

How to Follow the Way of Undoing

Liberation is the best thing, as the moon is best among the stars.

— Jainism

Throughout history, saints, sages, and philosophers have all proclaimed, in their various ways, that “He who loses his life shall gain it.” That means, ego “death”—the Undoing of ego—is the essential requirement for entrance to the Life Divine. But unlike physical death, which comes to us unbidden, the conclusive defeat of your ego will *not* happen *to* you; it cannot. It’s necessarily a fully conscious process. You must be a moth that flies into the flame *voluntarily*.

Of course, from our mortal perspective, we view our ego—and even our ego-centrism—as our ultimate safety, as the vessel that carries us across the sea of life. We ignore the fact that no ego has *ever* provided *anyone* a truly safe passage through life. Ego life is full of struggle and suffering from beginning to end. And the inevitable difficulties of living are made *far* worse—not better—by the ego’s constant clinging to its survival concerns and fear mechanisms. Yet we *still* cling to that ship???

Most life strategies are designed to keep ego alive, and *prevent* its Undoing. How, then, do we come to welcome this supreme sacrifice—the “death” of everything we think we are?

First we must admit the fact that our ego ship is not seaworthy. After all, no one wants to stay on a ship that is destined to sink!

*Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck.
I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me.*

— Judaism

When you discover your ship is sinking and is beyond repair, your priorities dramatically change. You rush to board a trustworthy lifeboat, and happily abandon your once-beloved vessel. In spiritual life, three similar steps bring you to the point of fundamental conversion to the enlightened life, the Life Divine:

1. RECOGNIZE the eternally unsolvable problem of ego and the limitations of self-effort, in your own case.

2. EMBRACE the only *true* alternative to continuing to live as an ego: surrender of self to God and to His Grace.
3. ABANDON your ego-driven existence, and transfer your allegiance to a different, higher Way of living—making an uncompromising commitment to ego-transcendence.

STEP 1. RECOGNIZE the eternally unsolvable problem of ego and the limitations of self-effort, in your own case.

*I have seen everything that is done under the sun;
and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.*

— Judaism and Christianity

As ego-identified beings, we are ever inclined to do things “my way.” But so long as ego steers, our way is *not* God’s way. In fact, doing things “my way” keeps us separate from God and out of step with His will. True spiritual life flowers only when we’ve grown *thoroughly* disillusioned with doing things “my way.”

Anyone can see the problem represented by the egos of *other* people. But to live the Way of Undoing, you must see that *you* have the ego problem. You must see the futility of self-effort and self-orientation in your *own* case. You must become disillusioned with living for yourself in any way, every way. You must be thoroughly tired of living for your own self-survival, self-protection, self-direction, self-defense, self-improvement, personal benefit. You must see the complete *futility* of the entire egoic lifestyle. That is the *primary* requirement for spiritual rebirth.

Of course, no one can force that recognition. Often, decades of repetitive disappointment pass before our ego failure humbles us. Every time we hit a wall, we try to re-establish hope in some other equally flawed direction. We set out boldly in pursuit of a new consolation, another way around the mountain of Truth. No wonder it is said, “Hope springs eternal in the human breast.” Fortunately, that is not quite true: Hope springs only until we surrender. After that, Spirit realization outshines hope.

To be willing to be Undone, you must become *conclusively* disenchanted with yourself and all your hopes, your schemes—and even your fears. You must be disenchanted to the point where your ego doesn’t keep sprouting back with another of its hopeful but ill-fated plans. Meanwhile...

Notice that each time you regroup, your problems return. *See* that every hopeful new path, every improved strategy leads to an impasse. *See* that every time ego redirects, it secretly misdirects. It grasps at straws in vain. That is the ego's way; it can do no better. When you finally accept the fact of your ego's failure, you realize, "There is *no way* for me. And the *reason* there's no way for me is because of me. *Me* is what is going wrong with this life."

That's why it is truly said, "Enlightenment is a failure." Note, however, that enlightenment is a different *kind* of failure, a much deeper kind of failure, than the kind associated with ordinary depression and ordinary giving up. It is not just a *personal* failing, or the failure of a person to "succeed." It is a failure of *personhood* as we (mis)understand it. That complete and final failure is the only thing that can bring us to somehow release our white-knuckle attachment to what we consider to be *me*—our separate sense of self and our self-elaborated individual identity—and to trade in ego life for the Life Divine.

