CONFUSED THINKING

"Your vision will become clear when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks within, awakens."
- Carl Jung

This "blind leading the blind" thing would be funny if it weren't so tragic: it would be tragic were it not so damn funny. Somebody comes along saying they have 'achieved full enlightenment.' (Comically redundant expression, that; what other kind is there? Half full?) Now, how the hell can 99.9999999 percent (so to speak) of the population of characters wandering around here in the dream evaluate such a claim? How can they tell? But that question doesn't seem to occur to anybody. A remarkable number seem eager to believe the claim anyway.

If, as the masters have asserted, only a jnani can recognize a jnani; if only when realization has occurred can there be recognition of when realization has occurred; then
just about anyone can make the claim and get away with it – as long as they manage to avoid the .0000001 percent who know better. Which shouldn’t be difficult. And once there are enough of them, all those who make the claim can authorize and certify each other; and the radical one millionth of a percent in whom there is actually the seeing of What Is are marginalized as weirdos. Then you’ve got a self-contained self-perpetuating mainstream system going which is utterly phony and no different than any other activity in the dream, and which hardly anybody can tell is phony. The one millionth of a percent don’t care: it’s all a ridiculous dream! Why interfere with something that is working perfectly? But for the identified characters slogging along in the dream and caught in the suffering of trying to make some sense out of it, it’s really quite tragic.

Here’s the funny part. Imagine a conference where the world’s top experts on human sexuality are convened. One after another these doctors, and specialists in human behavior, and research psychologists, go to the podium to deliver scholarly lectures on the subject of orgasm. As the conference goes on, it might become obvious that none of these experts have actually experienced orgasm themselves: it’s all intellectual. ‘After long years of arduous research and many austerities I can now tell you that I have finally achieved full orgasm. And I can confirm what all the ancient texts have said: that the very essence of orgasm consists of getting red in the face and screaming, after which you become a perfect person and everybody thinks you’re wonderful.’

Huh? But wait: nobody in the audience has experienced orgasm either, so how would they know that the speakers are all hot air? After all, these specialists are presented as
the 'experts,' and another 'expert' has certified their expertness, and they certainly sound impressive, so... they must be right! So everybody asks questions and takes notes. And later they all sign up for the advanced seminar, in which it is promised that they too (for a few hundred dollars) can learn the disciplines necessary to get red in the face and scream; at which time they will enter the ranks of those who have been certified as having attained full orgasm and become perfect wonderful people.

Of the thousands in attendance at the conference, there are just two people in the back of the hall, with absolutely no scholarly qualifications at all, but with a different kind of knowing; who look at each other, laugh, and walk out.

There is a lot of confused thinking in this awakening business, and it would be helpful to make a distinction. Many spiritual seekers, and many spiritual teachers, talk about having had "an awakening experience." They have had a profound experience of Oneness, of meaning (or perhaps several such experiences); and as a result everything, including themselves, looks different and new. On the one hand, there perhaps is no better way to express this than to say that it's like waking up. There are no exclusive rights to the analogy anyway; it means what everybody does every morning when they wake up from sleep, so why not use the analogy to refer to a renewing experience?

On the other hand, this kind of waking up has nothing whatever to do with what is being talked about here as awakening. The very fact that it is referred to as "an awakening," or "a series of awakening experiences..." is a tip-off. One experience among many. The effects of such experiences may be brief or may last for a long time, sometimes
for years, before they fade. Then if you're lucky there will be another one. Such experiences are profound, and beautiful, and bring about change, and nothing is ever the same. They are very wonderful; indeed this is the most profound and most meaningful thing that a human being can experience. It is what is called mystical experience, and it brings with it mystical knowledge.

But it is still a dream experience by a dream character. What this kind of waking up is referring to is a dream character having an experience, in the dream, of waking up relative to their prior level of awareness in the dream. But anything that can happen to a dream character is still in the dream, is still a dream event. It is still part of 'everything,' the everything that is not. It is not what is being talked about here, is not what has been talked about by the sages, as awakening. This awakening talked about by the sages is not part of 'everything.' It is the end of everything. It is not an experience, and it is not knowledge. It is not an awakening, it is It. It is not relative, it is Absolute. It is All That Is. It is that the dream, including the dream character in which this occurs, is seen through, and as such ceases to exist; is seen to have never existed.

