

## phenomeNEWS interview with Dr. George Catlin

***"We need to get away from the purely material obsession to a more spiritual orientation where we're working on the kind of inner transformation that will enable us to truly love our brothers and sisters as ourselves."***

*phenomeNEWS: Dr. George Catlin has written a great book called The Way to Happiness published by DeVorss. Dr. Catlin holds a doctorate in psychology and has taught in liberal arts colleges for the last 12 years. He has taught and lectured on the ageless wisdom teachings for more than 25 years. Welcome Dr. Catlin.*

GEORGE CATLIN: Hello. It's good to be here.

*This is such a little book, you could put it in your pocket. Yet it has a wealth of knowledge. What moved you to write a book about happiness?*

It really comes from two different sources. One is my own personal aspirations. Since I was about 18 years old, I realized that there was some inner meaning and purpose to life. I found myself dedicated to discovering what that might be. The other is my professional work as an academic psychologist, teacher and researcher. I realized that psychologists have devoted a great deal of time and attention to what can go *wrong* psychologically, but I realized that I was much more interested in what could go *right*. That is, optimal states, what they might be and how they might be found. So both in my personal and in my professional life, I've been pursuing this question for years now.

*When you started pursuing it, what opened up for you?*

Two interesting fronts opened up for me. Pretty quickly, I found myself reading many spiritual books which described the existence of a great group of fully enlightened individuals who are sometimes referred to as the Masters of the Far East or the Masters of Wisdom. I first came across them in a series of books called *Life and Teachings of the Masters of the Far East* by Baird T. Spalding. This is an American who, along with about eight other North Americans – American and Canadian anthropologists mostly – had the opportunity to live and study with a group of fully enlightened individuals in the Far East for a period of three years. And when they got back, Spalding wrote the account of their time with these teachers and their teachings.

These are amazing books. I can't recommend them highly enough to anyone, because they give you an introduction to what it's like to live with and see the operations of fully enlightened human beings. The other thing that was important about those books was they told Western readers that there were, in fact, a group of fully enlightened people on the planet who have always been on the planet, behind the scenes, aiding humanity however they can. It was a huge, huge step for me to realize that that was true. Inwardly I became oriented toward the promise that they held before humanity. I also began doing what I could to let others know about their existence and their teachings. That was a very big first step.

*Who are these masters? Where are they now? Are they still with us?*

Oh, absolutely. They are still with us and, in fact, they are emerging into public roles as we speak. The Western world has known about these teachers for over 125 years.

It all began back in 1875 with the work of an amazing woman, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. She was born in the Ukraine and had, from early childhood, interesting inner experiences of a very distinctive kind of teacher who seemed to be a kind of guide for her. First in sleeping dreams and then in waking kinds of visions, she saw this very particular man: tall with a

narrow face and dark, deep-set eyes. When she was 21, in London's Hyde Park one day, she actually saw the person who she had experienced inwardly all her life. He outlined to her a great life work, which she could take up, if she chose; it was completely a matter of free will. The first step in that work would be to get herself into Tibet, which at that time was a closed kingdom – no Westerners were allowed in – where she could study with him and his associates for a number of years. Being a woman of incredible courage and tremendous spiritual achievement, she accepted that challenge, and she did, in fact, make it into Tibet. She tried three times. On two of those occasions, she succeeded, and once she stayed in Tibet for three years and studied with this man and his associates. When she came back out, she began something, which many may be aware of, called the Theosophical Society, which was really the vehicle to bring news of the existence of these great enlightened individuals to a deeply skeptical Western world. That was step one.

