Max Weber, the brilliant sociological philosopher, characterized the rise of modernity itself.

Weber maintained that what defined modernity specifically (meaning the era beginning with the Western Enlightenment and its discovery of virtually all the modern sciences—physics, chemistry, biology, geology, astronomy, and so on) was the "differentiation of the value spheres." Before modernity, the value spheres were not yet fully differentiated, and thus their truths tended to be fused and confused. The "value spheres" specifically means the realms of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. The "Good" refers to the realm of ethics or morals (the ways that we are good to, or ethical with, each other); the "True" refers especially to objective truth, the realm of empirical science; and the "Beautiful" refers to aesthetics and artistic taste and personal authenticity. Weber's point was that, prior to modernity, these realms were not clearly differentiated—and thus morals, science and art tended to be mushed together. For example, none of the Churchmen felt that they had any need whatsoever to look through Galileo's telescope; the Bible told them exactly what they would see, and that's all they needed to know. They had collapsed scientific truth with Biblical poetry and ethics, and thus none of them—not morals, not science, not art—could proceed with their own truths and their own methods, and

when they were allowed to do so (as with Galileo), we have the explosion of relative knowledge that the Western Enlightenment brought with it.

Perhaps the most important—certainly as it impacted Guru Yoga—was the discovery that occurred in the area of developmental psychology (an offshoot of the discovery of evolution). Previously, throughout history, it was understood that human beings grow and develop throughout their life spans, and do so in various stages. But these stages of development were all understood in terms of their exterior, objective characteristics—such as infancy, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, older adulthood and elderly—those are all real stages, but they are described solely in terms of something you can see on the outside. The revolutionary discovery of developmental psychology is that there are *interior stages* of development as well, and these involve various interpretive frameworks, worldviews, and value systems. There are today several dozen different models describing all of this in detail, and the examples I'll give here represent only a few of the ways that this has been done.

One version of these interior stages is that of the developmental genius Jean Gebser, a variation of his interior stages being: the archaic stage, the magic stage, the mythic stage, the rational stage, the pluralistic stage, and the integral stage. Abraham Maslow empirically studied these stages in terms of motivation, and he found (with Gebser's correlative stages in parentheses): physiological needs (archaic), safety needs (magic), belongingness needs (mythic), self-esteem needs (rational), self-actualization needs (pluralistic), and self-transcendence needs (integral).

Carol Gilligan gives a simplified four-stage version of development that focuses on female moral development: the woman starts out at Gilligan's stage 1, which is called *selfish*—the woman cares only for herself so this stage is also called "egocentric" or "narcissistic." At

stage 2, called *care*, the woman extends care from herself to a group, her family, her clan, her tribe, her nation, her sex, her race, hence this stage is also called "ethnocentric," and it's the source of much bigoted and prejudiced values—but this can't really be helped, because it's a real stage through which all humans grow and develop; the only "cure" for this stage is to develop to the next higher stage. Stage 3 is called not "care" but "*universal care*"—the woman now extends care from her group to all groups, to all humans, regardless of race, color, sex, or creed (therefore a stage also called "worldcentric," which starts to care about *universal* justice, justice for all people, not only my own group or my own race or my own religion). And stage 4, which Gilligan called "*integrated*," manages to integrate all previous stages as well as the masculine and feminine form of moral thinking (a stage also called "integral").

All of these various models are talking about the same essential levels of development or evolutionary unfolding, so they all correlate quite well with each other. Thus, the archaic/physiological and the magic/safety are both *egocentric*; the mythic/belongingness are *ethnocentric*; the rational/self-esteem and the pluralistic/self-actualization are both *worldcentric*; and the integrated/self-transcendence is *integral*. The points we will be making can all be done by using the simple stages of egocentric, ethnocentric, worldcentric and integral.

The net result of all these studies is that today there are said to be upwards of perhaps a dozen multiple intelligences—in addition to cognitive intelligence there is also emotional intelligence, moral intelligence, aesthetic intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, motivational intelligence, values intelligence, and spiritual intelligence. And as importantly different as all these intelligences or multiple *lines* of development are, they all grow and develop through around the same six to eight major *levels* of development. Some of these models have been tested in over forty different cultures—including Amazon rainforest tribes, Australian aborigines,

Indianapolis housewives, and Harvard professors—and no major exceptions to these stages have been found. They're truly a type of periodic table of the elements of the human mind—they are a profound and incredibly important discovery, rarely matched in all of human history.

