A HOLE IN ILLUSION'S WALL

Meher Baba and the Zen Connection

Chapter 1

My previous book, Adam Smith's Mistake, was a self-contained work. Its thesis and argument were presented within the context of the book itself, and stand or fall within that context. It didn't depend upon a larger framework of beliefs and values that exist outside of that book.

However, the book did present an opening to something wider, and in this book I will talk about at least one of the directions in which that opening points. The opening to something wider than I'm referring to was, fittingly enough, at the very end of that book, and it was my quoting from the Bhagavad Gita. In Adam Smsith's Mistake I referred to it as one of the "textbooks" of the first temple, the temple of the religious or the spiritual as compared to the second temple, academia, which is the temple of the intellect.

The Gita is an extract from a much larger work, The Mahabharata, but is the most well known part of that work, and under the title of The Bhagavad Gita, the extract is presented by itself as its own book. The Gita takes place on a plain in which two armies of relatives, which drew in the whole of India, are about to go into battle against each other. Krishna, the Avatar or Messiah, appears as a figure in the battle. He had offered

both sides the same choice of assistance. They could either have the help of his large group of kinsmen, the Vrishnis, or they could have him alone, but that he would take no part in the fighting. One side chose the Vrishnis and the other side chose him, and he became the chariot driver of Arjuna, who is a householder and a warrior. The Gita presents the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna before the battle begins, and this conversation consists mostly of Krishna's replies to Arjuna's anguished questions about taking part in that battle.

At the end of Adam Smith's Mistake I quoted Krishna's famous declaration about himself which appears in Chapter IV of the Gita--

> For whenever
> the law of rightousness
> withers away
> and lawlessness arises:
> then I generate
> myself on earth.
>
> I come into being
> age after age
> and take a visible shape
> and move a man with men
> for the protection of good,
> thrusting the evil back:
> and setting virtue
> on her seat again.[1]

As this text indicates, Krishna as the Avatar (which literally means he who descends) appear periodically throughout human history when humanity is in desperate need of his guidance and assistance.

In Adam Smith's Mistake I referred to this statement of Krishna's with the general phrase of "light and truth incarnating once again within the midst of humanity," and didn't refer to Krishna by name. There was also the implied suggestion that great reformer figures such as Gandhi, Tolstoy, Martin Luther King, and Father Don Jose Arizmendi constitute specific instances of the light and truth being embodied amidst humanity, and, in fact, all of us, when we act on the higher values or our higher self can be seen as this embodiment. It was in this way that I meant what I said at the outset here that the material of Adam Smith's Mistake was all self-contained within that work.

But I also had something further in mind. It can be addressed by the question--What or who is this Krishna that appears in the Gita? Indians take him to be an incarnation of God in human form who comes again and again, the Eternal Return, as Mircea Eliade has put it.[2] In this, he is a figure very much like Jesus, although in Christianity Jesus has come just once and he will return one more time. For the Indians the original name of this divine being is Vishnu, and Krishna was only one of his numerous appearances. It is also the case that many in India accept Jesus as an Avatar, and there is always the interesting semantic correspondence between the name Christ and the name Krishna.

It was in 1967 that I heard about someone who was supposed to be the Avatar. I had gone to California that summer from Indiana where I was teaching psychology, to visit friends and to also meditate under a more formal discipline than I had been doing in my own self-guided and rough and ready approach back in the Midwest. In the course of that summer I visited a number of meditation and spiritual centers and found most of them to be congenial. I also knew that eventually I would have to settle down in one of them, or at least choose one direction as my framework for meditating. I had previously heard the name Meher Baba, but I knew next to nothing about him, and didn't know what he was or what he taught.

While visiting in Berkeley I came across a notice for a meeting that was to be held about Meher Baba, and out of curiosity went. The meeting was held in Sproul Hall at the University of California campus, the well-known sight of the recent demonstrations. In the background I could hear the sounds of the protest musical rock group, Country Joe and the Fish, as they warmed up for a free concert to be given in People's Park that evening.

In the room before the meeting started I picked up a pamphlet of messages titled, "God in a pill? Meher Baba on LSD and the High Roads." In it were a number of very interesting statements about psychedelic drug use, which, of course, was very prevalent then. Among them was, "In an age when individual liberty is prized above all achievements, the fast-increasing number of drug addicts forms an appalling chain of self-sought

bondage! Even as these drugs hold out an invitation to a fleeting sense of ecstasy, freedom or escape, they enslave the individual in greater binding." And, in regard to the drug experience, this, "The experience is as far removed from Reality as is a mirage from water. No matter how much one pursues the mirage one will never reach water and the search for God through drugs must end in disillusionment. One who knows the Way, who is the Way, cannot approve the continued pursuance of a method that not only must prove fruitless but leads away from the Path that leads to Reality."[3]

This talk about God struck me as most curious. A little later when the meeting was underway this curiosity deepened into a state of puzzled confusion, for one of the speakers let it be known that Meher Baba was the Avatar of the age, which meant God in human form. God? The very concept was at that time in my life quite outside my frame of reference. As someone who had informally studied and read in Eastern philosophy, and particularly Zen Buddhism, I believed in something called "enlightenment," but not God, and in fact it was this enlightenment I was looking for in my searches and meditation. But I was not looking for God. As far as I was concerned God didn't exist. The idea was an immature attempt to designate what a more mature spiritual philosophy saw as enlightenment. Enlightenment was a state of mind, or even a transcendence of mind, what the Canadian physician, Richard Bucke, called "cosmic consciousness,"[4] but it was far from the familiar anthropomorphized version of a male figure who overlooked the

affairs of the universe, or even ran the show, a figure to whom people could pray, and get answers and results. If people prayed and happened to feel that they got answers, then it was from their own selves that they did so and not from an old man seated on a throne in heaven, a wizard of Oz for the universe.

This talk about God, and Meher Baba being God in human form, would in and of itself been enough to send me packing out of there. But there were things that kept from doing so, besides, perhaps, politeness. In addition to the drug messages, which I found to be one of the only things I had read against the use of drugs that made any sense to me, I was surprised by the people at the meeting. They were not in any obvious way engaging in cult-like behavior or dress, and in fact appeared quite normal, as far as I could tell. Furthermore, there were two speakers that evening that I found interesting. One of them was Allan Y. Cohen, who was a psychologist like myself and had earlier been a graduate student at Harvard under Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert (later to be renamed, Baba Ram Dass). Cohen as a student had gotten involved with the psychedelic drug movement, but after finding out about Meher Baba, and coming to accept his status and authority had left the movement and now talked and worked against the use of drugs. He was shortly to publish a book called, Understanding Drug Use.[5] The other speaker was Rick Chapman, who had also been a graduate student in psychology, and had recently had the opportunity to see Meher Baba in India. He later was to publish a little book with the tongue-in-cheek title, How to Choose a Guru.[5]

