



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

## “It’s Time for Enlightenment to Get Personal: Ken Wilber and Marc Gafni in Dialogue”

---

If enlightenment is everything it’s cracked up to be – the awakening that changes everything – then why aren’t more people buying it? While many spiritual teachers would answer by pointing to the trickiness of the egoic self, two spiritual and philosophical visionaries team up to offer a radical alternative.

Marc Gafni says, “What these spiritual teachers fail to point out is: people have this intuitive sense that they exist uniquely. I am a unique feature of the seamless coat of the universe, and the way that enlightenment is taught to them, basically they have to deny that intuition.”

At the beginning of this dialogue – part of the Ken Wilber / Marc Gafni Unique Self Dialogue series – Gafni and Wilber describe the critical importance of Unique Self (or a similar “personal plus” formula used by Ken) in reframing the conversation about enlightenment. By properly grasping the distinction between separateness and uniqueness, it becomes possible to transcend the limitations of both narcissistic Western individualism which is based on the separate self and the limitations of Eastern and evolutionary teachings, which are based on a fundamentally impersonal vision of the Self. The dialogue urges the bringing together of the Eastern and Western enlightenment traditions, states and structure stages in a ground breaking evolution of the enlightenment conversation through the Integral Unique Self synthesis.

Another critical topic of the dialogue is prayer. Marc and Ken discuss the ways in which contemplative and petitionary prayer may both be reclaimed at a higher level of integral consciousness. Marc shares the story of a non-dual realizer whose form of prayer is definitely not belief in a dogma, but a first-person experience of the non-dual realization of the divine in the second-person. Ken discusses “spooky” scientific evidence which is pointing to unexpected efficacy to petitionary prayer. Following this dialogue, it seems clear that prayer is being reclaimed as a enormously important spiritual practice



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

for practitioners on an integral enlightenment path, one which puts us in conversation with the Unique Self which is in Marc's words "the personal face of essence living in you, as you and through you", or as Ken says, "personal plus not personal minus".

[Dr. Marc Gafni](#) coined the term "Unique Self" in his book *Soul Prints*, and has been working to develop the Unique Self teaching for over two decades. Ken and Marc collaborated intensely within the context of the original Integral Spiritual Center in evolving together the Unique Self conversation and unfolding this key new dimension of Integral theory. Marc's latest book, [Your Unique Self: The Radical Path to Personal Enlightenment](#), with a forward and afterword from Ken, fully unpacks the Integral Unique Self teaching. Your Unique Self just won the prestigious USA Best Book award in the Spirituality category. For a timeline of the Unique Self's development, see the [Unique Self Timeline](#).

## The Transcript

**Marc Gafni:** Enlightenment is the change that changes everything. You've actually awakened, you've blown your mind as it were, you've moved beyond at least the obsession with all the contractions that create so much brutality in the world. If that's true, let me phrase it in crass terms: if this product is so good, then why aren't people buying it? Do we need a better marketing firm, better branding, more lists? This is the great elixir of the perennial philosophy of all the great traditions. So why is it so singularly uninteresting to the masses of the West and Westernizing world ... well, all the enlightenment teachers say (which is true but partial) that it's the ego, the traps of the ego. It's hard to die to the separate self. All true answers, true but partial. These answers are all insufficient.

What they fail to point out is: people have this intuitive sense that I exist uniquely. I am a unique feature of the seamless coat of the universe, and the way that enlightenment is taught to them, basically they have to deny that intuition, that this intuition is the function of ego. What mystic philosopher Kook called the healthy spiritual intuition of the massages. It's a great phrase. They say, "No, I'm not giving up



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

my uniqueness. That's part of the core function of my dignity. I'm not denying my dignity." So they didn't have a move to make.

