

How do you approach a person who goes under the title of ‘Master’, yet would rather be a nudist than a Buddhist or atheist, someone who claims he is always ‘here’, and who attracts hundreds to his side? A conversation with Mario Mantese, beyond the intellect and beyond imagination.

A Window to the Eternal

by

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In the mid 1970’s Mario Mantese played bass for the funk-band Heatwave, which became world famous with hits like ‘Boogie Nights’. In 1978, upon leaving a gala evening in London, he was attacked with a knife. The blade entered into the middle of his heart. He was clinically dead for several minutes, and when he awoke from a five-week long coma he realized that he was blind, dumb, and paralyzed throughout his entire body. During this time, which seemed to him like a thousand years, he discovered immense hidden powers and the unending universe within himself. Thanks to these insights and enormous will-power Mario Mantese can now speak, see, and even walk. Presently he gives talks and darshans, at which he offers his experiences and insights.

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SPUREN: I have asked around in my social circles, looking for people who knew something about you. There weren't many. And when I made it known to folks that 1,500 people will be coming to your darshan this weekend, they were dumbstruck. You appear to be something of an unknown star...

Mario Mantese: Apparently an unknown star from another galaxy (laugh). I don't do any advertising and don't sell myself or my presence. Light doesn't need to announce itself through advertisements. When a light comes on in the darkness, beings align themselves without needing to be told anything. Through this light their internal beings are touched, beckoned, and awakened. One cannot come meet me, but one can discover me, and through this encounter discover oneself. I have never told anyone to come see me, and this is also something I will never do.

And that you tell someone to leave...does that happen?

It happens.

Is it done with a kick, or a pat on the shoulder?

If I tried to raise my foot and give a kick, I would lose my balance and fall over. (Laughing) No, it doesn't go like that. But I require people who want to come to me to abstain from smoking, drinking alcohol, and eating meat for three days. It can be that those who don't hold to this will receive their money back from us, and he or she will be shown out.

These sorts of requirements are the foundation of religious establishments, such as we know them.

I don't know about those matters, and they are not interesting to me. Belief is something which is subjective and exclusive. People come to me from all varieties of faiths. I also heartily welcome homosexual men and lesbian women. I also speak about God, but the word 'God' itself is not of much interest to me. I am aware of what lies behind the word. At the moment I speak about God and the Christian religion, I exclude the other 4.5 billion people who aren't Christians. Therefore I am very watchful of how I utilize words.

The renunciation of meat, alcohol, and tobacco has nothing to do with a dogma. It relates to our spiritual work and in part to what science has acknowledged. Indeed, those who eat meat from animals that are killed in the slaughterhouse or somewhere else are also taking fear, adrenalin, and many other subtle transmissions into their bodies. They are embodied by that which they eat and digest, in the truest sense of the word.

Respect for all living beings should be profound, and should exceed any moral or ethic. To be conscious of the unity of all life is what is called 'awakening'. Not to cause pain and suffering isn't something special. Rather, it is human normality. Overcoming dullness is called 'spirituality'.

That seems to take the Buddhist line.

I am not Buddhist and don't know any lines! I almost feel a bit sorry for Buddhists. I find it hard to fathom that according to their teachings beings must work their way up through a series of uncountable incarnations over millions of years, from a yellow hamster to a Buddha

– terrible, don't you think! I ask myself whether we were nothing at the beginning, before we are someone or something, and whether we will be nothing again in the end.

Buddha is self-transcendence, and self-transcendence is here and now. Those who bind themselves to processes of time are drifting. Those who discern the drifter bring an end becoming and being.

Nevertheless, you offer a basic message that we are not what we appear to be.

This is not a message. I speak from an inner universal science, whose findings are as available to you as to me. We are apparently in the body, but are we this body, really? Without the body we could not maintain ourselves. The body is there, but it is merely the instrument of something deeper. We experience ourselves in these moments now as a sequence within our waking state. But if you penetrate deeper into yourself, you discover that this waking state doesn't actually exist. To realize this is what it means 'to awaken'. Is this enlightenment? Enlightenment is the most boring thing there is! Why? It is en(all)-lightenment, not 'I'-lightenment. That means that you and I get nothing from enlightenment, that enlightenment is an experience without an experiencer. That is why we don't have to concern ourselves with enlightenment. But this is beautiful, isn't it?

The shadows in your life have yielded to the light. It seems that the knife-stabbing and ensuing near-death experience triggered this. Is such a drastic experience necessary in order to awaken?