Over the course of the meeting and in informal discussions afterwards I got the general picture of what the Avatar was. As the Gita had said, periodically in human history when humanity is in desperate need of reorientation or regeneration of true values the Avatar appears. He is the direct incarnation of God or, let us say, Divine consciousness in human form. Later on when I obtained some of Meher Baba's writings I read the following that he himself explained about the Avatar:

> The Avatar appears in different forms, under different names, at different times, in different parts of the world. As his appearance always coincides with the spiritual birth of man, so the period immediately preceding his manifestation is always one in which humanity suffers from the pangs of the approaching birth. Man seems more than ever enslaved by desire, more than ever driven by greed, held by fear, swept by anger. The strong dominate the weak; the rich oppress the poor; large masses of people are exploited for the benefit of the few who are in power. The individual, who finds no peace or rest, seeks to forget himself in excitement. Immorality increases, crime flourishes, religion is ridiculed. Corruption spreads throughout the social order. Class and national hatreds are aroused and fostered. Wars break out. Humanity grows desperate. There seems to be no way of stemming the tide of destruction.
>
> At that moment the Avatar appears. Being the total

manifestation of God in human form, he is like a guage against which man can measure what he is and what he may become. He trues the standard of human values by interpreting them in terms of divinely human life. . . The Avatar awakens contemporary humanity to a realisation of its true spiritual nature, gives liberation to those who are ready, and quickens the life of the spirit in his time. For posterity is left the stimulating power of his divinely human example, the nobility of a life supremely lived, of a love unmixed with desire, of a power unused except for others, of a peace untroubled by ambition, of a knowledge undimmed by illusion. He has demonstrated the possibility of a divine life for all humanity, of a heavenly life on earth. Those who have the necessary courage and integrity can follow when they will.

Those who are spiritually awake have been aware for some time that the world is at present in the midst of a of a period such as always precedes Avataric manifestations. Even unawakened men and women are becoming aware of it now. From their darkness they are reaching out for light; in their sorrow they are longing for comfort; from the midst of the strife into which they have found themselves plunged, they are praying for peace and deliverance.

For the moment they must be patient. The wave of destruction must rise still higher, must spread still further. But when, from the depths of his heart, man

> desires something more lasting than wealth, something more real than material power, the wave will recede. Then peace will come, joy will come, light will come.[7]

Meher Baba had said that the Avatar appeared six previous times in our current period of recorded history, as Zoroaster, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed, and now as Meher Baba. The name Meher Baba means Compassionate Father.

Meher Baba was not his given name. That was Merwan Sheriar Irani, and he was born of Zoroastrian parents in Pune, India in 1894. He was attending college there in 1913 when he encountered a well known holy woman who stayed in the area, Hazrat Baba Jan, reported to be about 120 years old, and when was visiting with her she gave him a kiss in the center of his forehead. For the following nine months he entered an changed state of consciousness. Prompted on an inner intuitive basis he sought out additional spiritual masters, and when he came to the venerable Sadguru (Perfect Master), Sai Baba, then around 77 years old, upon seeing Merwan said, "Oh, Parvardigar," the Persian word for Avatar. Following this, Merwan then went to another master, Upasni Maharaj. When Merwan approached him, Upasni Maharaj threw a stone at him that hit him on his forehead. Much later, Meher Baba described this as follows, "When I came near enough to him, Maharaj greeted me, so to speak, with a stone which he threw at me with great force. It struck me on my forehead exactly where Babajan had kissed me, hitting with such force that it drew blood. The mark of that injury is still on my forehead. But that

blow from Maharaj was the stroke of dnyan (divine knowledge)."[8] Sai Baba and Upsani Maharaj directed some of their followers to now go with Meher Baba. It was this early group of followers who themselves gave him the name Meher Baba. In 1921 Meher Baba began his work as the Avatar.

Another thing that struck me at the meeting in Berkeley, and kept me from just brushing the whole thing aside, was learning that Meher Baba had been totally silent, not having said a word from his mouth, since 1925, and that had continued up until then, a period of forty two years. Forty two years without speaking a word! Well, if true, this at least was no ordinary man. He communicated after he stopped speaking for the next year by writing, and then he stopped this, and used a board with the letters of the English alphabet on it and he would point out what he wanted to say, letter by letter. In 1954 he gave up even this, and for the remaining time until he died in 1969 he only used gestures to communicate. It is in these ways that Meher Baba "said" things or gave out messages or "writings." And it was in this way that he said, "My outward silence is no spiritual exercise. It has been undertaken and maintained solely for the good of others."[9]

Through either the alphabet board or gestures, Baba spelled out that he also took his silence in order to break it with just one word: "My mission is to utter this Word of Truth which will pierce the mind of the world and go straight to its very heart. It will convey the simple truth in its utter and indefinable simplicity. It will mark the moment of fulfilment of the Divine Life. It will throw open new gates to eternity. It will bring new

hope to despairing humanity."[10] Furthermore, "The word that I will speak will go to the world as from God, not as from a philosopher; it will go straight to its heart. With the dawn of the realisation of the unity of all life, hatred and dissension will come to an end. There will be unfaltering love and unfailing understanding and men shall be united in an inviolable brotherhood based on the realised Oneness of God."[11]

When I left the meeting I picked up a small book of messages by Meher Baba with the rather Zen like title of The Everything and the Nothing, and I found that I could not dismiss him or forget about him. Over the next few days I occasionally read from this book, and I found Meher Baba's statements to be of especial beauty, and a penetrating simplicity, viz: "God is love. And Love must love. And to love there must be a Beloved. But since God is Existence infinite and eternal there is no one for Him to love but himself. And in order to love Himself he must imagine Himself as the Beloved whom He as the Lover imagines He loves. . ."[12]

Could it be? I wondered about him. Well, if he was what he was supposed to be he would soon break his silence and then I and the whole world would know for sure.

It turned out that I didn't wait that long. Within a year, a series of experiences, coincidences, insights, and feelings occurred that overcame my skepticism and by the Spring of 1968 I became convinced that Meher Baba was the Avatar of the age, come to redeem the modern world. As he had said, "I am that same ancient one in flesh and blood, whose past is worshipped and

remembered, whose presence is ignored and forgotten, and whose future advent is looked upon with great fervor and longing."13

I had the strong urge to see Meher Baba, and along with a growing number of other people awaiting this opportunity I was glad when Baba in India, who had been in seclusion for the past several years as part of his work, said that he was coming out of seclusion and all could see him and be with him. He, with some of his close disciples or "mandali" (circle) arranged a careful program of visits to begin in the Spring of 1969, with different groups of people from different areas, both West and East, coming for different weeks. At this time Baba was almost 75 years old and his health had been dramatically failing. His mandali were worried that this extensive and essentially nonstop period of visiting would place too great a strain on his body. Avatar or no, the mandali were very solicitous and concerned about Baba as a human being. Baba assured them that this gathering would be "no strain" on his body and that he may undertake it "lying down." At the time that seemed to the Mandali scant assurance.

On January 31, 1969 Meher Baba died. His lips were sealed to the end and he did not break his silence.