Each sincere seeker eventually grows to see the limitations of self-work—or of self *anything*, for that matter. The old ego-centered life becomes threadbare. You see that essentially, at the very core of everything you do, you have always been dedicated to your ego and to its survival, in spite of your best intentions to be a good and loving and giving person. You feel repulsed by the smallness and selfishness of that life. At last, you come to realize:

Life as I live it will not work, and CANNOT work. Life is not actually a project that was given to me to fulfill. Rather, it is a project that is given for ME—the ego I think of as ME—to be UNDONE.

Thus you become ready to abandon ship.

NOTE: Typically, ego tends to misuse the vision of its failure by turning it into ordinary depression—and that only makes things worse. You must be able to stay constructive while seeing the problem of egocentrism in your own personal life. You must be able to view the evidence against the ego from the perspective of the Higher Self, or Spirit, not from the ego's perspective. It is, in fact, a cosmic *relief* to the Spirit when you truly recognize the ego's failure, and turn to God.

**STEP 2. EMBRACE the only true alternative to continuing to live as an ego:
surrender of self to God and to Grace.**

*We who live in the world,
can overcome the world by thy grace alone.*

— Hinduism

Once you see the utter futility and eternal hopelessness of living an ego-directed life, how do you appropriately *adapt*? You surrender! You give up! Give up on what? You give up on *me*, the illusory self that you believe is you—the ego. How? Instead of relying on your ego and your own sovereign devices, you stop thinking, “I’m going to fix all this.” And you turn to God and to righteousness for the solutions.

True spiritual life begins only after you finally admit the futility of living as an ego, and you actually transfer your allegiance to a different, higher Way of living. That is the essence of spiritual conversion, a true rebirth.

*(How is giving up on the ego different than ordinary giving up?
See the endnotes for an explanation.)*

How can *we* liberate ourselves from selfishness? How can *we* provide our minds with enlightened, God-given thought? How can *we* Undo ourselves? We can’t do *any* of those things. We can *start* those jobs, perhaps, but we sure can’t *finish* them. When it comes to liberation, the *conclusive* steps are gifts from God. Therefore, ultimately, we must acknowledge our utter dependence on God’s part, and turn to God.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.
In all your ways acknowledge Him and
He will make straight your paths.*

— Judaism and Christianity

Liberation from ego certainly cannot be achieved by memorizing higher knowledge. Nor does it come from practicing spiritual techniques or following rote prescriptions of any kind. What is required for spiritual liberation/realization is to humbly admit,

“I can create the problem, but I can’t fix it. Only a higher DEDICATION combined with a higher POWER could liberate me from this mess that I’m in, that I KEEP CREATING for myself. I must give up on the ego, and turn to God in order to be healed.”

That heartfelt acknowledgement opens the door to true surrender—the kind that allows for liberation. True surrender provides release from the perils of excessive self-determination. To be free, we *must* surrender egotism. We *must* surrender our personal will to the Divine will. We *must* feel, “Thy will, not mine, be done.” Only true surrender liberates us from the limitations of ego and ego-styled human potential, and makes us a conduit for far greater potential—under Divine direction.

At the crossroads: the moment of Truth

Of course, for the ego, and for any individual identified with ego, it’s hard to believe in anything other than personal striving—“creature power.” That’s why it’s such a blessed opportunity when we’ve gotten to the end of the ego’s rope. At that moment of destitution and humiliation, we stand at a cosmic crossroads. We have a golden, Grace-given opportunity to turn our minds to higher thought. But what do we do? Do we hunger and thirst after righteousness—or do we just cry in our beer and cover our wounds with bandaids? We either bet our all on righteousness, or go back to a life consumed by avoiding personal pain and pursuing personal gain.