Following Blavatsky came another woman, Alice A. Bailey, a different kind of person but very advanced, again, who had a direct personal inner relationship with one of the teachers. Every morning she wrote down his teachings and eventually published them. They are actually the most complete descriptions of the workings of the masters that are available today. One of the things which they said was that the masters, in 1945, had made an historic decision to return to open, outward roles in the world sometime between 1975 and 2025. That's the window we're in the middle of right now and, in fact, the teachers are already returning. They are already quietly taking up their positions in places throughout the world, appearing to individuals and groups as those individuals and groups are ready for them. Perhaps more importantly, they are preparing to eventually emerge onto the world stage, and soon you and I and everyone else will see them addressing us and speaking for what is good and true about the human spirit, pointing the way forward for humanity.

*Share International magazine talks about this. Is that part of it?*

Yes. *Share International* magazine is an expression of an organization that I'm a volunteer for, called Share International. Share International is a worldwide organization of volunteers, all of whom know the teachers are real, all of whom know the teachers are emerging into public roles, and all of whom have taken up the work of letting people know that they are coming – to try and open people's minds and hearts to the reality of what the future holds for us, so it doesn't come as a complete surprise to everyone.

*Share International* magazine is published 10 times a year. It is really a mixture of the teachings of the masters as given by a man named Benjamin Creme, who has been in direct contact with the masters for many, many years. It also contains political, social, and economic analysis of what's going on on the planet today. One of the things that people don't realize about spiritual progress is that it isn't just to do with one's inner states. Spiritual progress is to do with the state of the world at large; the whole planet needs to change. Everything about the way we live and express and relate to one another can and will change in the coming time because all of that needs to become an expression of our spiritual reality.

The problem today is we've got all the right ideals. All the world's religions promote the ideals of love, brotherhood and things like that. But we don't live them. We live in a deeply divided, competitive, aggressive world. So what we need to do is take our inner ideals and bring them into outer expression in our economic systems, in our social systems, in our educational systems. That's the work that's before us, and it's a tremendously hard but rewarding work. I know as an educator myself that our educational systems are almost completely based on fear. They will be completely remade in the years ahead. The teachers, the masters as I call them, will point the way to do all this. They are very practical individuals, indeed. They will just advocate changes. We, humanity, has to make the changes. They won't impose anything on anyone.

*We interviewed Benjamin Creme. He is very wise. When we spoke with him, it was a phenomenal experience. Is he a master?*

No, he's not a master. At least, I wouldn't say so. Of course he would never reveal his particular status. From the point of view of the Alice Bailey teachings or the esoteric tradition or the ageless wisdom teachings, there are a series of major steps which all people go through on their way to becoming a master. Those steps actually have to do with control over various aspects of our being. As you probably know, thousands of years ago, humanity was almost a purely physical, instinctual species. We were very much driven by our instincts to do what we needed to do to survive and reproduce. Of course, we've evolved a long way from that. We've moved forward to the point where now we're primarily an emotional species. We're pretty much driven by our hopes and our fears and our desires. We want what we want and we do what we can to get what we want.

A step ahead of that would be to become what we would call mentally polarized, which is a person who is living life from the place of the mind. That is, not driven by hopes and fears anymore, but thinking more or less objectively about the world and, because of that, being able to think about what's really good for everybody not just based on what one wants to do for oneself.

Beyond that would be a soul-infused state of consciousness. The soul is the place of deeply impersonal love, pure being, the state that all the great teachers talk about and describe as not an ultimate goal, but the next huge goal for humanity – the place that most people understand the spiritual path is leading to.

From my perspective, Benjamin Creme is what we would call a soul-infused personality. Beyond that there are still other great steps that one takes leading to becoming a master, and Creme is making those steps. His whole life is dedicated to service, and that's probably the primary path of evolution for humanity today, the path of serving others selflessly. He's spent his life doing that since 1974, when he first started this work of telling the world about the emergence of the teachers.