The mandali realized what Meher Baba had meant when he said "no strain" and "lying down," and they knew that he knew all along that he would not be physically present for this "last darshan" (presence with him). They also realized that he had intended it to go on even with him not physically present, and so they said that Meher Baba's invitation to come and meet him still stood. So I, and with several hundred others, took that trip to

India in 1969, to his tomb in Meherabad near Ahmednagar to have our "appointment with God" as one of the mandali called it.

The movie director James Ivory was at the airport to interview us both upon leaving the United States and returning and wrote an unsigned account of this for The New Yorker.[13]

My experience in India was both very natural and non-mysterious and yet profoundly moving. I felt Meher Baba's presence, even though he was not there physically. When alive he had dictated, "I am not limited by this form. I use it like a garment to make myself visible to you; and I communicate with you. Don't try to understand me. My depth is unfathomable. Just love me. I eternally enjoy the Christ state of consciousness, and when I speak I shall manifest my true Self; besides giving a general push to the whole world, I shall lead all those who come to me toward light and truth."[15] This light and truth were the words I used in place of the name Krishna when I referred to the Gita in Adam Smith's Mistake. According to Meher Baba there is just one Avatar and he comes again and again with different names at different times. In an incarnational echo of the message of Krishna in the Gita, Meher Baba had declared in his, Call:

> Age after age,
> when the wick of Righteousness burns low,
> the Avatar comes yet once again
> to rekindle the torch of Love and Truth.
> Age after age,
> amidst the clamour
> of disruptions, wars, fear and chaos,

rings the Avatar's call:

"COME ALL UNTO ME."[16]

Even though natural and non-esoteric, my experience there was fairly uncanny. All of us who had come to "meet" Baba, or receive his darshan, were gathered by the Mandali in a large hall where Baba, had he been alive, would have met us. We didn't know what we were going to do there. Then, one of Baba's Mandali went up to the chair at the front of the room, which was Baba's chair and had his picture in it, and bowed down at the base of it, and then placed her forehead on Baba's sandals which were at the foot of the chair. When she finished and moved away from the chair there was was a long interval until one of the Westerners finally followed her example. While following her lead, each person nevertheless did it in his or her own individual way. Some got dwon in their knees, others lay out full in front of the chair, some rested their head on the seat and so forth.

This was certainly unusual for many of us, although it is quite a common practice in the East. As I sat there waiting my turn, I wondered if this was not a bit too ritualistic for us, and perhaps even out of character with Baba's own naturalness. But I was struck by the free flow of tears of several who had gone up, with some breaking into sobs right at the chair.

As my turn grew closer my heart started beating so hard that it seemed to be hand knocking at a door to gain entrance. I did not understand why I should be so frightened about this. But was

it fright? Or embarrassment? I walked up to the chair and kneeled down, and I was overwhelmed. There were several strong physical sensations, one of which was a knocking, which was then supplanted by a kind of fire that rose up withihn my chest and seemed to spread to my mind. Baba was in the chair! No visions, I did not see him, but I knew he was there.

It was a very powerful experience that certainly at the moment, was very confirming of the whole trip and who Baba was. However, I have to say that later on, towards the end of the time there, amidst the heat, the dust, and the squalor of India, it flickered across my mind that perhaps this experience was nothing more than what psychologists could call social facilitation, the operation of the power of suggestion in a social context. Meher Baba, in his Call, quoted above, had bid all to "Come unto Me." But what did he mean by come to him? Did he mean to start a new religion? God knows, if he knows anything, that we don't need a new religion. And Baba has said this, "I am not come to establish any cult, society or organization; nor even to establish a new religion. The religion that I shall give teaches the Knowledge of the One behind the many. The book that shall make people read is the book of the heart that holds the key to the mystery of life. I shall bring about a happy blending of the head and the heart. I shall revitalize all religions and cults, and bring them together like beads on one string."[16] He said that religion can become cages: "Though religion has come into existence to liberate man from all narrowness, it can itself become a cage when not understood properly. All the world religions proclaim the same

eternal and universal Truth; yet human weakness has a tendency to carve out some limiting, narrow loyalty which closes its gates upon the shoreless and unbounded ocean of love or divinity. . .I invite man to break through all of his self-created prisons, and taste of the unlimited life which I bring."[17]

The answer was certainly not a new religion, but seemed instead to be seemed to be in the breaking of his silence--"The breaking of my silence will reveal to man the universal oneness of God, which will bring about the universal brotherhood of man. My silence had to be. The breaking of my silence has to be soon." He also said that, "My silence must break. There is no escape for it. I shall not lay down my body until I have given the Word to the world."[18]

But in 1969 he did lay down his body and did not give any word to the world. Or did he? Even after India these questions troubled me deeply.

Chapter II

Meher Baba died as the now mythical 60's came to a close. Of that period he was a minor figure at best. However, Eastern thought and spirituality provided a contribution to the philosophical environment of the 60's culture, with Zen perhaps being the primary influence among the Eastern currents then flowing to the West. In his classic study of that time, The Making of a Counter Culture, Theodore Roszak noted that, "The dissenting young have indeed got religion . . . what began with Zen has now rapidly, perhaps too rapidly, proliferated into a phantasmagoria of exotic religiosity."[1] Then Roszak also observed that "while a good deal of our contemporary youth culture takes off in the direction of strenuous frenzy and simulated mindlessness, there also moves through the scene a very different and much more mature conception of what it means to investigate the non-intellective consciousness. This emerges primarily from the strong influence upon the young of Eastern religion . . .Oriental mysticism comprehends argumentation; but it also provides a generous place for silence, out of wise recognition of the fact that it is with silence that men confront the great moments of life. Unhappily, the Western intellect is inclined to treat silence as if were a mere zero, a loss for words indicating the absence of meaning."[2]

In this statement we can detect a connection between the influence of Zen and Eastern thought and the silence of Meher Baba, although such a connection is not the explicit or conscious

intent of Theodore Roszak, and in this statement he was not referring to Meher Baba. In reference to the overt sources of the influence of Zen on the counterculture, and indeed on Western culture in general, Roszak noted that the Japanese Zen teacher, D.T. Suzuki, and the Western exponent of Zen, Alan Watts, were the two primary sources. Roszak wrote that "in much of what young America knows about the religion [Zen] traces back to one or the other of these two scholars and to the generation of writers and artists whom they have influenced."[3]

I myself, as a young college student in the late 50's, remember going into bookstores and being fascinated by the books on Zen, mostly by Watts and Suzuki, although I hardly knew what it all meant.The Zen influence was transmitted to us, as it was to so many others of those pre-60's times through the writings of the beatniks. Zen had made its way west from England to San Francisco when Alan Watts, who had been editor of the English Buddhist Societies' Middle Way journal, took up residency in the 50's as a teacher at San Francisco School of Asian Studies. One of Watts' early pupils was the poet Gary Snyder, who took to Zen and has been a foremost exponent of Zen and Buddhist sensibility in Western culture ever since. Snyder was among the earliest of the beat writers and helped bring Zen, or at least the Buddhist message, to Kerouac, Ginsberg and others. The existence of Zen got its most wide spread broadcast in one of Kerouac's follow-up books to his epochal, On The Road, and that was The Dharma Bums.[4]

Besides the probably natural attraction for me to the exotic

in this material, on a more meaningful level I, like I presume many others, was drawn to it by at least two things. One was the idea of satori, and the other the practice of the Koan, or Zen riddle.