Compensation is one method of return to the old. When we recognize the terrible mess we’re in, we may feel an overwhelming desire to make ourselves feel better again—to salvage our failing self-esteem and pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. To keep from being too depressed, going crazy, or committing suicide, we grasp onto compensatory, feel-good beliefs: “I’m a good person. I know I’m not all bad. My intentions are good. God will forgive me.” The tendency to resort to such beliefs is so strong it’s almost a reflex. Unfortunately, compensatory thinking leads us right back into the same old trap, because it’s only the ego trying to save *itself*. Feel-good beliefs might help us feel a bit better for a little while, but they are *not* what we need, and they will *never* satisfy us. They’re compensatory, not liberating. In the long run, the usual effort to “save the day” or “restore hope” is completely in vain, and even misleading. The truth is, the ego simply cannot be saved, much less save itself. Ego life cannot be resurrected—only *replaced*. Take refuge in God’s Grace and God’s law instead.

In the moment of Truth, when you’re at the end of your ego’s rope, don’t cut yourself some more slack. Just *be* at the end of your rope. Hang the ego, then

walk away from it. Walk away from all its compensatory, superficial, feel-good beliefs. Resist the temptation to try to save the day and fend off the Truth at the last minute. Walk away from the ego. Don't look back.

If you don't try to recreate yourself, you find, to your delight, the true Self that *remains* (*without* your egoic efforts at self-creation). Indeed, it shines forth *because* such efforts have ceased. You *do* have a true Self, you know! And it's *not* the self-concept you reinforce by constantly trying to make yourself feel better about your situation. It's infinitely *better* than that! Your true Self is a wonderful masterpiece of God.

*(See endnotes to read more about
the true Self that remains when ego is Undone)*

STEP 3. ABANDON your ego-driven existence, and transfer your allegiance to a different, higher Way of living—making an uncompromising commitment to ego-transcendence.

*O Son of Man! If you love Me, turn away from yourself;
and if you seek My pleasure, regard not your own.*

— Bahai

Only God can cut the final chain that binds us to ego. And of course, God is always willing for us to be newly and completely free. He is always providing the means for our liberation.

God does not leave his child tied up overnight.

— Nigerian proverb

Yet, despite God's will, most of us remain ego-bound. That's because we humans also have our *own* free will—a will that God respects. Generally, we don't *want* to be free of ego. Even God can't Undo those who don't want to be Undone.

God's Grace moves in direct proportion to our demonstrated willingness to surrender ego. Grace cannot save us against our will; we must *choose* to be Undone. We must passionately *crave* that liberation, actively *pursue* it, and unreservedly *accept* it. *Then* God snips our tether, and we're free at last!

Beyond the compromises of “improvement” and “balance”

Commitment is always available as a choice, and you can make an uncompromising commitment any time. The notion of gradual improvement

toward the ideal is spiritually dangerous, because it reeks of compromise. The stepwise approach affords the ego the opportunity to make perilous compromises that perpetuate its rule. The truth is, we can't make a deal with the devil and expect to win!

When we cling to a stepwise approach, we're still seeking some sort of middle ground—a "right balance" between opposing forces within. It can't be found! The lesson of experience has shown that right balance can *never* be found. Eventually we come to realize that, despite our best efforts to balance our egoic needs/wants with our spiritual needs/wants, that way doesn't work. The ego isn't good at sharing. If you give it an inch, it takes a mile—and whether it takes an inch or a mile, it prevents the fulfillment of all your fondest and most deeply held spiritual aspirations. Therefore:

Though the Undoing of ego unfolds progressively, Undoing does not result from incremental improvements, making a series of little concessions to rightness, surrendering more and more little pieces of our lives to Truth. It results from absolute commitment, no less.

Why forfeit the pure and absolute joy that only Right living and unconflicted Being can afford? Be wholehearted instead!

Pure and uncompromised surrender

Compromise is hell on spiritual life. With the bad habit of compromise, we only perpetuate our egoic antagonism to Truth and Rightness. And we will certainly *not* be Undone while we are inwardly divided. Divided, we are fallen.

If you are to win the struggle with your ego, you must live a life of uncompromised, willing, and happy surrender. Some resistance is natural, even inevitable; but nevertheless, resistance is just another thing to renounce. Give up the limiting pattern of foot dragging and unsurrender. Throw yourself completely—body, mind, and heart—into doing the right thing, into being "perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." Do that always. Fashion your *entire* life into one continuous experience of joyful surrender.