No, certainly not. But apparently I am one who needed it heavy, since I had to experience it like that. The near-death experience was, however, just the beginning. After this it was clear to me how superficial my life had been until this turning point. The decisive insight that came with my death-experience was this: 'My life was never bound to the body, never bound to my physical existence. I am eternal'.

Each person can awaken, and it is nothing special, and it has nothing to do with religion or spiritual practices. When someone meditates, he is perhaps successful in putting thoughts aside and controlling his breath. Through this one can become still. But this is not the 'great silence'. This stillness is produced through control, and is therefore a subjective experience. Instead of sitting around for hours meditating, I recommend this: Offer your precious time to your families and your children. Care thoroughly for their well-being, and don't mystify your activity! If I have any message, it is this.

Indeed, even someone like me who is handicapped can be free. That is a comfort to the handicapped and people who are ill, at least I hope it is. The people who know me see that I experience and endure many difficulties with my body. But I never complain.

Are you being called to do what you do?

I find the idea of following a calling trivial. I am simply here. I do that which I am, though that which I am was never active. When one is 'called', one sees himself as important and thus separates himself from the other people who are not 'called'. No, thank you. The clearer a person perceives the simplicity of his own presence, the clearer he will be about what he isn't. Through this the space is established for what he should do. That which a person can do in his life arranges itself on its own, when trust and confidence blossom within the heart.

By busying themselves with all the esoteric plunder, many people have lost this simple trust. They complete long years of learning, which leads to conceit, and then ask me if I know about this or that. No, I don't know any of that stuff, and I cannot say whether I find those things good or bad. Should I then say whenever possible that I am better than this or that? Truly, this child's play doesn't interest me. Because I am absent, I am present. That is all I can say about this.

That's sounding pretty good. Will you be that tomorrow in darshan?

There is no tomorrow now. I have no idea how things might be tomorrow. I am here, now, and don't go anywhere, not tomorrow and not the day after tomorrow. Thus, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow will also be now. I have ceased to exist, and have ceased not to exist, and I have stopped coming and I have stopped going.

Is your health stable?

Unfortunately not. My body has become very fragile. Just recently, in 2008 I had to consider canceling a seminar for the first time in 27 years. Although I was having great difficulties, I was able to attend the gathering and be available for many hundreds of people. I am very stable, but unfortunately the body is no longer so.

Do you have to undergo medical treatment in such moments?

That doesn't help. There are certain things happening that even the doctors don't understand. My body functions differently. It is pure universal light. My heart, for example, doesn't beat. It breathes. One time I was in a hospital in India. The head doctor declared, "This is impossible!" I agreed to let him call all his other co-workers in to have a listen. And when I go to a specialist in Switzerland, they say the same thing, "We have never heard something like that." My heart breathes: in...then out...or out...then in, I am not sure exactly. (big laugh)

Do you have any regrets?

Not at all. My being is as clear as glass. I have my hands, though my fingers are rather inflexible. Five years after returning to Switzerland I held a thick slate pencil and created my first book. You could say I drew it more than wrote it. It was typed out, and a publisher was found who printed and distributed it.

In the early 1980's the Coué organization asked me whether I would be interested in giving a talk on the theme, 'Life after Death'. I knew that almost everything I said would not be understood. My tongue, my lips, vocal chords and jaw were all still very restricted. Over 200 people came to see what sort of being would appear. I told the organizer that he should make an aisle free in the middle of the hall. After the visitors had settled in their seats, I staggered and stumbled (you couldn't call it walking) forward through the aisle. Someone helped me up onto the stage, and I sat down on a chair. I could hear the people fidgeting and asking themselves whether this was really the person who would give the talk. I silently looked at the people and waited. Then I said, "Death is exactly like this. Your insecurity, your critical murky feelings are the birth of death." After these words there was dead silence in the hall. (laugh)

A woman from India wrote in the book, 'In Touch with a Universal Master', that your soul is that of an Indian saint in a Western body. What does that mean to you?

Everything and nothing! India is a land where I have spent many years and made many deep friendships. Those people have left the world in the meantime. What people think of me is a subjective perception which they have of me. Some think, "Oh, look at that handicapped fellow, the poor thing..." Others think the guy has taken too many drugs or is drunk. I've heard all these things. Then the people learn that I have written a book. "What, a book?" Suddenly I am seen through a different lens. One says he is a writer, then a saint, then a guru, then a master. I am all these things, and I was never these things. That's how it is.