Satori, which can be generally understood as insight or enlightenment, was a very important concept to a young Western mind surrounded by a materialistic culture built on the creation of endless desires, and a religious background that seemed to offer little in the way of real and attainable ultimates, but mostly a ritualistic church attendance whose only tangible goal seemed to be live in a socially acceptable way in regard to ones surrounding community. Satori, described in natural and very practical terms, presented the real possibility that there was such a thing as enlightenment, a state not a part of and not continuous with ordinary work-a-day consciousness (although in those day I wouldn't have used the term consciousness). This was something that I never had encountered in the 50's in my Western upbringing, even with all of its religious preachments. Or, to put it slightly differently, in my growing up experience and in all my education, both secular and religious, the ideas and realm of mysticism and mystical experience had not reached me at all, and in retrospect it was through this reading in Zen that I first made contact with mysticism and the possibility of mysticism. However, at that time it was just Satori and unique, and I still did not know that this wa an expression of something called mysticism. That was to come later in the 60's when I was in graduate school and the whole area of mysticism, both Eastern and Western opened up to me.

The Koan was so intriguing because here it seemed was a method, something that could be done to attain satori or enlightenment. Furthermore, and I and other Westerners undoubtedly found this aspect of it particularly congenial, it was a method that engaged the intellect, and so seemed to be a natural extension of anything one did in school or academics. It was made clear in the Zen literature that the object of trying to solve the koan was to go beyond the everyday mind (or, let us say, beyond the mind), but the koan method was so intriguing in that one used the mind to do it. It was all paradox. The Zen riddles, such as the most famous, What is the sound of one hand clapping?, or, What is your original face before you were born?, could not help but be apprehended as an intellectual exercise--a puzzle to solve, an answer to be attained--even though it was always pointed out that the "answer" was not an answer in the ordinary sense of answer, but a going beyond answers, and it was not the intellect that solved the riddle.

Following my return from India in 1969, I waited to see what would happen next. Would Baba break his silence? What if he didn't break his silence, was he still the Avatar?Was the "proof" that Baba was the Avatar the breaking of his silence, still as a miracle yet to come? Baba had said, "The moment I break my silence and utter the Original Word, the first and last miracle of "Baba' in this life will be performed. It will be such a miracle as I have never performed. When I perform that miracle, I won't raise the dead; but I will make those who live for the

world dead to the world and live in God. I won't give sight to the blind, but will make people blind to illusion and make them see reality."[5]

The years then went by and there was no breaking of the silence, and little sign of Meher Baba's "public manifestation." While there were some continuing cultural signs of the regeneration of society--the women's movement, the continuing environmental concerns, as examples, the great heady enthusiasm of the 60's increasingly was replaced by the materialism, aggressive individualism, and hedonistic cynicism which peaked in the 80's, "the decade of greed and excess" as it was widely dubbed in the media. Where was the "New Humanity" that Meher Baba said would come into being?

I was well aware of these negative social trends in the early 70's, and was particularly pained in my work as a psychologist with low income people. I worked for a public health agency in rural Maine and I was able to make home visits to many of these families. This was quite helpful in that work since since for many of them keeping a vehicle on the road was very difficult, and travelling what often was a considerable distance to keep an hour appointment with a psychologist was asking too much. But my home visits also had the effect of rubbing my nose right into the conditions of poverty. Small houses with inefficient and dangerous wood stoves, with little children running around right near the stoves; cracks in the walls you could see through to the outdoors; some floors which were dirt; no plumbing, and water brought in from a distant source somewhere

in gallon plastic milk containers. And I could imagine school officials complaining that these children always came to school dirty.

Meanwhile it was obvious that there was plenty of wealth washing around in this society, both publically and privately. For example, while these people were living in basic deprivation, the legislators in congress had just voted themselves a hefty raise saying, "We just can't live on $60,000 a year, or some figure to that affect. I had seen that the Senate was described as "millionaire's club," where about 25% were millionaires compared to a bare fraction of that percentage in the general population that these same senators were supposed to represent.

As a result of this experience I became curious as to what the field of economics had to say about all this, about the matter of poverty and unemployment, and the existence of poverty amidst plenty. I had never taken an economics course in college, and I didn't know what academia, at least, had to say about these problems.

As chance would have it, seemingly, in the small Maine town where I lived was someone whom I knew casually who was a professor of economics at the University of Maine, Mark Lutz. I approached him about teaching me something about economics. It turned out that he had been curious about the field of psychology and was interested in learning something from me, and so Mark and I came together in a striking blending of complementary interests.

One night, after Mark and I had gotten together a number of

times for these discussions, I found myself awakening from a dream, and in my mind were the words, "Humanistic Economics." When I saw Mark next I said to him, "Let's write a book called Humanistic Economics. When he asked, what's humanistic economics, I, at least half jokingly, replied, "I don't know; let's write the book and find out." Actually, I had the vague idea that it referred to building economics on a foundation of Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology.

I later realized or remembered that one of my first contacts with what can be called a new economics had actually come a few years previously to this when I first moved to Maine in 1972. I had heard that there was someone teaching psychology at the University of Maine who was either a "Baba lover" or at least knew about him. Lover was the term that Baba had given to what would generally be called his followers. Since he said that the essence of spirituality was love, and that Divine love is what he came to bring, it wasn't "followers" that he wanted, but people who would strive to love. I called the psychology professor and we arranged to meet in his office at the university. I got there before he returned from a class, and while I was waiting a new book on his desk caught my eye. It was called Sources, and it was a kind of alternative culture reader edited by Theodore Roszak.[6] As I flipped through it I was surprised to see that a Discourse of Meher Baba was one of the readings, as it was unusual to see any references to Baba in general literature. And then, before closing the book, I noticed another selection, with an intriguing title, "Buddhist Economics," by an E.F. Schumacher.

I thought that it was something that I might like to read, but let it go at that. Then when I met Mark and we began our discussions about economics and psychology, one of the first books he gave me to read was Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered, by E.F. Schumacher.[7] All this seemed to be in the back of my mind as the name humanistic economics came to me, and besides its connection with Maslow's psychology, I thought of it as a convenient and distinctive label that could be applied to the kind of economics that Schumacher was writing about.