*Do the teachers, the spiritual leaders, look different? Are they illuminated? How will we know them?*

They'll look exactly like us. That's the amazing thing about the difference between them and us. Sometimes we talk about there being five major kingdoms of life on planet earth. The first is the mineral kingdom, then the vegetable kingdom, then the animal kingdom. The fourth kingdom is the human kingdom, and the fifth kingdom is the kingdom of souls, which is where the masters are. The unusual thing about the fourth and the fifth kingdoms is they both occupy the exact same physical form. So masters will look exactly like you and I look. They'll have physical bodies. We can meet and talk to them, shake their hands and feel them as completely physical. However, they've completely mastered every single plane of existence to the point where those physical bodies are actually light. They're the creation of their own mind. And thus, they can assemble and reassemble those bodies however and whenever they want. Those bodies are also immortal. Often when I talk about this theme, people ask me, "Well, won't we just kill them like we've killed all the great teachers of the past?" In this case we won't kill them because their bodies are indestructible. But I hope we won't kill them for better reasons than that. They will, in fact, be here on the planet for thousands of years to come.

Thousands of years ago they were openly on the planet. Then they went into a long, long period of esoteric work, retreat, from which they weren't directly available to us. But now, today, they're coming back out into the world to be openly available to humanity, to once again offer their guidance and teachings. When we see them first, they'll emerge as ordinary individuals. They won't claim any special spiritual status. They will simply be explaining truly extraordinary ideas about real change and real choices for humanity. On the

basis of our response to them, we will go forward or not. Eventually it will become known who they really are because their extraordinary nature will become obvious. But at first, they'll just emerge in the way that any other unusual person would emerge in the world. They'll start advocating a certain line of thought. They'll attract people to them. Eventually the press will pay attention to them, and eventually you and I will see on our news one night that a person is emerging in this country or that country with these rather radical progressive ideas. In that way, we'll get our first look at them.

### *What will their ideas be? What will they be speaking about – enlightenment?*

The most fundamental idea that we're told they'll be speaking about is sharing. And sharing is an incredibly simple yet complicated thing. Most of us were told to share back in kindergarten, and maybe we got the idea back then, but we've certainly abandoned it as adults.

As you know, in the adult world, especially in the United States, it's every man and woman for themselves, and our job is to go out and get what we can for ourselves and hope that no one takes it from us. But sharing brings one into an entirely different relationship to other human beings and to the material world in general.

Probably the biggest problem that's before the United States and Americans and the world community – because we're exporting our values all over the world – is that we've become obsessed with material things. We wake up in the morning and try to make money all day so we can spend it all night and then go to sleep and do it all over again. I used to see this most tragically with my students when I was teaching in colleges. They'd come to class, but then they'd go to their jobs, and then they'd spend money they'd just earned. They'd set up their lives as a work and spend cycle. Work, spend, work, spend, work, spend. So their whole lives were tied into money and material things. And in this, humanity has completely lost its way. We're not alive to secure more material things for ourselves. That's not life's purpose. Life's purpose is actually to learn to love. That's what life is all about.

We need to re-orient ourselves. We need to get away from the purely material obsession to a more spiritual orientation where we're working on the kind of inner transformation that will enable us to truly love our brothers and sisters as ourselves.

How do we do this? Well a great first step toward it, both for individuals and the planet, is to implement the principle of sharing. One of the teachers, in fact the teacher we refer to as Maitreya, who's the World Teacher, has said, "When you share, you recognize the divinity in your brother and sister." And I would add that you also express the divinity in yourself. When we share, we realize and we actualize the fact that we are indeed brothers and sisters and that our spiritual destiny is a common destiny. It's not just up to me to become enlightened or you to become enlightened individually. The real issue is whether or not we as one human family will move forward together. So sharing really is a tremendous key to that kind of progress.

When lots of people hear about sharing, in this country anyway, they think it's some kind of plot: "Someone's going to take all my hard-earned things that I've got stored away and make me give them to the rest of the world." Nothing could be further from the truth. Sharing is only sharing when it's done genuinely because someone wants to do it. The masters will never advocate any kind of imposition on anyone. The sharing that they're talking about isn't the sharing of going into your closet and pulling out a few extra clothes and giving them to someone else. It's about international sharing; it's about the countries of the world putting as their first priority the wellbeing of the whole.