For the first time, World Spirituality based on Integral principles, the emergent of Unique Self, makes enlightenment an option for the world, the masses of people. It changes the game. You can actually begin to talk about enlightenment in a way which speaks to the correct spiritual intuition which both wants to move beyond the contraction and wants to affirm uniqueness. Once you get the distinction between states and structure-stages, and then between separateness and uniqueness which is built on the first distinction, you literally open up the single most important possible human understanding, revelation, fruit of the Eye of the Spirit, which heretofore has been blocked. I can't think of anything more exciting at this moment.

**Ken Wilber:** Yeah. And part of the difficulty is that, as you said earlier, one of the common tenets of the world's traditions is that there are two selves. And there is a subtle distinction and it's a hard distinction to keep operative, it's a hard distinction to keep in practice – the distinction between the small self, the separate self, the self-contraction, and the big Self, the True Self, the Unique Self. You can see this in things like Ramana Maharshi using the phrase I-I. The first I is the small self. We tell people to be aware of yourself. Notice yourself. Be aware of yourself. When you do this, notice that there are two selves. There is the self you're aware of, what you can see, you're this, you're that, you feel this way, you feel that way, you're so tall, you weigh so much, you do this job, etc., and there's the observing self. The observing self is the True Self, the real self, the self you are trying to get in touch with. But unfortunately what you constantly do is transfer that observing self and its essence to your small, finite, individual, itty-bitty self. And that is the fundamental confusion of non-enlightenment. And yet Yes in a sense they are close. Because they are both awareness. And if you just sort of casually look within and don't use discriminating awareness then you're not going to tease them apart. But to notice I-I is to be ensconced in the I that is the True Self that has the perspective on the small self and everything else that is arising. So distinguishing those can be tough. In some cases it's easier to just toss it and not follow through on



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

that. It's also to deny in a sense the unique or even in some sense the "personal plus" components of the real self. It's self-contradictory. One of the ways that the real Self in many traditions is known is by the simple unchanging experience of I AM-ness.

That I AM-ness is a very deep I AM-ness. It's not I AM this or I AM that. It is just pure I AM-ness. That pure I-AMness is the one unchanging experience that every person has. You can't remember what you were doing probably two weeks ago at this time, but one thing you know was there's was that sense of I AM-ness. And it was the same sense that you have right now. And so when people are asked to deny that any part of I AM-ness is part of enlightenment, they are asked to deny that part of the real Self that shows up as I AM-ness, and they know better than that. They are being asked to give up something that is the only constant experience in their life, an experience that goes all the way back to when they were born; in fact, back before they were born. Before Abraham was, I AM. And that I AM-ness is simply another name for God. It's another name for the True, i.e., Unique Self. It was there prior to the Big Bang. It will be there after the end of the universe. It doesn't enter the stream of time. It is literally the unborn and the undying.

But it's there for anybody who wants to know it. You are aware of I-AM-ness? Welcome home. Welcome to God. Welcome to Spirit. Coming along and say, deny that, that just won't work. You can't deny Spirit. So what you can deny is the part that of I AM-ness that is "I am this" or "I am that"; that is the separate self, that is self-contraction. That's what you want to transcend. But you can't gut it all. Because the fundamental is-ness of I AM-ness is Spirit. You cannot deny Spirit without contradiction... Once you set off down that path, attempting to deny I AM-ness, it's an endless contradictory adventure. It simply confuses the issue enormously whereas realizing that becoming more and more in touch with the very core of I AM-ness is becoming more and more in touch with the core of the Unique Self which is one with the divine. At least it isn't self-contradictory and impossible.

**Marc Gafni:** It's a step in the right direction.



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

**Ken Wilber:** It's a step in the right direction.

**Marc Gafni:** Basically there are two denials. (If we frame it that way.) Both are propagated with enormous force in the world. Both run counter to reality or to real-ness as it were, and both run into a brick wall. One is the denial of Spirit, denial of depth, denial of I AM-ness, denial of True Self, the kind of Western materialistic, reductionist view that took hold so strongly. Someone like Freud who was still intoxicated with this view... He did incredible intellectual callisthenic contortions in order to account for it. You look at it and say: "Really?" That's one sort of denial.