Everyone knows, right living is *unselfish* living. You must necessarily live as a gift. Live for others, live for God. Overcome any tendency *not* to be a living sacrifice. But of course, to live unselfishly requires self-discipline.

The Life of Undoing is extremely deliberate. You must be fully intentional to walk this road. And you must take it on as an absolute discipline. No matter what mainstream preachers say, the Pearl of Great Price will never be inexpensive. Receiving God's gift depends upon our firm and undivided choice to *live* in the Spirit; no lesser price will ever secure freedom from imprisonment in ego. Entrapment in ego is self-created, self-perpetuating, and self-defended. So it takes a *strong* will to walk away from that.

O ye who believe! You have charge over your own souls.

— Islam

Even though the Divine Life is our God-given inheritance, people often underestimate how much personal responsibility is needed to claim it. Undoing is the *most* responsible process on earth! Indeed, the way of Undoing requires more responsibility than most people are willing to take. Few people are willing to exert control over their wayward mind. Few people are willing to abandon their self-protective patterns of living. Few people are willing to walk out of the tomb of egoic living, and expand into the truly spiritual realm of right living, the Life Divine. And yet, make no mistake: Only our responsible participation makes salvation possible. Our wholehearted adaptation to Truth is truly the essential contribution that we make to our own liberation.

*A person has the self as a friend
when he has conquered himself.*

— Hinduism

The Way of Undoing is a way of *life*, not a mere philosophy

Our hearts and souls constantly cry for release from suffering. And yet, to actually *be* fulfilled in spirit, we must embrace the path of liberation. We must *earn* our wings.

It's easy to be fed up with the life of ego. Even *ego* gets fed up with the suffering it creates! But you can be fed up with the ordinary way of living without escaping it. Indeed, most people are in exactly that fix.

Clearly, a lot of people feel disillusioned and disappointed with their lives—and deeply crave something better. But when, despite the misery of it, you *accept* a hum-drum life, or you allow yourself to be consumed by the difficulties resulting from the way you presently live, your soul urge for liberation remains on the back burner.

When do our spiritual urges move to the front burner? Only when we become committed enough to *live differently*. That's when true spiritual life really takes off—when we are actually trying to make our body/mind conform to what the indwelling spirit knows is true. That takes muscle. And it takes courage.

Willingness to live differently

To progress in the Way of Undoing, you must be willing not only to respect, consider, and believe higher principles, but also to make those principles the new basis for your own action. Your willingness to live differently is tested daily in spiritual life.

To truly open yourself to the Grace of Undoing, you must totally, willingly, and happily dedicate yourself to *living* a life of love and righteousness. With a glad and willing heart, set out on the road less traveled. *cultivate* a spirit of inner and outer surrender to the principles of Truth, and obedience to Divine direction. *Be ready* and *willing* to give up your body, mind, and experience—and not just in some abstract mystical sense. *Really* stop using your body/mind/experience as the basis for your decisions. *Really* stop making “I-me-mine” decisions—decisions made in reference to *my* survival, *my* comfort, *my* advantage, how everything affects *me*. Instead, steer entirely by the star of what is right and Godly, regardless of the implications for you, your popularity, etc.

It is worth noting that Undoing is not another example of “something I do for me.” Instead, it is something I do *despite* the person I (mis)understand myself to be! It's a way to escape from that, not to fix or fulfill it. Good comes only from turning away from that mess of hopelessness, and turning to righteousness *regardless* of gain or pain, credit or discredit.

On the Way of Undoing, your motivation *transcends* yourself. It's certainly not a mere reaction to pleasure or pain. It's not a quest for gain—not even *spiritual* gain, ultimately. Seeking often prevents finding—especially if the seeking orientation is selfish.

*Fulfill all your duties; action is better than inaction.
Even to maintain your body, Arjuna, you are obliged to act.
But it is selfish action that imprisons the world.
Act selflessly, without any thought of personal profit.*

— Hinduism

Ultimately, the Way of Undoing is not even a rebellion against the ego. It may seem to *begin* in such terms, but to *really* walk away from ego, you must simply ignore it. And you don't even want *credit* for doing that!