At present, all the countries of the world are in this fearful state within which their primary agenda is to get what they can for themselves. The United States is the strongest country in the world, and it's really the most aggressive in pursuing this agenda. No one can stand up

to us so we tend to get what we want all over the world. Right now in Iraq we want oil and so we send our troops there and we will get that oil because we want it. That agenda has to change. If we keep going with an agenda where might essentially makes right, we're all going to kill ourselves because now terrorists have demonstrated that you don't have to be a super power to cause incredible chaos in the world. And so we're going to have to learn to live together.

In short, we're going to have to learn to share. And that means sharing the resources of the world and not just grabbing them all for whoever has the biggest guns, but genuinely sharing them among humanity. When we do that, we become an entirely different species, and everything can change. No longer do we need all these huge armies. We still, of course, need some form of police, internationally and locally, to prevent people from becoming aggressive and taking what isn't theirs, but we don't need this kind of armed camp aggressive approach to life which now so dominates the world scene. So, it's a huge step we need to take, but the fact of the masters' existence will make it possible to take this step, because they'll provide the right kind of leadership. They will call to what's best in humanity. Humanity is a tremendous species. We are capable of great, great acts of love and service and goodwill, but that aspect isn't being called to right now.

*Will these masters come just in the United States or will they go all over the world?*

They will be all over the world. In fact, the United States is not the primary place where we should expect them to emerge at all. I'm certain there will be at least one master in the United States. The World Teacher I referred to earlier, Maitreya, has his point of focus in London, England, but he will appear all over the world. The masters represent all humanity, and all humanity is not America of course. America is a relatively powerful country, but our population does not merit the kind of attention we demand on the world scene. And the masters will be speaking with *all* humanity. They will emerge all over the world. They are truly universal people.

*What will the masters be teaching?*

All different teachings. One of the things that Maitreya has said is, "I'm not here to found a new religion. If you're a Christian, be a Christian, but be a good Christian. If you're a Buddhist, be a Buddhist, but be a good Buddhist. If you're a Muslim, be a Muslim, but be a good Muslim." All of the paths are true at their core. This time, when the teachers come forward, all of the world will see them. They won't just be speaking to small, localized groups. World media will make their teachings and their ideas available to all people.

But this time, also, the teachers will be different from how some people might imagine them to be. It would be a mistake to expect them to be purely religious figures. They will work in all fields of human endeavor that can contribute to real progress. Christ's advice 2,000 years ago on how to recognize them still stands true today: "You will know them by their fruits." These great ones will produce the most beautiful "fruits" imaginable because they are completely selfless. They have no desire whatsoever for themselves. All they live to do is to love and to serve others. And that kind of quality inevitably bears wonderful fruit which I'm sure will be perfectly clear to all open-minded people.

*How do you and everybody else know this is going to be? Is it written?*

It's written in a number of places. Blavatsky, through the Theosophical teachings first introduced the existence of the masters. The Alice Bailey teachings, which were written from 1919 to 1949, are by far the most complete explanation of the life and work of the masters. That's where it's written about their decision to externalize, to come back into open, outward roles in the world. The third major place it's written is in the work of Benjamin Creme, who's now written, I believe, 11 books – all about the teachings of the masters. This, too, is based on his direct experience with them over many, many years.

*We have a local group here that is working to revive Palmer Park, a well-known park in Detroit, and bring it back to life. Is this the kind of work that the masters will show us?*

That's the exact kind of spirit of goodwill that I'm talking about. And that spirit lives deeply within the American psyche. That is the kind of thing our leaders need to be calling to because that's the energy and the consciousness that's going to change the world.