Another sort of denial exists in the mystical traditions, whether it's a moment in Hasidism, or it's a moment in Mahayana, which is not fully integrating its own truths on both sides. You have texts that are more fully integrative their full implicit truths and those that aren't. It's denial of uniqueness. It's denial of individuality, but not at the level of separate self, of the contraction, or the distortion, but individuality at the level of your unique perspective, which is an irreducible feature of essence. Both of these denials produce enormous confusion, each of them in one huge swath of humanity. That confusion results in incredible pain, from pain of course comes fear, from fear comes violence, and the entire cycle of *samsara*.

And so the introduction of Unique Self – again, we're not talking a casual series of dialogue that Wilber and Gafni did ... it's not Integral Spiritual Experience and finding a nice topic ... and aren't we glad we did with our friend Sean Esbjorn Hargens a wonderful academic journal {JITP 6:1} on Unique Self ... it's not about a couple of academic books. {Unique Self and Non Dual Humanism two volumes Integral Publishers, forthcoming}- it is not even about our new book *Your Unique Self, The Radical Path to Personal Enlightenment*, rather all of that is about a shift emergent from World Spirituality Integral principles, emergent from Integral Spiritual Center, a shift in the very source code of understanding reality. It's an evolution of reality and enlightenment itself. Maybe to add one more piece to our 101, and turn it back to you, Mega-K, which is the personal and the impersonal. We flirted with this in a number of comments today. I want to try to explicate it and then turn it over to you.



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

The second confusion that you see in the literature ancient, modern, and postmodern is confusion in relationship to the personal. In virtually all writing – and I say this not casually with my teacher self but with my scholar self, with a lot of authority – in virtually all writing, there is a complete conflation of the word “personal” with personality, separate self, ego (not in the healthy Otto Kernberg “integrating principle” sense), but ego as separate self, personality, contraction. The personal is just identified and stuck there. In a recent book I read there were 137 references to the personal. Every single one of them dismissed the personal without exception and in the same book every one of them conflated separateness and uniqueness. It was a shocking example of this contemporary mistake.

When actually, if you step back, you realize the following: there are these two grand archetypes. There’s personal and impersonal. Personal man and impersonal man, if I can use that typology. Actually there are two out of three minimally if we map it. Level one: the level of the personality. It’s Gurdjieff’s shock of separation: entry into this world, fixation of attention, the styles we develop to cope with the pain of *samsara*, the distortions that result, that notion of personality, and the kind of incidental proclivities and flavors of personality in all of their poignancy, all of their frailty, and all their ephemeral nature. That’s personal personality level one. You need to move beyond that, to transcend that, to move beyond that to recognize all that is, of your True Self. That’s impersonal. That’s not personal in the sense of level one, personal. What then happens is that Your True Self awakens as Unique Self. And Unique Self is ultimately personal. It’s the personal face of essence which is your unique expression of essence which is by definition inexorably personal. Personal reappears at level three. I refer to it in three stages. You refer to it in early writing as “personal plus” and “personal minus.” It’s one of the places we met in early days.

When you look at personhood in this sense, you begin to kind of reclaim the personal and disambiguate this enormous confusion. It’s not intellectual confusion. It’s somatic emotional intellectual mind confusion in the mind of most of the people in most of the world studying some version of this distortion. The ability to reclaim the personal at a higher level of consciousness and not fall for this level one / level three [fallacy]. What you call pre-trans fallacy. (It’s a version of that.) It’s enormously



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

important... If I got off the call and say, “I spoke to Ken and wasn’t he impersonal?” I would not be saying something great. I would be saying ... was he not feeling well? I wouldn’t be saying “Ken is stuck ... in his personality today, stuck, in his personal warmth.” I would be saying that I felt his personal essence, expressed and refracted in the interpersonal space, because personal essence met personal essence. The ability to reclaim the personal at the higher level of consciousness is another critical Unique Self 101 movement to disambiguate the confusion and change the conversation.

