

SURRENDER

Alan Zundel at the HeartAwake Center, April 3rd 2007

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So, the question often comes up—I talk about this breaking out of the mind, breaking out of the self, this different state of consciousness—and the question comes up, ‘Well, how do you do that?’ It’s hard to explain how you do that, because the whole point is to get beyond the ‘you’ that’s trying to do things. It’s really giving up, surrendering. It’s a matter of surrender, surrender of the self.

How do you surrender? What does it mean to surrender? There’s an element of surrender in all the big religious traditions. In fact, ‘Islam’ means surrender, and in a lot of theistic traditions of course surrender to God is the idea, surrendering to God. In Eastern traditions, like Hinduism, it might be surrendering to God in some sense, or a more impersonal aspect of the greater reality. Or you have elements of Zen that come from Taoism, where you’re surrendering to the Tao, the Way, giving in, going along with it.

I don’t think it really matters what you call it, what you’re surrendering to, or whether your conception of your relationship to this to which you’re giving yourself over, whether it’s a personal relationship, as many people feel a relationship to God is or should be, or if it feels more impersonal. I think that has less to do with what you are surrendering to or who you are surrendering to, whether it feels personal or impersonal has more to do with your own bent of personality, and your expectations and what kind of concepts you’ve come to be comfortable with. In other words, some people feel very comfortable with the idea of a God that’s very personal and loving; for other people the concept of God may feel threatening, frightening even, or disturbing.

So, conceptually it doesn’t matter how you conceive of it or what you call it or how you relate to it. The important thing is the sense of surrender to this larger reality. And we’ve seen it come up, when I give these talks, over and over again, when I talk about surrendering—maybe I don’t use that word, but the idea is giving up, giving over, or something like this—there’s usually an objection, ‘well, does that mean you don’t do anything, you just sit there? This giving over your self—what is left?’ But this that you are surrendering to has *life* in it; *is* life, really—is the source of life, where all life comes from.

When we’re living out of the ego mind, it often seems like the world of human beings is driven by ego and that without that nothing would happen, that there would just be stagnation. But if you open your eyes and you look at nature, you see it’s constantly moving, growing, changing—evolving even. There’s no stagnation; there’s constant

movement. In giving yourself over to this life force that's behind all of reality, there will continue to be movement. There will be a movement that seems less effortful, or more effortless maybe is the term I want. *[laughs]* Not that you don't make efforts physically, or even mentally, but it feels like less of a resistance where your mind is drawn one way and another and you're not sure what you should be doing. You give over that.

Usually when people have been with the spiritual life for a little while, practicing meditation or some prayer form to come deeper into themselves, they get some sense of this source of life inside themselves, some sense of direction from within, right? The heart center that's giving you direction. You can think of it as though it's a chick within an egg. This quiet space within yourself, the heart center where your life derives from, is like the chick. And it's growing; it's growing as you sit on the egg to keep it warm. *[laughs]* Your meditation practice is sitting on the egg, creating the environment for it to be able to grow inside. And it grows for a time, and then it begins to peck at the shell; the shell is the self. It wants to break through. It's not sure what is beyond that, or how different life will be because this is all it's ever known, is being inside the shell. But it feels like it has to open up.

What does it mean to surrender that shell in the spiritual life? It means to give over yourself to this quiet space. To allow it to take over. To allow it to grow out between the cracks of your own sense of self. I mean that in your day to day life as you find yourself caught up in mind stuff—caught up in maybe an emotional state like anger or fear, irritation, resentment over something—you realize that, and you allow yourself to give that over to this quiet space, and let that life force within that quiet space take over and give you movement, rather than having that emotion control your mind and maintain that shell around your internal connection to the source.

Or when you're dwelling too much on the future, on your own plans and projects, and ideas about how things should be and where they should be going and how they should be happening, it means giving that over. Giving that over to that quiet space too; allowing that to take over, allowing it to settle those issues in your mind and say, 'Let go of it. Let go of it. Just be guided in the present moment by this life force, by this source, by God, by the Tao—whatever it is. Let it give you guidance. Set aside those plans; surrender them to it. Surrender your own ideas about the way things should be and let this take you somewhere.'

Now, that doesn't mean that it's bad to have plans and projects, it just means when you find your life is not going in the direction you thought it should, you give that over. Maybe you find a new direction, maybe you find a new way to fulfill those old plans, maybe you create new plans, but whatever it is you're giving it over to whatever is new coming out of this. When it's not going the way you thought it should, when it feels like it's stuck, like it's stagnant, like it's not quite getting where you expected, give it

over to that. Let that internal quiet space come. Open up to it. Let it give you the calmness that it's offering to you, and allow it to give you direction.

So this surrender, even though it's a surrender of the sense of self—in that the self is often composed of ideas about our projects and plans, and who we are and who we're supposed to be and who we're becoming, or our emotional states, or any of these things, and you find when these begin to feel constricting like a shell and you need to open up and break through it and you give over to that—it's still *you*, it's even a deeper part of yourself. The word 'self' becomes confusing here because there's the self that constricts like the eggshell and there's the self that's within that's like the chick, growing and coming out of the shell. The larger self, the big mind breaking through the little mind. The true self, breaking through the false self. The sense of God, breaking through the sense of a being with no connection to God. The sense of oneness with God moving through you. Or whatever you want to call it.

It's a surrender to something larger than yourself, it's not simply a surrender to nothingness—although it's even called 'nothingness' at times, meaning that you can't assign a name to it or attributes—you can't describe it, you just allow it to take over and move you and feel that sense of fulfillment in who you're becoming when you do that. That's what surrender means. And that's the only construction I can come up with at this stage to explain how you let go of the self. Of course there's things you do before you get to that stage, where you're trying to bring your life together and really create a sense of self has some control over your life, but once you arrive at that stage and you feel that something else has to happen, that's what it is. It's giving over to that internal self that wants to grow, that wants to experience life—life to the fullness.

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