*People under delusion accumulate tainted merits
but do not tread the Path.
They are under the impression that to accumulate merits
and to tread the Path are one and the same thing.*
— Buddhism

The wise attitude is, “Pleasure pursuit and pain avoidance got me into this mess. So forget that! From now on, I’ll do what’s right *regardless* of pleasure or pain, credit or discredit.” You just leave ego behind, and simply walk right into the other world, the world of righteousness.

Let all your deeds be done for the sake of Heaven.
— Judaism

Choosing again and again

*Yes, there are two fundamental spirits, twins which are
renowned to be in conflict. Of these two spirits, the deceitful one
chose to bring to realization the worst things.
But the very virtuous spirit, who is clothed in the hardest stones,
chose the truth, and so shall mortals who shall satisfy
the Wise Lord continuously with true actions.*
— Zoroastrianism

When you set foot on the Way of Undoing, your choice for ego-transcendence might be strong, but since the ego position is still deeply entrenched, it will continually reassert itself. There’s no shame in that—it is natural, even inevitable. But as a consequence, the only way to maintain your true commitment is to *repeatedly* choose the spirit position, and leave behind the ego position, *over and over*—every time ego-orientation rears its ugly head. It’s like cutting down weeds every time they grow back, until they run out of the root power to sprout again. Eventually, negative tendencies fade.

*All movements under heaven
become uniform through perseverance.*
— Confucianism

The key to progress is choosing—and choosing consistently. Since the ego is always either pursuing pleasure or avoiding pain, when either of those tendencies arises, you often have chances to choose again *against* ego. Just choose to do what you know is right, *regardless* of your personal preferences. Choose to do right as often, and as well, as you can. God will do the rest.

Choice points throughout the day

Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

— Christianity

Thoroughness is next to Godliness, even though we might prefer more slack. But when it comes to slack, bear this in mind: It doesn't help to remove cancer from one part of your body if tumors remain in other parts. Similarly, a piecemeal approach to ego-transcendence *can't* work. You can defeat the ego *only* as a whole.

For example: You might decide to get up earlier in the morning, to overcome laziness. Wonderful—you've beaten the ego at sunrise! But remember, the rest of the day is still up for grabs. What if the ego wins even *half* the battles all day long? What if it wins a *quarter* of your votes in the way you live, the way you handle things, the way you think? True, every spiritual victory is a good thing, but what does it mean to win a few battles while losing the war? What if the ego lost the battle over your waking time, but still found a dozen other places to do its thing—and be fed, and reinforced? Time to redouble your resolve!

God is faithful,

*and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength,
but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape,
that you may be able to endure it.*

— Christianity

No one wins every battle, but *don't* take human imperfection as an excuse to concede to the ego, or to relax spiritual vigilance. It's absolutely impossible to beat the ego with the idea that you'll defeat it in one area at a time. To win this battle, you *must* fight on all fronts at once. You must be determined and willing to renounce ego in *all* its forms—inner and outer, subtle and gross, seemingly small and seemingly large.

We must consciously and deliberately work to transcend ego-identification in every form of which we are aware—in the spirit of happy, faithful surrender to God's Grace and direction. In all sincerity and honesty, we must do everything within our power to surrender egoic sovereignty. So, without hesitation or undue struggle, let go of all forms of selfishness and self-concern as they arise.

The meaning of “undue struggle.” If you owe a fellow money and he asks you to pay your debt, wouldn't it be wrong to balk at his request, to complain or procrastinate in giving him his due? Just so, we are in the wrong, spiritually, when we indulge in excessive resistance to doing something that we *know* is spiritually right and appropriate. Recognize the presence of ego in that kind of resistance. When you feel such hesitation arise, simply turn around once again and walk away from ego—*without* excessive concern.