**Ken Wilber:** Yeah, absolutely. That indeed is why I started talking about “personal plus.” There was such a confusion. The worst source of the confusion frankly coming from Theravadan Buddhism, which has been a disaster and got rid of the problem basically altogether by its doctrine of *anata*, which says that it is absolutely true that no entity has a self of any sort at all. So when you find Nagarjuna, the founder of Mahayana Buddhism. What he attacks is not Hinduism, which you would think as a good Buddhist he would attack. He spends most of his time attacking Theravadan. It’s really screwed up. You look at it in terms of the two truths. In relative truth, a separate self in a healthy Kohut fashion, is necessary and is as real, relatively real, as moment-to-moment dharmasar. Subject and object arise together and are equally real, relatively real, part of the relative realm. To say that *anata* applies to the relative realm is simply wrong. So now does *anata* apply to the absolute realm? That you can’t say – and this is where people don’t quite get all the way over the hump – it’s true you can’t say that in the absolute Emptiness in the strictest technical sense cannot be described as self, or having self, but nor can it be said not to have self. These are both two dualistic concepts. Absolute reality is neither self nor not-self, nor both nor neither.

So is *anata* absolutely true? No. It is false. In both relative and absolute truths, the Theravadan notion of *anata* is false. That has just screwed up, particularly in the West, the attempt to understand everything from self and its relationship to enlightenment; the notion of personal and its relation of enlightenment or any of those states. And of course the ultimate confusion goes back to not understanding structures and states. As Mahayana continued to grow and evolve, slowly as a metaphoric use of language, the



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

word “self” was moved back in to reality. So Zen talks about a True Self; the Nivata Sutra talks about Maha Atman, the Great Self. That is in essence what we’re talking about in the manifest realm as True Self. As soon as there is manifestation at all, the True Self immediately is a Unique Self, depending on the person in which it is housed. That’s a person plus, not a person minus. It shows up. It doesn’t suck the person out. It adds absolute reality to the perspective that that person has.

**Marc Gafni:** It changes the entire game. I remember in our very first meeting, 2002 or 2003. We were looking at an article. I had read two of your books at that stage. I think it was a local person in Boulder, a friend of yours, had sent you my *Tikkun* article “Prophets and Pagans.” (My levels of consciousness article.) I remember we met in this point on the personal. This distinction is so important, and it’s so lost, and it’s so confusing to people. What do you do when you’re desperately seeking to come home. You’re seeking God, enlightenment, essence. Whatever you call it, that’s personal. And you’re told that’s wrong. ... You’ve got this personal thing that’s equally real. It’s not abstract. You’re told you’re lost there. That’s at the egoic level. The failure to make that distinction creates confusion that is enormous. It’s rooted in Therevada, that’s one major root. I’ve said this to you several times. I’ll say it publicly. My most enjoyable footnote in *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* –

**Ken Wilber:** Footnote 1 to Chapter 14. I’ve got more comment on that footnote than anything.

**Marc Gafni:** I hate when you know your books better than I do. It’s an awesome footnote. I want to point to a second place where this personal issue gets confused. That’s the place where it occurs in the lineage, mystical traditions. But there’s also a place that might be called Hegelian, and then translated into Marxist/Leninist versions of evolutionary spirituality. It has many important wonderful positive aspects. Our friends are engaged in it in myriad ways... Aurobindo had this huge contribution. de Chardin. That’s a given. You and I have spoken to Andrew Cohen about the proto-evolutionary moment in Kabbalah. It’s not about the evolution of the biosphere. Everything is beautiful. Deep bow to the evolutionary moment. Evolution is. But the shadow is:





# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

here comes Hegel talking about the emergence of Absolute Spirit unfolding in a historical way. The problem is that the process defaces the personal. ... I'm not sure what Hegel's intention was (when I was about 20 I had my Hegel period of time and read Charles Taylor), but the way he was translated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century both by the Marxist-Leninists and by the National Socialists (a.k.a. Nazis) was a legitimate read of Hegel is that the process reigns. The process is the One True Reality.