It wasn't long after that that Mark and I, young and foolish as we were, began working on our book of a new economics. It soon seemed to be taking shape and we decided to write to Schumacher in Switzerland where he then lived, to ask him if he would read it and perhaps write an introduction. Some time after we had written the letter, it was now Mark's turn to come to me with a dream, and he said that he dreamed that Schumacher had died. I, the knowing psychologist that I was, dismissed this with a casual comment that it was "merely an anxiety dream." It was not long after that that we read in the paper that Schumacher died on a trip away from Switzerland. And then, not too long after that, Mark called me and said, "We just got a letter from a dead man." It was from Schumacher and he said that he was about to leave Switzerland on a trip and when he came back he would be happy to look at what we would send him. It must have been one of his last letters.

Mark and I continued with the work on our book and in 1979 it was published as, The Challenge of Humanistic Economics, and

we dedicated it to "E.F. Schumacher, the gentle giant of humanistic economics." It was years after that that we found out about mystical experiences in connection with Eastern spirituality that brought Schumacher to the spiritual and conceptual basis for his later new economics.

When one reads about Schumacher in the biographical statements that accompany his book, one finds that he was an economist member of the British Coal Board, an important but no doubt conventional organization, and since it is British we might say, the very model of a modern bureaucracy. How did someone like that or in that kind of position come to write something as philosophically and spiritually radical as Small is Beautiful? The story, I eventually found out, is as follows.

Schumacher had been a very promising economist who had studied with the eminent British economist, John Maynard Keynes. Keynes is seen as one of the historically great economists, of equal stature with the founder of the field, Adam Smith, and the great rebel, Karl Marx. Keynes wrote primarily in the 30's and 40's and is credited with developing the ideas that helped lead the world out of the Great Depression. In the 40's Keynes is quoted as saying, "If my mantle is to fall on anyone, it could be Otto Clarke or Fritz Schumacher. Otto Clarke can do anything with figures, but Schumacher can make them sing." But someone who can make statistics sing is still not the person who was to write a book that had very little to do with statistics and more with philosophy and metaphysics. Had a transformation come about that had turned this heir to the mainstream intellectual tradition in economics into something quite different?

While he was at the National Coal Board from 1950 to 1970, in his commute from Caterham to Victoria Station, Schumacher began the practice of reading different kinds of books than he had previously. These were the Eastern philosophers and mystics whom he found seemingly had an answer to a question that had preoccupied him increasingly after World War II--"What had caused men to fail as people despite their high level of expertise?" All the writers he was now reading gave a similar answer. For example, he quotes, S. Radhakrishnan, the first President of India, and an outstanding Vedantic philosopher, writing in 1939: "The present crisis in human affairs is due to a profound crisis in human consciousness, a lapse from the organic wholeness of life. There is a tendency to overlook the spiritual and exalt the intellectual." About this time he became friendly with John G. Bennett, a member of the Coal Utilization Board, and a disciple of Gurdjieff, and this led Schumacher into consciousness-raising practices and yoga.

On Februrary 1, 1951 during his daily period of meditation "Fritz" Schumacher had a profound experience: " . . . suddenly all sorts of things that I had not understood became completely clear--and in the most simple manner. . . Sentences and scripture that had been a mystery to me up to now and which I have since re-read suddenly became completely unambiguous and true. It became clear what Buddhists and Taoists understand by "emptiness," nothingness," "Nirvana" or "Tao," and how it is possible that "Plenum," "abundance," "All" of "Life" can be used just as well. Since the 1st February I have not had any more

doubts about the "truth" of "work." Near the end of his life Schumacher wrote, "The modern experiment to live without religion has failed . . ."[8]

The more that I studied formal economics the more I thought there was something wrong with it at what we might call its metaphysical core. All the religious teachings of the ages have taught the value of overcoming or at least limiting desires, while economics appeared to teach the opposite. For example, Jesus said, "It's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle then for a rich man to pass through the gates of heaven.." And Abraham is said to have written on the gates of his city, the Ur of the Chaldees, "He who is content with his portion in life is a rich man." Of course in Buddhism it is fundamental that desires are the root of suffering. Economics, in contrast, speaks about the value of fulfilling wants or desires, and that these wants are unlimited. As one economics textbook puts it, "Let us emphatically add that the overall end or objective of all economic activity is the attempt to satisfy these diverse material wants."[9] Furthermore, it is also the case that economics doesn't just offer this as a description of natural human behavior, but also puts the seal of approval on it and promotes it as a good thing, and thus the humorous economic slogan that happiness is a rising GNP (Gross National Product).

For a long time I thought the root of the problem with economics was that it talked about wants, and did not distinguish between needs and wants. Mark and I based our first book on this issue, but as the decade of the 80's rolled by I began to see

that the problem was yet more fundamental than the issue of wants versus needs. I really should have seen it much sooner because at least in retrospect it was something that Baba had written about most explicitly, and I had read it many times in his writings. But these things, I find, have a way of working in their own time, and only when the time is ripe does the seed that has been planted burst forth with its bloom.

Economics teaches that human economic behavior (and maybe all behavior) is based on self-interest, and that this self-interest is good thing. As one economics textbook puts it, "The market makes productive use of selfishness."[9] It took me an amazingly long time to fully comes to grips with the fact that what Meher Baba said about self-interest and what economics said about self-interest were diametric opposites. For example, in The New Humanity discourse Baba says, "The root-cause of the chaos which precipitates in wars is that most persons are in the grip of egoism and selfish considerations, and they express their egoism and self-interest individually as well as collectively. This is the life of illusory values in which men are caught."[10] And if this were taken to mean that the problem of self-interest only operates in the case of war, we should be know that Baba says elsewhere (actually in Hollywood in 1931), "The root of all our difficulties, individual and social, is self-interest."[11]

Perhaps I was beguiled by the benign interpretation of self-interest given in the field of economics to at first fully acknowledge what Baba was saying. Many economists are prepared to admit that narrow self-interest or selfishness can be a problem,

but in the context of the market with the balance of competing self-interests from each individual, a broader self-interest emerges or is forced to emerge, and that kind of self-interest is what economics is talking about. Therefore, I might have believed somewhere in the back of my mind that the self-interest that economics lauds and the self-interest that Meher Baba condemns are two different things. If I did think this, how could I have forgotten what I had read in Meher Baba as far back as the 60's, where it appeared on a small poster as "The Parade" statement? It was from a message that Baba gave in India in 1939: "Exclusiveness is parading as nationalism; self-interest is known as economics . . ."[13]

When this finally clicked, I decided to write Adam Smith's Mistake. Adam Smith and his successors, Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo, laid the foundations for the field of economics with their endorsement of self-interest. In time this way of thinking, which has come to be called "the economic way of thinking," permeated other areas of thought such as sociology, political science, psychology, and is a main current of thought that defines the modern world, or the world that modern economics has brought into being.

In this regard the modern world is topsy-turvy. It is not self-interest but its very opposite, whether we call it benevolence, ethics, morality, fairness, justice which makes for the social good. The value of one's self-interest in the social order is only to keep in check the overreaching and potentially exploitative self-interest of another so that these higher

qualities can emerge and be allowed to operate. What economists theorized, that self-interest led to a "competitive equilibrium," was too often in practice sadly and tragically wrong. As more perceptive economists have showed, the outcome more closely resembles a war or race to gain monopoly power. The only principle that leads to social harmony is, in effect, the principle of harmony itself, or cooperation. It seemed to me that the proper place of self-interest, again, is only that it is in your self-interest to prevent my self-interest from taking advantage of you, and vice-versa.