Growing into the Life Divine

The greatest power for change on Earth, the switch that turns on Divine power, is the *willingness* of human beings to surrender to what is appropriate, and to the Divine impulse that flows if we let it. But until we can reliably hear the voice of inner Divine guidance, we really *can't* just “let go and let God.” So the first level of surrender—and this is something everyone can do—is to surrender the egoic tendency to live based on *whim* (including, for example, doing “what feels good” in any moment). Instead, follow good *guidelines*.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

— Judaism and Christianity

As the basis for action, take universally recognized moral principles, and apply those with feeling sensitivity in each circumstance. Commit to consistently *live* your life based upon Godly principles/precepts that *you* recognize as true. This is a beginning step of surrender, but a necessary one. It is an effective way to avoid the pitfalls of overly selfed action, and to refine spiritual rightness.

He who, even as a young student, applies himself to the doctrine of truth, brightens up this world like the moon set free from the clouds.

— Buddhism

Happily, as you perform high-principled actions, you will find that your mind slows down a bit, and you become increasingly receptive to inner Divine guidance. *eventually*, that leads to this:

*I just do as I am prompted to do
by some divine spirit standing in my heart.*

— Hinduism

Meanwhile, in the quest for perfection, perfection is neither expected nor required of the seeker. We're only obliged to live up to the standard we *know* we can meet. The true Way is this: In every moment in the Way of Undoing, we are to obey the "rules"—the principles of spiritual life—*as we understand them*. We move without delay or reluctance to our furthest horizon—the highest degree of responsibility and righteousness we can currently *conceive*. When we arrive there, we will see a new horizon, and a greater potential for surrender of ego. Upon seeing it, we will be obliged to move *there*. Soon after each step, God reveals the next. By this cooperative process, any sincere person *can* successfully follow the Way of Undoing. Without ever going farther than we can see, we can eventually reach our goal.

By Grace, you will surely adapt to the Life Divine if, to the best of your ability, you commit and submit yourself to God. In response to your dedication, effort, and sincerity, God will continually refine your understanding of right action, increase your endurance for the challenges and struggles of spiritual endeavor, and give you greater and greater space from the tyranny of ego.

*Thou dost show me the path of life; in Thy presence there is
fullness of joy, in Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.*

— Judaism and Christianity

Walking the walk

Faith without works is dead.

— Christianity

An ego-transcending life can never be a matter of merely accepting a dogma or practicing a technique; it is an all-consuming commitment. Similarly, an ego-transcending life requires no special circumstances, nor is it prevented by any circumstances. It can be expressed in anything and everything we do. So, in the Way of Undoing, we make and implement our choice for unselfed living in the context of our ordinary lives and activities. We bring our spiritual practice *fully* into our daily lives.

The true way is a *living* path. We cannot be Undone merely by thinking about it; surrender means nothing until we bring it into the level of action.

Nothing by empty talk is determined.

— Sikhism

We may deny that, but we can't *help* but feel it. In fact, the spiritual dissatisfaction that most people feel comes precisely from the pain of not

having made the body do the bidding of the spirit, at the manifest level of *action*. For example, you thought of what to say, but you didn't make your mouth say it. Or you thought of what to do, but you failed to walk across the floor and DO it. In such cases, the ego created a wall for the implementation of your spiritual impulse, and wouldn't let happen what *needed* to happen.

This we all know: The ego is strongly identified with the body. That's why it's a lot harder to *do* something that's loving than to *think of* doing it. And that's a very good reason why the Way of Undoing begins at the physical level—the level of action. A most effective way to start chopping ego down to size is to press the body into physical *service* of Truth.

*Without selfless service are no objectives fulfilled;
in service lies the purest action.*

— Sikhism

You can *think* about spiritual action all day long, but the moment you try to bring your intention into the level of action, you shake the ego's selfish purposes to the foundations. You are saying to the ego, "I'm going to take this body and use it for God's purpose, not yours." Will the ego resist? Of course!

That's why people get so scared when they actually try to do something—as opposed to think about it. But by the same token, whenever you adapt your physical activities to the ways of Truth, a spiritual victory is yours.

Often, we pretend not to notice how often we balk at the point of bodily implementation. We don't want to face how much we've let the ego keep our spiritual impulses and inspirations from manifestation. But in the Way of Undoing, we must *not allow* ego's body-identification to confine us to inaction or paralysis. The level of action must be surrendered.