What that does, of course, is rob consciousness of one of its great evolutions, the evolution into understanding the grow-up understanding of the dignity – and ultimately the individual dignity – of the individual. It defaces the personal. What we're trying to say here in Unique Self is that the impersonal process in Theravada or Hegel is beautiful, but then you have to move beyond it into the personal face of the process, to the unique expression of the process, which is irreducible, and therefore has irreducible dignity, the correct contribution of the liberal world. Its shadow was the narcissistic hyper-inflation of the ego itself. ... But the best intuition of Matthew Arnold and Thomas Carlyle, and all the great Western thinkers, which expresses itself powerfully in awakened Western mystics is the sense of the personal after the personal. "After" isn't the right word, it's linear. In the depths of the impersonal is perspective, the personal face of essence. You awaken as Unique Self, as the unique expression of the evolutionary imperative. Aurobindo's evolutionary imperative lives uniquely in you. That's the source of unique creativity. We desperately need to reclaim the personal on the other side of the impersonal ... in order to clarify both our own internal experience and ameliorate the pain caused by the inappropriate confusion between "personal minus" and "personal plus."

**Ken Wilber:** It's the only way that evolution can occur beyond the merely biological. The problem is that of course biological evolution occurs. And in my opinion, it can't quite occur the way the neo-Darwinian synthesis thinks it can. There are still too many little bitty problems with the notion of just mutation and random natural selection. It's just not enough to get us from dirt to Shakespeare. First of all, there's a force in the universe that is the opposite of randomness



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

and a lot of people like Stuart Kaufman and so on have speculated that that force is self-organization. Many traditional philosophers would identify it with something like Eros, the drive towards higher and higher unions. Take the immune system, which has so many parts to it that it couldn't have possibly evolved by checking each part out with natural selection because the thing only works as a whole and you're never going to get all those mutations happening all at once to make this massive leap into an immune system. So there's a force that's driving evolution, and certainly mutation and natural selection is a part of it, and so is Eros or Love or Creativity or whatever you want to call it is built into the cosmos. And so once in particular we move beyond biological evolution which almost everyone has acknowledged has stopped about 50,000 years ago. And yet if you look at culture and cultural evolution, how on earth is that happening? The force of that is personal choice. It has the individual personal choice in all four quadrants introduces options into the cosmos that get laid down as Kosmic grooves. They're passed on not through genes. Now that we have the genome done, we are alarmed that there are so few genes there are. We know that everything that arises can't be governed by mere genes. There is an enormously insufficient number of genes to account for hardly anything. It's a whole conscious choice occurring in persons. That's the mechanism by which evolution continues.

And if you look at the speed of evolution in cultural evolution and unfolding, it's staggering. We've gone from structures archaic to magic to mythic to rational to pluralistic ... in a mere 10,000 years ... which in biological and physiological evolutionary time is nothing. Yet it's huge in terms of the changes in the cosmic habits and the natural habits which we refer to as laws that have been brought into existence through personal. The whole point about making evolution, and having evolution not just of the fittest, but the evolution of the wisest, is that the person develops more and more depth. That is to say, the Unique Self increasingly becomes the chooser of options which gets laid down as evolutionary grooves. The more the Unique Self is in charge of evolution, the better off we all are. That's not a small issue to bring up.