But there are several crucial items about those stages that need to be remembered—and then we'll see exactly how profoundly they impact the realities of Waking Up and the guru's actual transmission. *Genuinely significant is that none of these stages can be seen by introspecting or looking within.* They are much more like the rules of grammar. Everybody brought up in a particular culture ends up speaking that culture's language fairly correctly—they put subject and verb together correctly, they use adjectives and adverbs correctly, and in most ways they follow that language's rules of grammar quite accurately. But ask any of them to write down what those rules are, and virtually none of them can do it. In other words, they are following a large system of complex rules quite correctly, but they have no idea they are doing so.

These interior stages of development are just like grammar—when individuals are at a particular developmental stage, they will follow the rules of that stage quite faithfully but have absolutely no idea they are doing so. And no amount of looking within, introspecting, meditating, or contemplating will tell you what those stages look like. This makes these stages very difficult to discover, and that's why humanity didn't do so until only a hundred years or so ago, quite unlike Awakening or Enlightenment, which is many thousands of years old. These developmental stages of "Growing Up," in other words, are very different from the states of "Waking Up." One of their biggest differences is that Growing Up refers to the developmental stages that the relative self undergoes in the relative world, and Waking Up refers to the states of awareness that involve a genuine Waking Up—the former refer to relative truth, the latter refer

to ultimate Truth. Another difference is that only one of them (Waking Up) can be seen by looking within or meditating. But for that reason, it is an alarming fact that*, as a rule, the Great Wisdom Traditions lack awareness or understanding of the basic stages of Growing Up* because the Waking-Up Traditions were laid down before these Growing-Up stages were discovered.

This is disastrous for the world's spiritual systems and for the world's Great Religions. Because one thing research has demonstrated is that these two pathways—Waking Up and Growing Up—*are* relatively *independent of each other*. You can be highly advanced in Growing Up, living at its highest developmental stages to date (worldcentric or integral), and yet still not have had a single satori realization in your entire life. And just as disturbing, you can have had a profound Waking-Up experience and yet still be at very low stages of Growing Up (such as ethnocentric). In fact, many of the world's great mystics—widely considered to be at the some of the very highest reaches of Waking Up—were nonetheless at ethnocentric stages of Growing Up, and thus they have obvious sexist, racist, homophobic, xenophobic attitudes—and worse, because their Tradition gave them no way to see and understand the stages of Growing Up (including the stage that they themselves were at), they had no way to see this inadequacy at all.

Significantly, the Great Traditions themselves were at their own lower stages of Growing Up when they were first laid down. Most of them, at their peak, were deeply ensconced at their own ethnocentric stages of Growing Up, and this is reflected in the universal existence of racist and sexist (and other ethnocentric) traits *in all of them*. Racism in the form of slavery was rampant in the Great Religions, and not a single major religion had any effective objections. Christian and Buddhist monasteries had slaves; St. Paul counsels slaves to "obey your master and love Jesus Christ"; slavery was so widespread in earlier times that even the Native American Indians took their slaves with them on the Trail of Tears. It wasn't until the Western

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Enlightenment that a stage of Growing Up (the "worldcentric" or "universal care" stage) emerged that saw slavery as truly evil and, more importantly, actually did something about it. The Western Enlightenment, in Growing-Up terms, marked the first major collective emergence of the worldcentric stages from the previous ethnocentric stages, an emergence that also brought with it the rise of rationality to replace mythic-literal modes of cognition—which therefore saw the rise of the modern rational sciences of physics, chemistry, biology, geology, as well as changes in theological understanding.

The worldcentric stage—which is Geber's' "rational" stage and Gilligan's "universal care"—didn't treat one group as superior or better than another (including those who were "saved" versus those who were "damned"), but attempted to treat all humans fairly regardless of race, color, sex, or creed. Where the major Great Religions had introduced powerful pockets of Waking Up, Waking Up in itself is independent of Growing Up, and thus having a Waking-Up experience was not enough to make the Great Religions condemn and remove slavery. But the emergence of the worldcentric stage (in the relative realm) during the Western Enlightenment was a higher stage of Growing Up that strenuously objected to slavery (although notice, the Western Enlightenment was not marked by any increase in Waking Up—in fact, Waking Up tended to drop off considerably, which is also another story in itself, and one that helped downgrade the trust in Guru Yoga and virtually any other system of spiritual Awakening—again, Waking Up and Growing Up are two *very* different things). But viewing slavery as deeply immoral, the worldcentric modern stage, during a roughly hundred-year period from 1770 to 1870, outlawed slavery *in every single rational-industrial country on the planet*—the first time anything like that had ever happened in humankind's entire history (despite the emergence of all sorts of Waking-Up experiences that had occurred).