Your soul longs to be free. Give it what it takes!

*He who shirks action does not attain freedom;
no one can gain perfection by abstaining from work.*

— Hinduism

Undoing in action

*Action springs not from thought,
but from a readiness for responsibility.*

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The rest of this section of the web site will detail how to live the Way of Undoing in the five major areas of human action: service, study, practical responsibility, relationship, and Divine connection. For those who would take to the path, each section will shed light on the question, “*How do I live this way?*”

Blessings upon you, dear reader! May you live to be Undone!

Endnote 1:
**The Difference Between Giving Up On the Ego,
and Ordinary Giving Up**

The ego and the spirit have very different ways of giving up. For example, exactly when ego gives up on love and loving, spirit gives up on being insufficiently loving for love to succeed.

Ordinary giving up is something the ego does; but only the spirit can give up on ego. Let us clearly describe what we mean by giving up on ego (or giving up on personal effort). But first, here's what we *don't* mean:

1. **We don't mean *give up hope*.** When the ego gives up, it gives up on everything constructive—particularly the higher processes and potentials of living. It gives up on beauty, faith, hope, and constructiveness. And that is a very foolish thing to do. That kind of giving up depresses the spirit, and effectively prevents the ego's Undoing—so naturally, the ego heartily recommends it.
2. **We don't mean *cultivate false hope*.** The ego has another way of dealing with the soul's affinity for beauty, faith, hope, etc. It holds them as “new,” “spiritual” goals—but in the old, selfish way. By selfishly clinging to spiritual-sounding aspirations, the ego fools you into believing that it is being ousted, when it is still very much in charge.
3. **We don't mean *become passive*.** Liberation is no mere “head trip;” it requires plenty of participation. We certainly have things we can and should do in the name of spiritual diligence. A true spiritual life is dynamic, active. At the same time, personal effort should not be isolated. Higher guidance is needed *along with* personal initiative.

What we *do* mean by giving up on ego is:

1. **Give up on rugged individualism—going it alone, without the benefit of surrender to Divine guidance.** Face the limitations of all personal efforts made under the spell of ego. God has a big part to play, too—and we can't possibly do His part.
2. **Give up on selfish living.** You must see, conclusively, that the real problem with creature power and personal effort is the selfishness at the root. And of course, you must see how that observation applies to you, personally.

Deeply acknowledge the cosmic error of being self-centered and self-directed. Selfishness is destructive, hurtful, hopeless, fruitless. It creates endless trouble and frustration. By presuming separation, difference, and conflict, selfishness *causes* most of our problems.

3. **Give up struggling *selfishly* for personal liberation.** You need to be very clear about this point. Undoing *depends* on self-forgetfulness. Self-centered effort precludes Undoing, since it reinforces the ego-*me* that needs to be left behind.

Endnote 2: The True or Higher Self

What *is* a human being? Surely, there's more to a human being than meets the eye.

Oddly enough, the self we normally identify with is a “virtual” person, a fabrication of our ego. In fact, most people remember assembling their virtual self as they grew up, by agonizing over decisions about how to look, how to act, who to “be,” what interests and activities to pursue, what friends to associate with. The purpose of fabricating a “virtual self” is to maximize our sense of attractiveness, safety, and power. But that has nothing to do with who we really are.

Occasionally, we get in touch with deeper levels of our being, and those are the parts that will remain when ego is Undone. Deeper and truer than the virtual “self” is the individual personality—the unique human being God made. Still deeper, we find the Spirit aspect of the human entity, the Higher Self. That Spirit is not limited to our personality. Our Higher Self exceeds the personality, and overlaps with God.

There can be no security based on the virtual person we identify as ourselves. How could there be? Any virtues it has are not really *our* virtues. *Real* security is only found in:

1. Authentically being the unique individual that God made.
2. Feeling your oneness with God and all other people in the Higher Self, the Spirit Essence.

The deeper the level you identify with, the more secure you feel. You can be *more* secure in your real self—the unique person God made you to be—than you can ever be in your ego persona. But you are *most* secure in your Higher Self, the spirit. We all *need* that very broad spirit base to be *most* secure.