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

**Marc Gafni:** It's not a small issue. It's the largest issue. Basically what you see is these two trajectories that are in parallel to each other that until this Unique Self conversation pretty much went completely unnoticed. One trajectory is the deepening of the personal. There's a doctorate about when the word "self" first came into the dictionary. In the Renaissance (which has a deep sense of Unique Self in many ways, it's pre-), there's an enormous deepening of the personal. My favorite book of yours is *Up From Eden*. In a long conversation with you I described it as an evangelical book in the best sense, carrying the good news. It carries the personal, first at the separate self level. There's an evolution of the personal which is quickening all the time, then there's the second trajectory, which is cultural evolution which is quickening all the time. In the past 20, 30 or 40 years, the pace is quickening. If we look ahead, it's shocking. Ray Kurzweil, what it might be, it's shocking. In our lifetime, we are seeing massive seismic changes. There are these two trajectories actually speeding up at the same time. It's not a coincidence. They are directly informing and animating each other. The increase of the personal and the deepening of the personal completely shifts and evolves evolution itself, in which case the conclusion we are drawing is that the essential engine of evolution itself is the Unique Self.

**Ken Wilber:** Yeah, absolutely. That's the leading edge. It's the only place where there's room for genuinely new cosmic habits to be laid down. We go back and we look at structures like red or magic or amber or mythic. Those are structures which have been repeated so many times, they're like the Grand Canyon. So deep. If it rains, water is going to end up flowing all the way down and flow along the river at the bottom. It's not going to stay on top or half way down. Water is going to follow that extraordinary groove in the surface. Yet right next to it if we're wanting to start with where the leading edge of culture is now: we're somewhere around turquoise or vision logic or whatever term one wants. That's a groove that's two or three feet deep. Not a mile deep. It's just being cut. It's the leading edge that can do the cutting. Because someone down at the bottom of the Grand Canyon – say, red – can't cut a new groove on top. They're going to have to follow what's already there. It's the frothy, chaotic leading edge of evolution in all four quadrants where new things get laid down, where new Kosmic habits or



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

laws start to come into being. The “leadingst edge” is the Unique Self. It is being laid down by individuals who have deeply realized I AM-ness and the uniqueness of the realization of that I AM-ness.

**Marc Gafni:** That’s why leading edge people are so distinguishable. They arouse enormous amount of adulation and ... because of their distinctness. They are extraordinarily personal. Not personal in their separate self sense. They may have their quirks on that level – aside from you and me, who have completely worked them out – it’s that personal creativity which is the engine of evolution. I’ve noticed this in a couple of thinkers who have gotten lost in the impersonal thing. The move they’ll make is they’ll unconsciously affirm choice. Choice is central. But choice is personal. That’s precisely the point. The notion that there’s a window of choice beyond determinism is precisely what we mean by the personal. Actually choice is in some sense a synonym of the personal. Choice is not an expression of the impersonal process, but the personal essence of the impersonal process, which is choosing, affirming that personal nature. This brings into the conversation the last piece of 101. After that, we’ll decide if we want to go on. It’s so important to 101. You’ll let me know if you want to go on...

Let’s bring up this personal notion which is the notion of YOU. The personal expression of the intelligence of the Kosmos. We talked about Eros, Love, Creativity. As you know, we reproduced and added some stuff to a core dialogue we did at the Future of Love dialogues, Evolutionary Love, which is an appendix in the Unique Self book [Your Unique Self, 2012]. It’s this notion of intelligence. Let me try to bring it in a roundabout way. People ask about prayer. I was sitting not that long ago with our colleague John Wellwood. About eight months ago. He said to me: Gafni, I’ve known Marianna for a long time. (He and Marianna, awesome mother of Zion, are good friends...) I’ve read some of your stuff. Gave me But how can you believe in prayer?, he asks How can an intelligent human being believe in prayer? I asked him what his thing was, and he said it was awareness. That’s a realization. His assumption is that prayer must be a dogma. So I told him that prayer is also a realization; prayer is an awakening to the



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

second-person face of the divine. And of course John is so smart he got what I meant in a second. Prayer= Second Person is not a dogma but a realization.