Even though self-interest is the root of the matter in economic thinking and the other fields that it has influenced, it is still derivative of the further bedrock issue of the idea of the self. The meaning of self-interest after all depends on just what is this self that expresses and acts on its interest? And this is where psychology attempts to make its offering.

Generally speaking, psychology and the background of Western thought that it emerges from and exemplifies equates the self to what is called the ego. And just as there is confusion and controversy about self-interest, there is the same about the concept of the ego. For one group of theorists there is just the ego, the "I" or "me," and it is out of this theoretical tradition, which goes back to the French cynics such as LaRochefoucauld and the English writer, Bernard Mandeville, as I have explained in Adam Smith's Mistake, that economics gets its idea of self-interest,or "amore-propre" or self-love as Adam Smith first used it.

Once the purity of the monolithic self or ego of the economist is left for the realm of the psychologist's conception of the ego, we come in for all manner of subtleties and complexity, and rightly so. The economist's conception of the person as only motivated by self-interest is obviously a very one-sided image that does an injustice to the multilayered nature of the real human being. For one thing there is the idea of the higher and lower self, so that we can talk about narrow self-interest in contrast to something called enlightened self-interest. But if there is a higher self or higher ego, just what is it, and where does it come from? From experience? Perhaps, but what are its limits? Is it still ego, no matter how enlightened it is? And who is it that defines what an enlightened ego is? Another ego?

Then there are the complexities of Freud; the tripartite division of the self, into ego, id and superego. And then the various conceptions of what is called self-psychology or ego-psychology, and Transactional Analysis with its Child, Parent, and Adult. But these complexities pale besides the Jungian concepts of anima, animus, archetypes, imago, the shadow, the collective unconscious, and to top it off, the Self itself. In this field of the study of the self we are in a maze of diverse, often overlapping concepts with various degrees of overlap, sometimes an ego being something that is desirable to strengthen, and sometimes being something that it is desirable to to overcome. So, although psychology has value in that it substantially broadens out the simplistic economic view of the

self, this broadening may ultimately be no more helpful, and perhaps even less so, of the economic way of thinking.

I believe that one of the charms of Meher Baba, as well as evidence of who he is, is his ability to plunge into the heart of the matter, whatever it is, and make everything suddenly so clear. Baba once humorously contrasted spiritual knowledge, or gnosis, with philosophy, when he gave this definition of philosophy: "The simple made difficult." And this is also a comment on how the intellect, if left entirely to its own devices, can enmesh everything and all questions in a thicket of complications. It was in this same way that Meher Baba revealed simply and clearly and to the point, just what the ego is--it is the identification with the body. That's it, and all else about the ego merely stems from that.

This led me to understand more clearly than ever before the significance of another early and influential economic thinker, Jeremy Bentham, who proposed that moral questions really reduce to bodily sensations: "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we should do . . ."[14] Bentham named this new conception of the person "Utilitarianism," from which the term utility came into economics; human beings seek utility, which is the object of their self-interest. For Bentham it was like a new religion, built on scientific foundations, to replace the old religion, built on superstition. He wrote to a friend in regard to his coining the new name: "A new religion would be an odd sort

of thing without a name." [15] I also now understood more clearly the overarching similarity between the economist's conception of the self and Freud's stress on the "pleasure principle," and on sexuality.

After defining the ego as identification with the bod, Baba then goes on to say that this identification of the self with the body is false, that is, the ego is a false self. It is this false identification which has become culturally enshrined in the principle of self-interest. If, falsely, the self is taken to be the body, then self-interest is basically the interest of the body, i.e., having pleasure and avoiding pain. If people, however, were able to experience who they really are, not the body but something else, this would be an experience that would usher in a New Humanity: "The coming civilization of the New Humanity shall be ensouled not by dry intellectual doctrines but by living spiritual experience."[16] "I intend when I speak to reveal the one Supreme Self which is in all. This accomplished, the idea of the self as a limited, separate entity will disappear and with it will vanish self-interest. Cooperation will replace competition; certainty will replace fear; generosity will replace greed. Exploitation will disappear."[17]

So instead of intellectual doctrines, it was a fresh experience of the Real Self that Meher Baba said he came to bring. This experience I had assumed, with good reason, would come with Meher Baba breaking his silence: "The breaking of my silence, the signal of my public manifestation is not far off. I bring the greatest treasure for which it is possible for man to

receive--a treasure which includes all other treasures, which will endure forever, which increases when shared by others. Be ready to receive it."[18]

I thought I was ready, but it didn't seem to me that I had received it, nor certainly had the world.

Chapter 3

As I worked on the new economics with Mark through the 70's, I continued to find myself obsessed with the question of Meher Baba breaking his silence. Was he yet to? Or was the breaking of his silence symbolic? Even over a ten year span from my trip to India in 1969 to the publication of our book in 1979, approached the question from every angle I could think of--but I could come up with no final satisfactory answer.

During this time, as had been my habit before I had come to Meher Baba, I would occasionally read in Zen, perhaps out of the hope that somewhere in that most penetrating of spiritual doctrines, really the doctrine to end all doctrines, lay some kind of answer. I had always felt that there was a lot of "Zen" about Meher Baba, and the silence breaking question was Baba's ultimate Zen.

Zen talked about the doctrine of "No Mind," and Meher Baba had talked of "manonash," or the annihilation of the mind. A classic line in Zen is "He who knows doesn't speak, and he who speaks doesn't know." And this could no better be exemplified then in the 44 year silence of Meher Baba.

Suddenly it occurred to me that the matter of Baba's Word and the breaking of his silence was a giant koan.I've already referred to two of the most famous of these riddles,

but there are hundreds or even thousands that exist in the Zen literature. At least one major school of Zen, The Rinzai, emphasizes the posing of these classic koans to the student, in perhaps an ascending order of difficulty, as the major method of its approach. Oftimes this is combined with meditation as that what the student meditates on is the riddle, rather than on his or her breath of some other object.

However, what Westerners don't often appreciate, and perhaps many oriental Zen practitioners don't either, is that for the koan to be effective it cannot be just some intellectual puzzle handed down over centuries, but must be something that totally grips the student and becomes something that he or she feels driven to solve, that couldn't be let go even if he or she wanted to. In other words, an obsession. Thus, there needs to be a deep personal connection between the riddle and the student so that her or his whole life gets wrapped up in it. I finally understood this about the koan, at some time in the mid 70's, when I read of the nature of koan described as follows: It is like a hot ball of wax that you have taken into your mouth. You can't spit it out because it will burn your tongue, and you can't swallow it because it will burn your throat. Therefore, what you are left with is the need to keep rolling it around in your mouth.