The unique personality

When we talk about personality, we're talking about uniqueness, difference. Every individual—the human being God made—is a precious creation of God. A person's value stands beyond what we normally think about good qualities and bad qualities, strengths and weaknesses, personal foibles, and the like. Each person is indeed unique and special beyond words. It's always appropriate to both recognize and value that.

The Higher Self

Every unique personality being has value as such, but more than that, the Higher Self shines in everyone, with a radiance that exceeds the individual personality. In special moments, at least, we certainly recognize the Divine beauty of the Higher Self. About it, you could say, “This radiance is what I’m channeling, what I’m letting through me, from God.” But at the same time, you could also say, “This radiance is the part of me that *is* God.” Heresy? Not at all.

*I hear you singing, my soul,
but how can it be that God’s voice
has now become my own?*

— St. Francis of Assisi

Though every human being has a personality that is a marvelous piece of Divine handiwork, God has not limited us to that alone. So He says, “You get to be a part of the Big Mystery. You get to be a part of Me!” That part of us—that essence—is pure Spirit. It is not unique, but gloriously universal. Universal as in Unity. Universal as in, “We are one and the same.” Universal as in, “This is my body, this is my blood.” In flashes of higher consciousness, we *see*, and in our enlightenment, we *know*: “I am every man. I am one with all that lives.” This is our Higher Self.

At the LLF, for purposes of clarity, we refer to that Higher Self as the “Self-same Self.” The word “same” reflects that *our* Higher Self is not different from *other* Higher Selves. It indicates *the* Self—that spark we hold in common, that spark in which God holds us, and in which we hold one another.

Self-actualization and Self-Realization

When we are not identified with limiting ideas of ego, our real personhood—our personality as it was made to be by God—is *freed* (freed from ego’s illusory coverings, limitations and restrictions). Then, at last, we can express ourselves as we were made to be. We can express ourselves truly, genuinely, immediately.

*Life is art.
The whole life of man is Self-Expression.
The individual is an expression of God.
We suffer if we do not express ourselves.*

— Perfect Liberty Kyodan

When our authentic personhood is not twisted or covered or suppressed by all the ego’s constraints, we call that self-actualization.

Self-Realization extends beyond self-actualization. It includes the spiritual domain of the human being. Although most of us are not used to experiencing that glorious, ecstatic part of ourselves, it *is* the *reality* of our spiritual nature.

Peak experiences of enlightenment

We get in touch with our spiritual nature in those golden moments when our guard is down and we don't have our ordinary walls to cling to, when we can't figure it all out, and we don't have anything down pat. Perhaps we've all tasted that enlightened state from time to time. But most likely we didn't fully realize what it was, or what it's worth. And to complicate matters, we probably felt more than a little bit disoriented.

But, as they say, "You have to be disoriented in order to be *reoriented*." Do we *realize* that Divine disorientation—when all our "certainties" about who we are feel uprooted, spun around, and shaken up—is actually a Grace-given opportunity for transformation? Whenever we feel disoriented from our habitual viewpoint, enlightenment is indeed at hand. But to maintain that enlightened state, we must persist in it. At such times, if we decide we are tragically lost or "off center," we feel sudden fear, and we immediately try to "get ourselves back together." We hasten to retrieve what we have been relieved of, by Grace. In that case, all too soon, we get the old, illusory self back: "Ah, yes! This is who I am. I have regained my 'center.' Now I feel myself again." Alas—a golden opportunity lost!

In order to reap the positive potential of disorientation, we need to resist the tendency to regroup around the same old ego-orientation. We can remain free only if we can live without our old concepts and limits: "The birds have their nests, the foxes have their holes, but the Son of Man has no place to rest his head." Ah, freedom!

Enlightenment is beyond the personality. It is of Spirit. Enlightenment is a condition of wonder, a blissful state of Divine Ignorance: Your lower mind doesn't know who you are! In this world of manifestation, whatever you define or think you know will be less than what enlightenment *is*. So, the trick is, don't go back to defining everything—especially *yourself*! If you don't rebuild illusions of self, then the Ultimate Fact remains clear and obvious: You're One with God.