That about being a master, that comes from you, doesn't it?

No, it was not my idea to call myself a master, but it is appropriate. My master recommended that I acknowledge this title. Master M has a correlation to my spiritual work. In everyday life I am Mario Mantese. Still, I am not at one moment one, and another moment the other. It is like light. You can observe it as waves or as particles, but no one knows what light really is! As a cosmic master I have no authority, but rather all-comprehensive, uncomprehending competence.

Through this you have established a function for yourself.

In the consciousness of others, yes. In my own wakened presence, no.

So, can't anyone establish a relationship with you and be your student?

No. Someone from India wrote me that he would like to be my student. I told him that I have never seen a student of mine. I would really like to know what they look like. If I had students, then they would have me as well. In this way we would confuse ourselves within this dualistic concept and be lost. I am the end of all becoming, the end of all ways, the end of all concepts. This is what I am. No students... and happy!

I would classify what you teach within the Indian Advaita philosophy.

Classify it where you want to. But I am never at home anywhere but here and now. I don't set up house anywhere. People always want to stick me in a drawer, so they can categorize me. I don't allow myself to be categorized, because my presence is universal and without tradition. In India they also speak a lot about 'paraatman', the Totality, and yet they still cling firmly to thoughts of caste and tradition.

What is darshan for you?

Darshan is to be here with you now. Tomorrow darshan takes place with 1,500 people without a word. On Sunday there will be darshan with words. 'Darshan' means 'insight', 'grace', or also 'gathering with a divine being'. For me darshan is the unlimited flow that I am. Those who encounter me, encounter themselves.

What happens to the one across from you?

I don't see anyone across from me, or when I do, only as a reflection in consciousness. My being is silence, and silence does not think. There is only pure perception. When thinking is inactive, then no 'I' arises, no 'you' and no 'other'. Therefore, everything that exists comes to rest within my heart. My presence transcends the personal. People see and experience me in darshan as someone across from them. But I sense them inseparable within my heart. They are exactly that, which I am.

So, you are having a conversation with yourself?

I never speak in darshan. I am empty. In darshan I am there for six hours. I have no thoughts, and no thoughts have me. I look deeply into the souls of people, and within a fraction of a split-second I know inside myself their sufferings, their fears, their worries, wants and needs. But this is no act of clairvoyance. The glance of Master M is a divine, illuminating, liberating, and elucidating light. Where he casts his glance, worlds move! Thousands of people tell of unbelievable, astonishing experiences. Deeply moved, they share what they experienced during or after the darshan. I receive hundreds of letters and emails through my organization. I read them, but don't answer them, which wouldn't even be possible. Without developing personal responsibility and clear awareness, only a correction is possible, instead of final liberation. I am not a healer of the physical body. I am liberation. I am not a teacher who fills people's minds. I empty them.

Are you doing anything then?

Because I am not, everything happens.

But something does it...

It is action arising from non-action. We live with the idea that someone has to do something for something to happen. But this activity is directed from the will and is arbitrary, and that is not what I am. Let's look at the sun, which is many millions of miles away from the earth. What does the sun know about clouds, shadows, rain, hail, and barrenness? It knows nothing of these phenomena. Without moving to act, it moves all life on the earth and still remains untouched and unfettered.

One could say, it is itself.

One could say that. I don't know. The awakened person is presence, and presence is a seeing without thinking, pure intuition here and now. A cosmic master affects all things without acting, but indeed, when my hand moves, I move worlds, and when I speak, I move worlds. At my gatherings, I don't say anything new, nothing exciting. Because I am uncompromising love right here, as Mario Mantese I am not perfect and also not without faults. And yet I am timeless in time and incorporeal within the body. That is the mystery.

Here we are pushed to the border of language. It sounds very peculiar to say: I am timeless within time, beyond time and space.

Because in reality there is no time and space, I am ‘not-I’ and timeless, though I appear on the relative plane as body in space and time. I am here, now; Master M, Mario Mantese.

For me there are two planes. I cannot answer or participate, because then my ‘I’ speaks. The other plane is a sensibility that knows that it is true, which is beyond this ‘I’ and is here now.

Be careful: Two planes are only there for the ego, and in reality do not exist. When I speak, I do not think, also now, when I am speaking with you. I speak from that which I am. At the moment one imagines one could comprehend or analyze the eternal, one gets confused and is trapped within concepts. My words affect a turning around, a return, a de-learning. All water flows to the ocean, but I swim back to the source. Where is the source and where is its beginning?

