

Self-Realization, Self-Honesty, and Sacrifice of Suffering

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1. WHAT IS SELF-REALIZATION?

The purpose of human life is self-realization. You are here to realize yourself. Self-realization is reciprocal coevolution and mutual unfoldment of self-knowledge, self-generation, and self-radiation or self-giving. No matter how much wealth you may acquire, or no matter how much "worldly" success you may achieve, unless your life is lived in the context of this purpose, and in accord with this purpose, you will not find real freedom, happiness, and self-fulfillment in life. In truth, self-realization is the very spirit of cosmic evolution, and therefore, the essential spiritual destiny of the human soul.

The human race is the apex of natural cosmic evolution. It is also the beginning of a new kind of evolution, conscious and teleological-teleonomical evolution. Other creatures exist as the final product of long lines of natural evolution, and do not, and cannot, become more evolved in one lifetime. Human beings, on the other hand, within the span of one lifetime, can, through conscious effort, become more evolved. Every human being comes into existence not only as the latest product of a line of natural evolution but also as a possibility of a new kind of evolution, and of a new kind of human race.

Self-realization for a human being is thus not an already-done deal, but a possibility of a new mode of evolution. And this possible new evolution is what is called transformation, which is the process of conscious and teleological-teleonomical self-realization through self-transcendence. It is only in the context of transformation that authentic self-realization is possible. And it is only in the process of transformation that you can find real freedom, happiness, and fulfillment.

Humanity at large does not know that self-realization does not occur "naturally," that the self to be realized is not given on its own accord by the mere fact of being born or living, or that self-realization requires conscious effort, commitment, and discipline. The self that most people "think" they know and possess is nothing but a constellation of floating identities clustered together by the sheer randomness of life, programmed into their mind in the process of enculturation and acculturation. They do not possess a single atemporal "I" or Self; on the contrary, they are possessed by a constellation of randomly clustered floating identities socially programmed.

The self, which you consider to be yourself, is thus in reality a constellation of floating identities that are clustered together as a result of your blind identifications with thoughts and events that have come your way throughout your life—seemingly randomly or accidentally. All your life you have identified yourself with some thoughts or feelings or events ("I am that I am smart or stupid." "I am that I am afraid of X or Y." "I am that I was born in Japan or America."). And those with which you have identified (the sentences after "that" as in "that I am smart or stupid") have become your identities. You exist as that with which you have identified. Your identifications have become your identities. And your identities are floating because they are not rooted in your real self, nor based on your authentic self-knowledge. In your spiritual blindness, you have identified with those that are not you by the very nature of them being identified by you.

Inner freedom arises when you really see all this and cease to identify with anything that is not you. Total inner freedom is the cessation (i.e., nirvana) of identification, the whole structure and process of identifying as such. Because you identify with nothing, you are everything. This is freedom, the first and last freedom,

independent of any external circumstances or conditions — total and absolute. No freedom is possible for a constellation of floating identities. Freedom is attainable only through genuine self-knowledge.

The process of further evolution begins when you understand this, and make the commitment to your transformation. You then enter the path of self-realization, which is the ascending spiral of self-knowledge, self-generation, and self-giving. Self-realization is the evolutionary unfolding of a singular yet whole atemporal self through the unfoldment of self-knowledge. It is through self-knowledge that you come to be, and it is when you come to be that your life comes to be real and fulfilling. Without self-knowledge, your life lacks the very soul that lives. Without self-knowledge, life only happens to you, and everything in life is only thought and done to you — without you ever being there to live, to think, or to act.

Most people are not ready for self-knowledge or self-realization, though they say they are, precisely because they are not aware that they do not know who they are, that they do not possess a single atemporal self, or that there is a possibility of further evolution for themselves. They "think" that they know who they are. They "think" that self-evolution can be achieved by merely accumulating information in the form of beliefs. They are kosmically ignorant not only of themselves, but also of their own self-ignorance. In Buddhism, this ignorance of self-ignorance is called, in Japanese, *mumyo* (no light), and is considered to be the root cause of all human suffering and mischief.

This ignorance of self-ignorance is the original, endarkened, human condition, the awareness of which is the first step towards authentic self-awakening and self-knowledge. This means that you enter the path of self-knowledge when you become aware of your own self-ignorance. There is no such thing as original sin, but only original ignorance, which is the ignorance of your own self. If there were any "sin" possible, it would be an act committed in self-ignorance. To enter the path of self-knowledge, and to live your life in the context of self-realization and transformation, is to live your life virtuously. In reality, you cannot grow the Tree of Life in the garden of your life without the Tree of Knowledge firmly rooted in the ground of your being.

There is an old alchemical law, which states: "In order to make gold, it is first of all necessary to have a certain quantity of gold, and if no gold is possessed, there is no means of making it." The whole of alchemy is an allegorical description of the science of human transformation from the state of "base metals" (self-ignorance) to the state of "precious gold" (self-realization). And, as the old alchemical law says, in order for there to be full self-realization ("making of gold"), there needs to be a certain degree of awareness or realization ("gold") of self-ignorance and of the possibility of self-realization already. Therefore, the question of self-realization or self-knowledge is essentially meaningless to those who do not have the needed awareness of their original self-ignorance and of the possibility of self-realization.