The ethnocentric-laced origins of the Great Religions also show a great deal of sexism, aka the patriarchy. This lingers to this day in many of them, even those practicing genuine forms of Waking Up. One Theravada Buddhist teacher, respected for a deep degree of Enlightenment, was asked if Buddhism was sexist, and he replied, "Not at all. After all, a woman can always be reborn as a man."

The point is that indeed Growing Up and Waking Up are two deeply independent pathways, which cover respectively relative truth and ultimate Truth (but both of which are now categorically important due to nonduality). Growing Up traces the developmental process as it moves through the relative realm of the conventional and relative self, with each stage becoming more and more relatively whole, more conscious, more inclusive, and more capable of positive emotions. Waking Up, on the other hand, traces the developmental process as it moves toward ultimate Truth, or the discovery of the True Self and Supreme Identity with Awakening or Self-Realization. And what research has continued to show is that those two pathways are indeed fundamentally independent—you can be at any stage of Growing Up and have a full-fledged Waking-Up or satori experience. In fact, several studies have taken well-respected spiritual teachers, known for their significant Awakening, and subjected them to standard tests measuring the growth of various multiple intelligences (in the relative realm), and overall these Awakened teachers performed no higher on all these tests than the average person did. (In other words, Waking Up does not in itself increase Growing Up.)

So you can have a Waking-Up experience at virtually any stage of Growing Up. And this is something no religion anywhere will tell you—because none of them know this truth. Every person is always experiencing some degree of both of those dimensions (from very low to very high), but the degree of achievement in each is independent of the degree in the other.

Yet a further and very important point—and this cannot be emphasized enough—is that whenever a person has a Waking-Up experience, that experience *will be interpreted according to the stage of Growing Up the person is at*. This fact has a staggering impact on every spiritual system of Waking Up anywhere in the world.

Even if, during the actual time period that a person is experiencing a Waking Up, they are completely beyond thinking, as soon as they come out of that experience, they will start to explain it to themselves, they will use the mind to make sense of what happened—and as soon as they do that in any way, they are using the relative mind to interpret the experience, and *that relative mind in all cases is a multiple intelligence that grows and develops through the major stages of Growing Up*.

This is what makes the discovery of these Growing-Up stages so stunningly important for any sort of Waking-Up spirituality. God is an ultimate, how we think about God is a relative; and although that ultimate Realm (of Waking Up) is timeless, boundless, and unchanging, that relative realm (of Growing Up) evolves over time, it develops through succinct stages of values and worldviews, each of which have massively different characteristics that have developed and evolved through time (and continue to actively evolve to this day)—and how we interpret that Waking Up depends almost entirely on our stage of Growing Up.

This was empirically demonstrated by the work of James Fowler, who studied people's spiritual interpretations, and found in virtually all cases that those grow and develop through major levels. (These are the stages or levels of the multiple intelligence known as "spiritual intelligence." Spiritual intelligence refers to how one interprets one's spiritual reality—and that interpretation, using mental terms and concepts, is a relative truth that unfolds through Growing Up in six to eight major qualitative stages. As such, spiritual intelligence is completely different

from an actual spiritual experience of Waking Up in ultimate Truth. The latter is an immediate, nonverbal, and nonconceptual *direct experience*; the former is a conceptual, mental, verbal *interpretation* of that experience and other spiritual realities.) Spiritual *intelligence* represents relative truth; spiritual *experience* represents ultimate Truth. And where ultimate Truth is indeed boundless, changeless, timeless, relative truth grows and evolves and develops in time through discrete stages of evolution.

So, not surprisingly, Fowler's research also found that people interpret their spiritual environment (or what they consider to be of "ultimate concern") in ways that reflect indeed the stages of Growing Up through which all multiple intelligences develop—and thus Fowler's stages are quite similar to Gebser's stages, which, as we recall, are: archaic, magic, mythic, rational, pluralistic, and integral.