With this image I suddenly understood that the question of Baba's silence breaking was my koan, and perhaps

ultimately the world's koan. I felt like it could drive me crazy and I did everything I could to get rid of it. I tried to forget about it, but I couldn't; it kept coming back to me. I was forced to keep rolling it around in my mouth.

Although on the outward level my life was apparently in good order--I had built a house, gotten married, wrote a book, had a child, on the inward I experienced an ever increasing sense of desperation. God is within and he is to be found there, so I had learned to believe. But when I tried to "look within" all I found was darkness and a sense of hardness. I was thus impressed, and somewhat comforted when I came across a description of the inner as "dense." My feeling was that Baba needed to break his silence, and until he did real spiritual progress was impossible, as was any hope for improvement in the world.

After my trip to India in 1969 for what the Mandali described as "The Last Darshan" quite a number of other people interested in Meher Baba had gone to India on their own over the years to pay a visit to Baba's tomb, meet the Mandali, and so forth. They generally reported being very moved by the experience and they too felt Baba's presence. I accepted the genuineness of what they were saying because I knew the reality of my own experience there. I figured that Baba didn't just give his darshan to those of us who had gone in 1969, but also "intended" to have his darshan available for those yet to come who hadn't gone in '69. However, I also noticed that quite a number of Baba lovers were going back

again for return visits, and in a number of cases were going back again and again. That I didn't quite understand. Once one had gone and seen it and felt it, what was the point of going back again? I concluded that people were doing this because they had nothing better to do, or didn't know what else to do. It was perhaps not a bad way to spend one's time or structure one's life while waiting for the Avatar to break his silence and manifest to the world.

I myself was quite content to make the much shorter and less expensive trip to the spiritual center that Baba had established in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and tried to do this once a year. I found these visits to the Meher Spiritual Center spiritually invigorating, and they seemed to sustain me in my life back in Maine, and in the world, a world I found quite unregenerate despite the coming of the Avatar, a world in which the love power of the Avatar was little in evidence. I felt Baba's presence in my own life personally, such as in those sustaining trips to Myrtle Beach, and these kept me going as a Baba lover, but in the wider world there was little or no trace of his having come and gone. From the perspective of the world, gone indeed he seemed to be.

In 1980 I found myself in a new job as the psychologist-director of an acute admission unit in a state hospital, and this gave me more income than I had had previously in my small private practice, as well as several weeks paid vacation. I found myself increasingly thinking about using that time for a return trip to India. Perhaps I

was coming up against the same dead end that I believe other Baba lovers were, and I, like them, didn't know what else to do. It had been eleven years since my first trip to India, and my wait for Baba to break his silence was accumulating considerable length. I was very sensitive to and could not easily shake off comments, such as the marvelous remark by Diane White, a columnist for The Boston Globe: "The Second Coming is proving embarrassingly tardy." Yes, Baba had come, but his real appearance was the breaking of his silence and his public manifestation, and in that sense he had still not come and in that same sense it was embarrassingly tardy.

All this time, and especially as the years wore on, I tried harder to relate to the belief of a considerable and perhaps increasing number of Baba lovers who felt that Baba had broken his silence, or was continually breaking his silence. Down deep I felt that this position was a cop-out, and at some level a relinquishing of faith in the ability of Meher Baba as Avatar to perform his miracle. I almost believed that a real faith in Meher Baba as the Avatar was the belief that he had yet to break his silence. All those who believed otherwise, I felt, were compromising or watering down their faith in him to make it more acceptable to the obvious fact of no apparent silence breaking.

However, I couldn't comfortably or realistically uphold this position. Among those who believed that he had already broken his silence were many of the Mandali, his closest disciples, who had been personally with him for years. It was

untenable to me, even with my big ego, to think that it was I who was still holding onto the belief in the reality of Meher Baba while they had slipped away. These Baba lovers would point to other statements of Baba that seemed to support the idea that the silence breaking had already occurred, such as--"I am never silent. I speak eternally. The voice that is heard deep within the soul is my voice . . . the voice of inspiration, of intuition, of guidance. Through those who are receptive to this voice, I speak."[1] And in another place Baba said this, "The illusion which most aspirants find difficult to shake is the belief that infinite truth is an object which has to be attained in some distant future."[2]

So, although Baba had always put the emphasis on the breaking of his silence, an event yet to come, a transformative event the world needed and was waiting for, he did from time to time give out statements like the above. And so, Baba lovers tended to fall into two camps, those that believed that he had not yet broken his silence like myself, and those that believed that he had. Undoubtedly, there were also Baba lovers who flipped back and for between both alternatives. Maybe this latter group were dealing with the matter best of all since, despite their inconsistency, they were at least trying to embrace the two alternatives. In any event, the fact that there were two sides, and I had to admit in most moments, two legitimate sides, was only further impetus to my sense that the matter of Baba's silence breaking was a giant koan.

So, caught in this riddle with no end in sight and becoming increasingly desperate, perhaps I too didn't know what else to do, so why not go back to India? After all, it had been eleven years and most of my friends had gone back since then, and had wonderful stories to tell. Also, I found out that Kitty Davy, one of the original Western mandali, then 88 years old, was also making a trip then, perhaps her last. Kitty had been one of the Western disciples that Baba had sent back to the West after a lengthy stay to help found and run the Center in Myrtle Beach. Kitty was especially important and dear to me. When I first went to Myrtle Beach and met her in 1968, I was deeply struck by the love that was in her, and I knew that it was Baba's influence on her, or "his" love, and it helped to more strongly establish my conviction in Meher Baba. Kitty was going over to India with a number of other Baba lovers, who were accompanying her and helping her travel at the same time that I had my time off, and I felt that it would be a wonderful opportunity to go also go over with her, and so I finally made the decision to go back again.

I wondered what it would be like this time, and I made the mistake of looking at someone's slides that they had taken of their own recent trip. It was a mistake because the slides were mostly of people standing around at various sites in the vicinity of Baba's tomb, smiling and drinking tea. It looked very social, sedate, and not very interesting. At some little corner of my mind I wondered, what had I gotten myself into?

A number of us met at the airport in New York along with Kitty, and we flew over together. To land in Bombay after about a 24 hour trip with time changes seemingly happening all the time is an amazingly tiring ordeal, considering all one does is sit in a plane and once in a while get off at an airport. So it was necessary, and I don't know if any more for Kitty than for the rest of us, that we make the trip to Ahmednagar, the Indian town in Maharastra State where the tomb is in two legs. We stayed first overnight in Bombay when we arrived, and then the next night in Pune, which is about 2/3 of the way to Ahmednagar. Some of Meher Baba's family still live in Pune, and there are a large number of Baba lovers there.

By the luck of the draw, so to speak, I and two other Baba lovers stayed overnight in the same house that Kitty did, which was that of Meherji, one of Baba's oldest Indian Mandali and naturally, therefore, a long time fellow disciple with Kitty. The atmosphere was extremely congenial and warm, and despite my previous misgivings I felt very comfortable and very much at home, and had a sense that I was yet once again in the orbit of Baba's love. I began to feel increasing excitement, with no obvious reason, about heading off the next day for Ahmednagar and Baba's tomb.