There's that story I shared with you almost a decade ago,- as we were original having the conversations that in part lead the a revaluation of the second face of god – and the emergent three faces of god Integral teaching – it was the story of a non-dual realizer. I do really looked at him as one of the key non-dual realizers in his hermeneutic book on Kabbalah. He starts to make a blessing. “Adonai, Blessed are You.” There's a long text after that but he can never get to it because he keeps fainting. Blessed are You, You, YOU, YOU! He keeps fainting in ecstasy. He's fainting in ecstasy not because he's fainting in dogma, but because he's having a first-person experience of the second-person personal intelligence of the cosmos. He's having the realization that Rumi had. That's where Rumi fell. Not God in the mythic membership sense. The awake, personal intelligence, sitting in that seat next to you as it were, all that incarnation which is holding you. Which doesn't mean that that 2<sup>nd</sup> person isn't also awake within you as You-Are-That. I AM lives in paradoxical creativity with being held by the divine.

Paradox is always the deepest revelation of reality. What Unique Self brings to the table is that uniqueness always implies relationship. Without uniqueness, if you're only in oneness, there is no relationship, it just is. The second you realize perspective, you create conversation, dialogue; perspective means relationship. The second I realize and awaken as Unique Self, and awaken as the personal face of essence, living in Me, as Me, and through me, then awakening to a personal intelligence, which is not a mythic god, not an ethnocentric, homophobic god, it's the awakened Unique Self of the Kosmos as it were which includes all unique selves. Prayer becomes not a mythic expression. Prayer is reclaimed if you will, an integral prayer if you will. It becomes an awakened living possibility again. Unique Self brings the personal on board at a higher level of consciousness. In turn it brings the personal face of divinity which lives paradoxically with the impersonal face of divinity. They're both two faces of the One. That's the last of the 101 that I wanted to put out to you. Back to you.



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

**Ken Wilber:** There are two kinds of prayers. Both of them are fine. But one is more open to egoic views shall we say. There's petitionary prayer and there's contemplative prayer. Petitionary prayer is Dear God please give me the new job. It was classically made fun of by Janis Joplin: *please God give me a Mercedes Benz. My friends all drive Porsche's, I must make amends...* That's not an elevated use of the I-Thou relationship. The other form of prayer, contemplative, has several different forms but it is essentially the heart-felt awakening of I AM-ness then expressing and finding divine love, divine happiness, and divine joy. And expressing gratitude, and all of these sort of higher emotions that you can do when you assume the second face of Spirit and take up an I/Thou relationship. Person is just being plus intelligence. The entire fucking universe is a being with intelligence. That's what 2<sup>nd</sup>-person experience is. I don't see how you can deny being plus intelligence. It's just resonating with that form of spirit. Of course that's not a dogma. That's a realization. The great thing about prayer is that unlike just worshipping third-person face of Spirit – let's say, marveling at the Grand Canyon and having that type of nature wonder and experience – and unlike mindfulness or first-person meditation, on first person meditation, ego can hide out In both of those. First and third person are easy places for ego to hide out. There's nothing fundamentally challenging it. But in second person you are fundamentally suffocating that which you recognize in some sense that which transcends your own separateness and separate self. There's no place to hide out. When you are truly consenting to the presence of the Lord, truly throwing yourself wide open to Spirit, then there's no place to hide. So it's a very powerful form of practice. Everyone's spiritual practice should be a mixture of first, second, and third person – certainly true of second person.

**Marc Gafni:** Completely received. Unique Self implies second person. Both in terms of relationship: for example, in the [Your Unique Self] book we talk about the Seven Laws of Unique Self Encounters. What's a Unique Self evolutionary encounter? It's when True Self, emergent self meet each other. The other is there at every level of consciousness so the personal face of being plus intelligence is the personhood of the universe, the quality of



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

personal which is the quality of the cosmos, not the distorted separate self personality. Paradoxically, Ken, even Eastern traditions which didn't have a formal doctrinal sense of the personal, and actually dismissed the personal, still have a lot of prostrations. It's paradoxical that you had this sense of surrender which might have appeared in fundamentalist garb, but the notion of surrender to the personal was always there.