This means that before you can enter the path of self-knowledge, you must be qualified for it. And the qualifications to enter the path of self-knowledge are (1) the recognition that you do not really know who you are; (2) the commitment that you will achieve self-knowledge and self-realization; and (3) the willingness that you will do whatever it takes to accomplish this purpose. To enter the path of self-knowledge, you need to know yourself well enough to know that you do not know yourself, while seeing the possibility of self-realization for yourself. In short, you need to possess sufficient inner spiritual light to attain spiritual illumination.

When you are ready, the gate of the temple of self-knowledge, of self-realization, of transformation will open for you. It is our task as students of truth to make ourselves worthy of truth. This is in fact all that we can do. This is what it means to earn the right to enter the temple of the Inner Spirit. The truth, the true knowledge of your Self, is the gift that will be regiven to you in return for the effort that you give to the Kosmos in pursuit of authentic self-knowledge and kosmic truth.

2. SELF-HONESTY AND SACRIFICE OF SUFFERING

What does it mean to make ourselves ready to enter the inner temple of transformation? What does it mean to make ourselves worthy of truth? What is required of us to make ourselves thus ready and worthy? The answer is truthfulness in the sense of honesty. Honesty is the awareness and the acknowledgment of truth, specific and factual truth. To make ourselves ready to enter the inner temple of transformation, and worthy of truth, requires honesty, the kind of self-honesty that is much more demanding than that to which we are accustomed.

Whereas truthfulness in the sense of integrity is the principle of living in accord with the whole context of knowledge concerning integrated and universal truth, honesty is the principle of living in accord with the knowledge concerning specific and factual truth. While integrity is the principle of being true to your Self, honesty is the principle of being true to your own self.

We are each a constellation of illusory floating identities. A constellation of floating identities is not capable of integrity, but it is capable of honesty. For, while it does not have the Self with whom it can be in integrity, it does have the self or the selves with which it can be honest. This honesty is the place whence we start our inner journey of self-realization and self-transformation. The degree of honesty is the function of the degree of self-awareness and commitment to honesty. To enter the inner temple of transformation and the upward stream of evolution requires the highest possible degree of self-honesty. You need to be willing to look at and acknowledge everything about yourself. You need to actually look at and acknowledge everything about yourself.

Honesty, therefore, requires courage—courage to look at all that is you. Courage is the ability to face your fear — in this case, the fear of truth, or the fear of breaking or losing all of the illusions and delusions you have about yourself. To make yourself ready and worthy, courageously and honestly, you must cease to allow yourself the luxury of self-deceit, self-conceit, self-prevarication, or self-evasion. You must become poor in spirit, poor in the possession of illusion and delusion.

Therefore, the Bible says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." When you cease to allow yourself the luxury of self-deceit, self-conceit, self-prevarication, or self-evasion, your spirit will become poor and your heart pure, so that you will be able to enter the kingdom of heaven within, and see God within.

The great Japanese Zen master Dogen says, "To study the path of enlightenment is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be given Being by the Whole." This self-study requires self-honesty, and this self-honesty is the beginning of self-knowledge. When you purge yourself of self-deceit, self-conceit, self-prevarication, or self-evasion, you will discover that there is no "you" or no "self" beyond your illusion or delusion. You will forget "you" — the illusional or delusional self, and see God within, which is your true Self. Therefore, Dogen says, "To forget the self is to be given Being by the Whole."

The question is whether or not you are willing to be completely honest with yourself. This means whether or not you are willing to sacrifice your suffering. The great mystic and spiritual master George Gurdjieff says, "A man will renounce any pleasures you like but he will not give up his suffering. Man is made in such a way that he is never so much attached to anything as he is to his suffering."

Honesty, complete self-honesty, will mark the end of suffering; for suffering is the product and also the engine of self-illusion, which could not survive self-honesty. Your suffering, whatever it is, is the mechanism that anchors you in the world of illusory floating identities. You say to yourself and others that you want to be free

from suffering, yet in reality you cling with all your might to your suffering. This is the fundamental self-deception, or the existential self-racket, which self-honesty will make vanish by casting the light of consciousness upon it.

No one who is not free from suffering, who has not sacrificed one's suffering, can truly engage in the work of transformation. Transformation is not a release from suffering; it is an ever unfolding of Spiritual Joy. Enlightenment is not a release from darkness; it is an ever increasing of Spiritual Light. Therefore, to make yourself ready to enter the temple of transformation is to sacrifice your suffering for joy. And to make yourself worthy of truth is to learn to be completely honest with yourself—first with yourself and ultimately with your Self or God.

When you sacrifice your suffering for joy, and when you make the commitment to complete self-honesty, the gate of the temple of transformation will open for you, but not before. Therefore, rejoice in your life, and "to thine own self be true."