*Yes, it is. People coming together and giving and sharing, working together.*

Exactly. The single best example of sharing in American history is the Marshall Plan, and our involvement in World War I and World War II, which was a tremendous expression of the American soul. Following World War II, as you know, America made tremendous resources available to enable Europe to get back on its feet, including Germany, the very country that had been our opponent in the war. We extended our hand and gave the economic aid to make that happen. That's the kind of expression of sharing which the world needs in the future. That's the kind of attitude of cooperation and goodwill which America can lend to the world which is so deeply in need of it today.

One of the things that we psychologists know is that people tend to like other people who are like themselves. We really like other people who agree with us on almost everything because it's very comforting and reinforcing to have someone say yes every time we say yes. And it's a little more challenging, in fact, it's a great deal more challenging to learn to love someone who's different from you. But that's exactly the challenge which is before humanity today. The world is too small to keep ignoring everyone who's different from us. What we're going to need to do is learn to appreciate, respect and embrace the difference.

*Your book tells how to be happy. Can you give us some tips?*

Of course. The first tip is to do with what we've been talking about already, which is that people have to come to terms with the question of what are we doing here. They really have to look themselves in the mirror and ask, "What am I doing here? What is my life all about?" And in that regard I think we have to make a fundamental, philosophical decision about whether we think we live in a purely material world, within which purely material goals are what it's all about, or if we think we live in a spiritual world, within which there is a grand overarching order and meaning to everything.

If we think we live in a spiritual world, then we need to think clearly, "OK, how can I participate in that spiritual reality?" I am positive we live in a spiritual world. My experience demonstrates this time and time again. If we think we live in a spiritual world, I believe the next thing we'll realize is that we are here to learn to love. That's what life is all about on this planet and probably what life's all about throughout the cosmos. If we take this seriously, then the next question becomes, "What is preventing me from loving? How can I become truly a more loving being?" This is really the beginning of the spiritual path.

As soon as we take that question seriously, we begin to realize that a great deal about our lives – our day-to-day, hour-to-hour, minute-to-minute lives – needs to change. Here I'm not talking about leaving one's job or abandoning one's relationships. Very much the opposite. What I'm talking about is seeing one's job and seeing one's relationships as fields of experience, activities within which this essential quality of love is struggling to be born. Then when we ask ourselves, "How can I use today's time in the workplace and today's time at home to really bring myself toward the kind of person I want to become?" Then everything begins to change. We look for the tools, use our challenges, our weaknesses, our problems as opportunities for growth. To do that we have to slow down a bit.

We're living at hyper speed. We're way too busy. We're busy with things that don't bring real fulfillment. We think they bring fulfillment, but they don't actually. Certainly the best

example of this is television. Think of the countless hours that Americans devote to watching television. Our heart is where love exists, and as long as our attention is glued to the television we're never going to experience the heart. Life is not about being entertained. Life is about engagement. Life is about doing things that arise from one's inner being and connecting with the world in meaningful ways. And the only way to begin to seriously do that is to turn off your television set.

*And interact instead of observing.*

Exactly! Once you turn off that television set, it's an interesting process that happens. People actually go through a kind of withdrawal because they are genuinely addicted to this kind of entertainment. They don't know what to do. They feel sort of lost and lonely for a while. And this is an understandable response to even cutting back on an addiction. But in that lost and lonely state of not really knowing what one's going to do, eventually some ideas begin to emerge. We ask, "What shall I do?" And these ideas are the way to the heart. I don't know what a particular individual's ideas might be. Maybe read a book or plant a garden or call a friend and see if they want to go for a walk. These little whispers of the heart are exactly what we're looking for, because these are the genuine desires of the innermost being that are just starting to surface into consciousness. Listening to those calls, listening to those whispers is the way to the heart, and the heart is the place of love which we're all trying to get to. We can only get there if we can slow our lives down enough so that we can begin to hear those whispers, those calls.