**Ken Wilber:** Second person was a powerful realization.

**Marc Gafni:** The movement from dogma to realization is a powerful move. Get beyond the mythic arresting of prayer at a particular level of consciousness, and we need to liberate the second person from that limiting cultural space of amber. That's huge. I want to push the envelope a little more. This is something we've never discussed before. Let's go back to Mercedes Benz. I want to push the Mercedes Benz. First off, I would ask for a Lexus. Mercedes Benz was making these death machines. My mother would look at a Mercedes Benz, I grew up in an orthodox Jewish household, and she would spit. ... Blessings on that, and the infinite crazy pain of that. And... I want to talk about asking for personal needs for a second. I want to kind of invite bringing back online a second form of petitionary prayer, not its degraded form. In its degraded form, there are two expressions: "God, give me the Mercedes Benz." as you know. The other is the cheapened form of The Secret movie, manifest with your intention your new car. There's a New Age cheapened version. They're mirrors of each other. One is from the first person God can manifest your car, and the other is your second person God can manifest your car. Both are rooted in a degradation of a kind of profound intuition. There is also the realization that prayer in some sense affirms the dignity of personal need. Prayer affirms the dignity of the personal – the infinite dignity of personal need. There is a Yiddish expression which is to "ask for everything". What is meant is not that you're caught up in your narcissistic personality self. Human need has infinite value and dignity. When you actually turn to Source, and you ask, which in some sense is a self-conversation. You're asking the Self of the divine which lives in you, as you, and through you, ... it's also true that there's a cosmic being intelligence which is



# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

the process described in the evolutionary notion. The process is alive, personal, pulsating, and intelligent. It's far beyond via negative. You can't even talk about it as the level one personal, and turning or invoking that for the sake of my son's health. Being able to live my Unique Self in the world. Having enough funding for Center for World Spirituality, having enough funding for Integral Institute. Whatever it is. There's a way of doing this which is not degraded, but surrendered. It's saying: Spirit, move through me. Manifest in the ways that you can. I'm invoking you, invoking Me and that which is beyond Me, in that paradoxical panentheistic moment. So we can reclaim petitionary form in what we can call an evolved form of petitionary prayer.

**Ken Wilber:** Sure. It's like homicide. It all comes down to motivation. If one's motivation is fairly clean and fairly pure and benefits others as well as one's self. Of course, for one's self is fine, again, as long as it's not: give me the strength to wipe out that person kind of thing. Depending on motivation, it's totally fine. You don't want to just do nothing but petitionary prayer. That implies that the only self you are aware of is the small self, and that's rather what you're looking to get over. Not only is that kind of petitionary prayer okay, but there's a lot of spooky evidence that it can have rather remarkable effects on an individual's healthy, for example. There are studies of people with heart disease and prayer. And those who get prayed for survive in higher percentages than those who don't. Hey, give me some of that. I remember our first meeting we prayed together. I just remembered that. Blessings on prayer in its evolved form, and the ability to reclaim ... I remember our colleague – I don't know well, I've just had a few conversations with – Cynthia Burgeaux. I tried to describe the sense of divinity that comes with the Unique Self realization and I described it as the infinity of intimacy. The infinity of intimacy. Intimacy arouses caring. It's just not functional, not just utilitarian, it's not just cognitive appreciation of their dignity and value, it's this deep felt sense of caring to concern. Whenever you describe the move from egocentric to worldcentric to Kosmocentric, you describe it beautifully as a felt expansion into wider caring and concern. So you might describe it also as an expansion of intimacy. When Source, the awake process of intelligence, is realized as the realization of intimacy, is a natural





# AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

turning towards in prayer becomes a natural expression when coupled with a broader prayer in the evolutionary context. Whenever you're praying only about yourself, you know you're in trouble, something has gone wrong. Something's gone wrong there.