Thus, a Christian at the magic stage, for example, will be attracted to the New Testament because of all the magic and miracles that Christ displays—healing the sick, walking on water, curing the lame, flying through air, rising from the dead, and so on. They think that if they believe with sufficient faith they will magically get that new job, get the girl, get the new car, and so on—they will be magically rewarded for their faith. If Buddhist, they will repeat a mantra in order to magically get things in the relative realm for themselves (i.e., they are egocentric). At the mythic (or what Fowler called the "mythic-literal") stage, the person will believe that every word in the Bible is literally true and is the absolute and unerring word of God, and that the Bible represents the one and only true religion in the entire world, with all other believers bound for eternal hell—this is a shift upward from an egocentric stage to an ethnocentric stage: not just me, but my special group, is saved for all eternity (while everybody else is still damned to hell). Somebody at the next-higher stage, the rational (or beginning worldcentric) stage, will be

attracted to all the moral (and very rational) principles in the New Testament, including the Sermon on the Mount. Or, at this rational stage, they might rationally look at all of it and decide none of it makes any sense and become an atheist. It is important to note that an atheist who decides to be an atheist for rational reasons is still at this stage of rational spiritual intelligence. A pluralistic-stage believer will not be as strictly rational but will be more "relativistic" and "multicultural"—seeing Christ as one authentic world teacher among many other authentic world teachers—after all, who are we to judge that somebody is better? (This standard postmodern "anti-judgmental" and "egalitarian" value flourishes at this stage.) They will be attracted to all of the "deconstructive" aspects of Christ's teachings, such as the weak inheriting the world (a fine example of "inverting hierarchies"), and they will particularly try to express the *social justice* they see in Christ's teachings (and Buddhists at this stage are actually called "social Buddhists" or "social-justice Buddhists"). Notice that both the rational and the pluralistic stages are "worldcentric," as they have moved from an ethnocentric stage that believes Christianity and only Christianity can provide a real salvation (with everybody else being totally damned) to a stage of *universal care* where all humans—regardless of race, color, sex, or religious creed—have equal access to genuine liberation. An integral-stage approach is aware of all of those perspectives and takes all of them into account, realizing that people at different stages will necessarily see and interpret the world—and Spirit—quite differently.

Comment [P4]:

The point is that there wasn't just one Sermon on the Mount—there were six of them. Each person at a different stage actually heard a truly different message, and they couldn't help but do so given the unavoidable nature of the mind's development—and thus all of those stages are real, although each higher stage is, in a sense, "more real." As Hegel put it, each stage is

adequate, each higher stage is more adequate. But the point is, they are all dramatically different—and this changes everything.

The same applies with full force to the whole notion of transmission. We'll return later to the idea of transmission, but for right now, simply note that a student can receive a transmission of spiritual energy—which is said to be the subtle energy that corresponds with an Awakened awareness, and an energy that the guru, it is claimed, can transmit directly to the student, facilitating a Waking Up of the same Awakened awareness in the student—but if that is so, notice that this transmission has no effect on the stage of Growing Up the student is at. If the student is at egocentric or ethnocentric or worldcentric or integral stages of development before transmission, they will be at exactly the same stage after transmission. This can even be a damaging and dangerous situation, because the fact that the Waking-Up traditions have little understanding of the Growing-Up stages means that a guru can transmit a spiritual Awakening energy to a student at even the lowest stages of Growing Up—at egocentric or ethnocentric stages—and what that will do is energize those stages without fundamentally changing them. The result is then, for example, a strongly ethnocentric mystical state that truly thinks its prejudices and bigotries are coming straight from God and are totally endorsed by absolute Spirit. Historical texts make very clear, for instance, that many of the Crusaders—both Christian and Muslim alike—had very profound mystical Waking-Up experiences, and—because those deep spiritual experiences were interpreted by ethnocentric stages of Growing Up—they were simply convinced that their Tradition, and their Tradition alone, had the one and only true God, and the other side was nothing but infidels, heathens, and apostates, who, if they could not be converted, were only to be tortured and summarily murdered. It's no accident that many of Hitler's inner circle (e.g., Himmler) were deeply interested in Waking-Up practices and esoteric

blood-and-soil mysticism. And it's no accident that many cultic movements today typically involve a mystical Waking-Up core experience surrounded by many numerous, relative, ethnocentric beliefs about their own unique superiority and their sole capacity to deliver ultimate Truth.