My sensibilities, my paranormal capabilities were, in the eyes of many, enormous. They were also tested scientifically. But I allowed them to flow away. You can read about this in my autobiography. Things which many spiritual people wish for their whole life long, what they want to cultivate and perform, I have penetrated and let go of. In this way my senses have been spiritualized, truly unified!

It has been reported from sources near you that you perform miracles. Do you ever think about the possibility that you draw people to you that expect miracles?

Miracles happen – why shouldn’t they? But if this is the only reason one comes to see and experience me, then that person is in definitely in the wrong place. People experience miracles in my presence, but they are something other than what they think or hope them to be. I do not fulfill wishes!

One doesn’t have to do anything but be there and honor you and pray to you a bit?

Because I don’t react or act on the personal level, I am indifferent to wishes, flattery, or accolades. But love and respect flow towards me. Watch yourself, how you think, not what you think. Look at how you talk and act, and be deeply aware of each word. War is not taking place somewhere outside, but rather right here inside ourselves. We are the war. When a person awakens, and has really recognized this in himself, the war inside him ends, and the war in his surrounding environment ends as well.

Is that one of your visions?

I have no visions. I am here and not there. Feet on the ground and head in the universe. That is why I call my spiritual work ‘the adventure of normality’. I am here, and when I am no longer here, I am not there. I am always here. Where could I go? (laugh) Where do you want to go after death, paradise? I won’t be there! Day in and day out singing hymns or mumbling mantras while wearing white nightgowns – no thank you, that’s not for me.

The Case of MM Still Unsolved

It has been two weeks since my encounter with Mario Mantese: Time to allow the experience to resonate, to sort out the essential and non-essential, to gain balance from a distance. This is a proven method in journalism, and with the agreeable publishing conditions at *Spurren* Magazine, we could afford ourselves the time. But here this tried and true scheme doesn't function. Not by this man. When I think of him, I return again and again to the same images and feelings. I am stuck in something like an endless cycle where a distance doesn't want to establish itself. Instead, sentences ring through my mind, like "To those who say 'Yes' once to me, I say 'Yes' a thousand times. My goodness! With my intellect I would have normally reduced such a promise to rhetoric in a split-second and tossed it aside. But with Mario Mantese it doesn't work for me. Quite the opposite: I find it plausible that he does exactly that which he has stated here. How and why he does it, that I leave to him. I have an inkling that he does it because he can't do anything else. For him it is less a question of doing than of being.

To put things in perspective: A good six years ago my colleague Colette Grünbaum-Flury had already done an interview for us with Mario Mantese. We were doing an edition on spiritual mastery, and he had just published a book, *In Touch with a Universal Master*, which includes somewhat devotional reports of his students. We introduced him as, 'the Swiss Master'. Our title was meant to be thoroughly ironic. We couldn't take the proclamation of being a 'cosmic master' seriously.

But this, I have experienced in the meantime, is not what is essential to consider. Also not the long process of back and forth that took place before our encounter in December of 2008 in Winterthur, which for me was inconvenient and complicated. When the three of us sat down with him and his partner in the hotel room, the obstacles which may have entered between us vanished into thin air. Two hours went by like the wind. We drank good tea and submerged into timelessness. In spite of the grandeur of many of his expressions, I never had the feeling once that someone was trying to show off and attain something affirmative for himself. We spoke of the mystical and the profane, and one could hardly distinguish one from the other. More than once I was so taken in by the natural clarity of answers I heard that it seemed the words were coming from me and not from him.

The two following days were very different than our small meeting. To share this intimacy and timelessness with 1,500 other people was something I would have to get used to. But the many assistants who made the large assembly with Master M on stage even possible also helped me. They not only aided me in finding my seat in the darkened hall, but also made it easy for me to allow the essential to enter, in that they inconspicuously completed their required tasks while remaining ordinary, without exuding any false humility. The wakeful and clear presence of the people in his close vicinity spoke for itself. The atmosphere at the gathering testified to the fact that here it is really about being oneself with ever-increasing clarity. This is impressive. How does Mario Mantese do it, keeping hundreds of people in silence and in his presence for many hours without relying on any kind of show? Probably it is exactly the point that he doesn't do, but rather is. For this there is no category, and it does not allow itself to be copied. One can only let its effects permeate. And gratefully accept.