True awakening is the total annihilation of the sense of a separate self. How can it be total annihilation if it keeps happening every other weekend – or every third year? Sounds like there's something left to annihilate. Once the total annihilation of any sense of being a separate self has happened, who is there to totally annihilate, again? It does become obvious that what these teachers are talking about cannot be the same as what is being talked about here, as what is talked about by the masters as 'ultimate,' as 'final,' as 'complete.' 'Gone, completed, beyond.'
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You could say that this 'end of everything' is the end of the everything that is not; that's why when awakening occurs, it is said that nothing happens. There is no great experience in the dream, there is no great knowledge gained in the dream, there is no event at all, because all events are in the dream.

Those who are selling 'awakening lite' will tell you that something wonderful happens. A true teacher will tell you that nothing at all happens. There is the stepping out of what happens, the stepping out of the idea of one to whom things happen. This is the meaning of Wayne Liquorman's comment to the effect that if you want dramatic, beautiful, profound experiences, stay in the dream; once awakening happens, things get very ordinary.

Some teachers, such as Ramesh, get away from this confusion by using the language of awakening very little, if at all; by referring to the end of everything as 'the Understanding.' Of course that introduces its own set of potential confusions, as people think it has something to do with comprehending something, which it does not.

And of course all of this confusion is itself simply part of the perfect unfolding of totality in Consciousness.

Much of the misunderstanding seems to spring from an innocent underestimation. Reading the original accounts of total annihilation of self, most readers would, naturally enough, think that these accounts don't make much sense: after all, there's the 'enlightened master' continuing to live and teach and certainly look like a separate self. The modern critical sense is to distrust these accounts as fanciful hagiography or devotional embellishments, or
as somehow allegorical. After all, nobody knows anybody around now who appears to meet these descriptions. Hence the underestimation: awakening can't possibly be that rare, that strange.

In short, the accounts of awakening related by the masters just don't correspond with anything that is believed to be real and true, or valuable and helpful toward making the world a better and more enlightened place. And so, the accounts of what it is to realize the dream as dream are reinterpreted, in the light of what 'we know' – in the dream! This kind of thinking of course misses the whole point of what is trying to be conveyed, and is in itself just more dream.

In spiritual circles there is great value placed on personal growth, personal improvement, becoming a better person, becoming more aware, teaching others how to become better, making the world a better and more enlightened place. The hope for a better future, the belief in an upward spiritual evolution that carries the whole race with it, is like the belief that there is something wrong and something that needs to be done. It seems hard-wired into the human mechanism but is in fact the device by which the 'divine hypnosis' operates, keeping the dream characters motivated and occupied in the dream. This belief is an illusion, and it is what creates suffering.

In Truth, in the Absolute, in All That Is, there is no evolution, no progress, no becoming better, no becoming. All is as it is. The idea that the world is in bad shape and that the present point in history is pivotal and that something has to be done, is as old as the human mind; it has always seemed thus, at every point in 'human history.' In truth
everything is in perfect balance; the world never gets better and never gets worse, although to the apparent individual instruments it may seem that it does.

Teachers who draw on these recurring themes in the dream to appeal to the ego’s hopes and dreams and to popularize their message are deluding themselves and others and have not seen beyond the dream.

This belief in ongoing evolution, the dream of becoming a better person, the goal of improving oneself and others and society and making the world a better place: all these and more certainly seem to be noble beliefs and goals by any standards. Our cultures value them as ideals and it is believed that these high goals are what keep individuals and the human race from descending or regressing into chaos. And of course it is the ‘divine hypnosis’ itself that allows these beliefs, because without them the dream would not go on.

But as Buddhist teacher Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche has noted,

“Enlightenment is the great and final disappointment, the dissolution of all our egoic fantasies and grand hopes.”

This is true seeing, and it will never sell in the revival tents. What is being said here is not a politically correct message, or even a spiritually correct message. It is not a comforting message, and it will never in any culture be popular. It is only the truth, as near as can be told. All is as it is.
Perfect Brilliant Stillness

The ego seeks fulfillment, and if awakening is marketed as satisfying that need, then what is being offered is bogus. True awakening is awakening to the annihilation, the dissolution of that which seeks fulfillment.

"Transformative spirituality, authentic spirituality, is revolutionary. It does not legitimate the world, it breaks the world; it does not console the world, it shatters it. And it does not render the self content, it renders it undone." (Ken Wilber)

And of course, as you may perhaps intuit at this point, the wonderful aching beauty is that in this annihilation every longing, hunger and thirst that any mind/body apparatus ever felt is resolved and dissolved, perfected, healed and made forever irrelevant. The ego seeks fulfillment, but what is Understood in this annihilation is so huge that no mind, no ego, no heart could ever possibly hold it. The human race has no idea what fulfillment truly is.