In fact, what we call a "cult" is exactly a group organized at the ethnocentric stages of its own Growing Up, where a single special group is thought to be superior to all others, and the leader of that group is given an utterly supreme status. The status of the cult leader is especially disturbing, because they are invariably taken to be God (or extremely God-like), and yet this doesn't mean just in ultimate Truth, where all beings are equally one with God, but is also taken to be true in relative truth, which simply elevates their finite personhood to an infinitely exalted status and makes the guru "can do no wrong" a deeply problematic falsehood (and in worse cases it leads directly to things like Jim Jones, where hundreds of people were killed by voluntarily taking cyanide-laced Kool-Aid at the directions of their finite God-King).

What all of this means is that if a person goes to a guru and begins study, that guru might be quite Enlightened or have had a profound Waking Up, but at the same time they might also be at virtually any stage of Growing Up. The profound problem here is that, if the guru is believed to "never be wrong," and yet they are operating from a low level of Growing Up, the students are going to be forced to accept for ultimate reality items that are in fact deep pathologies. The major point here is simply that gone are the days where a genuine Waking Up was all that you needed in order to be authentically and fully self-realized. Waking Up itself is no longer nearly enough. Yet most of the authority of the guru—and especially the whole issue of "infallibility"—rests deeply on the idea that Waking Up itself is indeed enough. When the guru has an Enlightenment or Waking-Up experience that you don't, and you choose to turn your autonomy over to the guru

in order to get this Waking Up, you are giving the guru control over the areas of your life that include those that the guru knows absolutely nothing about and, indeed, may actually be pathologically or dysfunctionally adapted to themselves. The genuine disaster here is that you get not only the Enlightened part of the guru, you get the guru's sickness as well—and you can't tell the difference.

Part of the dignity of modernity and the differentiation of the value spheres is that we have discovered much about these pathways of relative development—we know what they are and how to accelerate them. Combining that information with the traditional knowledge of Waking Up gives us an unprecedented chance to create a truly integrated (Integral) approach to spiritual understanding, an approach that includes but transcends Traditional systems.

It's time that we treat gurus exactly the same way that we treat physics professors. Instead of having an infallible view about everything of importance, they have a truly reliable view only about the techniques, practices, methods, and means to help individuals Wake Up to their own truest Self and Supreme Identity. When it comes to relative reality and the relative world, those truths have to be discovered on their own—they can no longer be dismissed as part of the totally illusory world.

One item that a guru has traditionally been known for—that of transmitting a subtle energy to their students that accelerates the process of Waking Up—is still a capacity with which gurus can be expected to help, in my opinion. This transmission process is not as far out as it sounds. Human beings in general are always transmitting their fundamental energetic state. If you are around somebody who is joyously happy, you tend to feel that happiness, too. If they are radiating a deep peace, you'll tend to feel that. Likewise, if you are around somebody who is profoundly depressed, you will tend to feel sad as well. As you grow and develop in the path of

Waking Up, and you attain higher and higher states of consciousness, you will to some degree transmit those states, and the people around you will notice them. Many schools of Guru Yoga actually have practices where you can learn to intensify this transmission effect and control it to a significant degree. Known by names such as *shaktipat* ("the transmission of shakti or subtle energy"), gurus are often known for the power of shaktipat that they demonstrate. Whatever we decide about that, it is something that I believe is real and would remain in the basket of things the guru can legitimately engage in—along with the already acknowledged other practices and exercises that can help students progress along the path of Waking Up.

As for the appropriate attitude to take toward the guru, if you have chosen that person to be your spiritual teacher, the appropriate attitude is no longer a special and unique ontological status but simply a functional status. That is, it's no longer appropriate to look at a guru as being some sort of unique, exceptional, elevated being who alone knows all the answers and who alone is God. When it comes to relaxing the egoic self-contraction into a oneness with the entire Ground of Being, it is entirely appropriate to look at the guru as being a perfect manifestation of that ultimate Reality, as somebody who is deeply God-realized (assuming, of course, that in your opinion they indeed have had a genuine Waking Up, and this is why you have chosen them). But this is not an ontological status possessed by this guru alone; it is the ontological status of every sentient being in existence. But you can (and should) elevate the guru to an exalted status in a special way, but only on a *functional* basis. That is, the guru is indeed infinitely beyond your own present status; but the guru is representing a status that your own True Self fully possesses, and you will see the guru as specially possessing this status only until you realize your own, whereupon the guru returns to his or her actual status: an acknowledged honor of being one who has realized the ultimate Reality of their own being, which is a Reality possessed by all beings

but realized by few—and that in itself deserves enormous respect, exactly the same amount your own realization of this Reality deserves.