*In your book you also mention walking slowly.*

Walking slowly is a great practice. It's a great metaphor, but it's also a great practice. Just try it some day. We walk as if getting there is all there is to it. We've just got to get there as soon as possible. Try slowing yourself down to half speed, but even three-quarters speed is enough to get the feeling. If you walk slowly, you can actually begin to feel yourself breathe. You can begin to see the world around you. And what you're really doing is tearing yourself away from this hurry-up mentality. There's no hurry. We need to just slow down and breathe a bit and be with the process of living. That in itself is a great liberator.

Again, it's a hard thing to do because we're addicted to go, go, go, as if there's some pot of gold at the end of this walk. There isn't. Embrace the process. And a great, great practice – a spiritual practice that goes back for centuries – is to try to walk slowly. Sometimes it is called mindful walking. Just walk with full awareness of that moment – the breath coming in and out of you and the experience of the world around you. You can even do it going down the grocery aisle. You don't have to go full speed down the grocery aisle. We don't have to lead hyper lives. So walking slowly is just a simple practice that one can do any time.

*I (Gerri) broke my foot a few years back and had a cast for five weeks. For those five weeks, I walked, just like you say, slowly, with the crutches. I walked one step at a time. I was living in the moment. Every step I took I was totally aware of. That slowed me down.*

That's a wonderful example of how what we see as setbacks are actually opportunities for liberation. You could have been angry about the cast. You could have been fuming for five or six weeks, but instead you embraced it and said it was about slowing down. "I'd better see what's in this for me."

*I looked for the lesson in that. I appreciated that whole time because it taught me to live in the moment, to slow down and just be with where I'm at.*

That's really the trick. There are a few other simple things that people can try to do. Certainly meditation is one of them. I can't recommend it strongly enough.

Meditation is humanity's oldest, best tool for coming into the now and beginning to approach the heart. I'm amazed at how many people I know who are deeply dedicated to the spiritual path and yet they don't meditate daily. They just can't bring themselves to sit down and just breathe calmly, peacefully, for 10 minutes a day. This is a process like brushing your teeth that should ideally be done at least twice every day. If we can just bring ourselves to sit still, then movement becomes an option.

Right now, we're all addicted to movement. We don't know how to be still, but we can learn. You don't need some advanced meditation technique that you've been initiated into by a guru. All you need to do is simply count your breaths. Sit straight up, spine erect but relaxed. Don't lie down in a recliner. Sit in a straight chair, ideally not even using the back. Just allow your spine to support itself and watch your breath come in and out for 10 minutes. A Buddhist technique is to count those breaths. Count the inhalations. If you get to 10, start again at 1. Most people can't get past about 2 before they start thinking about a zillion other things. This is because our minds are completely out of control. We don't know how to control our minds and tell them to slow down. Our minds are like runaway race horses. Sometimes it's referred to as the untrained monkey that's leaping all about. I challenge people to see if they can control their minds. If you can't control your mind, you'll never find your heart.

The mind is the doorway to the heart. Through the mind, we'll ultimately reach the heart, and the step through the mind is to bring the mind under control. Simple meditation, counting those breaths, is the foundation for doing that. All I'm talking about is 10 or 20 minutes a day, and it's more important than anything else you do for the rest of the day. I promise it.

*If you had one last pearl of wisdom to leave with us, what would that be?*

It's really twofold. One is *look within* and the other is to *look without*. Look within and find out what you really want and pursue that with all your heart. The other is look outside and see the world as it really is. The world is a place of tremendous sorrow and pain right now, but also a place of tremendous potential. If we keep our eyes focused outward on the world horizon, we will in the near future see emerging into public awareness great enlightened beings, who will offer the inspiration, the vision and the leadership to lead humanity out of this time into a truly golden age. We live at the crux or the turning point of all human history. It's a tremendous privilege to be alive today, and the help that we need to actualize our true potential is here on the planet coming into awareness very soon.

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*The foregoing is a slightly edited version of the article that originally appeared in the December 2005 issue of phenomeNEWS, 18444 West 10 Mile Rd. Suite 105, Southfield, MI 48075, [info@phenomenews.com](mailto:info@phenomenews.com).*