We were going to be driven on the five hour bumpy and dusty drive down a classic narrow Indian roadway by one of Baba's family members who was happy about the prospect of driving Kitty and the rest of us in his own car to Meherabad,

and we were greatfull to be able to get that personal attention from him.

Once the ride was underway, I had substantial misgivings about that gratitude. With the four passengers squeezed into his small but relatively comfortable Fiat, we were off down the winding roadway through the Indian countryside. Most Indian roads, and that is the major ones that handle the heavier vehicular traffic--cars, trucks, busses, motor scooters, in addition to the always present bicycles, bullock carts, herders and their animals, and walkers, are built at about a lane and a half width. That is, two vehicles cannot pass each other at the same time. One has to pull over. Indian driving on these roads amounts to what looks like to the visitor as a continuous game of chicken. Two vehicles approach each other at top speed, both beeping their horns, and at the very last moment by some secret rules of preference or dominance, one of them manages to pull over, and thus by the narrowest of margins just avoiding a horrendous head on accident.

Our driver seemed determined to get us to Ahmednagar and Baba's tomb in record time, both in the swerving speed of his little zippy vehicle and in never being the one to pull aside in these head on confrontations. I tell this in a light vein now, many years later and safe, but at the time the ride was no joke. I became afraid for our lives as we careened, beeping, dodging, down the road toward Ahmednagar. Along the way we saw at least one or two vehicles along the roadside

left over from accidents. At one point, despite what was no doubt a major breach of etiquette ,one of us, perhaps it was me, asked him to slow down. He acknowledged, seeming to realize for the first time that we were scared out of our wits, and then without much respite for us at all at that moderately slower speed, picked up again to what I thought was at least our former speed.

We passengers in the car looked at each other in mutual fear, all except Kitty. Although it was obvious that she knew we were going dangerously fast, she was easily the most calm and passive of us, resigned to the situation as we careened along. Whether realistic of not on my part, at one point I believed seriously that we could get killed and never make it to Baba's tomb (at least not in an alive state) and I thought that one has to be able to come close to death to be able to make it to Baba's doorstep.

But we made it. Finally, there it was as we approached it, the tomb, with its little white dome roof glowing like an opaque bubble in the sun. Somehow, again unaccountably, a thrilling feeling arose in me about finally being there. We were driven up the hill, as close as we could drive to the tomb, particularly for the sake of Kitty, and we stopped. As we got out, I saw for the first time that Kitty was carrying a newspaper-wrapped packet of flowers in her lap that she obviously brought to put in Baba's tomb. I was surprised that I had noticed them during the whole trip, but she quietly had them sitting on her lap. I was impressed that out of her love

for Baba she thought to bring flowers, and had somehow gotten them and had them here to symbolically lay at his feet. As for me, I had not thought to bring anything. How self-centered I was; I brought nothing and I had nothing to give.

Just as we were standing outside the car, and I was thinking this, Kitty spontaneously turned to me and asked me if I could carry the flowers the rest of the way up to the tomb for her. I was shaken by this gesture, which seemed so clearly a loving answer from Baba through Kitty in response to my inner feelings. Baba seemed to be saying to me--"You feel you have nothing to give. Here, take these and give them to me." I carried the flowers up the hill for Kitty and gave them to her just before we entered the tomb. She went in, stood there quietly, and put the flowers down over the marble slab on the floor.

Then I went in, and immediately something burst. I felt Baba reaching me from a place way outside myself, with what I can only describe as a blast of his love and presence. It utterly shattered my composure and I began crying. Baba's reality was so tangible and so objective that it made me realize that I had been placing the existence of God only inside myself, and this had been a bias I had picked up from mysticism and Eastern spirituality. In contrast to Western religion, which had placed God as existing outside the person, and thus as something external and apart from and ultimately alien, I had gladly clung to the Eastern

perspective of God as being within. Now I suddenly saw that this orientation, though perhaps preferable to the idea of God as outside, was also limited and false. If reality includes an inside and an outside, and it must necessarily do so if we divide reality into these two spheres, then to place God in one of these spheres and not in the other is to limit God to half of reality. In this experience, which was a shattering, I felt God as being both outside me as well as inside me, and this "me" in fact was such a tiny thing, that the "place" where Baba was so much deeper that he was outside me as well as inside of me. The walls of the "me" enclosed such a small space that to keep or believe that God was just in there is to severely limit his infinite extensiveness. In the tomb, in this bombshell of a moment, Baba blasted through those tiny walls and let me know that he existed on both sides of them, and in fact that all of reality was contained in him, and not the reverse. I also knew in that overwhelming moment that the pain that I had been in for all these past years since he died was somehow a necessary preparation for me to have this experience now.

For the next two days or so I constantly lived on the verge of tears. My heart was in my mouth or at least my throat, and anything that touched me with feeling, and that was almost anything at all, could make me cry. I didn't feel like I was the same person I had been the previous years of my life before coming here again.

After those first few days, this state began to subside

and I got the sense that I was maybe becoming "normal" again. As earthshaking as this experience was, however, it didn't immediately or obviously affect my understanding of the question of Baba breaking his silence. That was to come about two weeks later, shortly before I was to depart from India back to the United States.

I was sitting in what is called Mandali Hall, a long room in the area known as Meherazad, outside of Ahmednagar where the Mandali reside, and where Baba lived with them in the latter years. Baba's chair was in the corner of the room where he used to sit with the Mandali. The floor was covered with a patchwork of various small carpets and cushions and visitors would sit on them and meet with the Mandali, particularly with Eruch, the Mandali member who was almost Baba's right hand man for many years, and who would attend to Baba, read out his messages, translate his hand gestures into words. Eruch was also quite articulate and had a marvelous memory, a trait I noticed that was much more developed in the East than in the West, and he could tell intricate and long stories about Baba, and answer questions by way of these stories and anecdotes. Sitting in Mandali Hall and hearing Eruch's stories and asking endless questions was one of the special reasons for going to India, besides making a pilgrimage to Baba's tomb.

On this particular day, in one of those sessions with Eruch, I was sitting there off to the side, rather casually listening to what was being discussed, and I heard someone

ask him, "What about desperation, Eruch? Is it important to be desperate?" The question readily reminded me of what my condition had been back home. The questioner was apparently referring to what is sometimes known as "divine desperation." Eruch's replied, "No." He went on, "Desperation is ultimately no good. It's like having a ball of candy in your mouth. You don't want to swallow it and you don't want to spit it out, so it winds up getting stuck in your throat." My God, I thought, this is almost the same image I had come to for the question of Baba breaking his silence--the image of the koan. I had never heard anyone else use this image before, other than reading it one time years ago, and here was Eruch with this same image, and saying that this condition was ultimately not good. Instantly I was transfixed, and felt gooseflesh. I couldn't help but intensely feel that this was a message meant for me, in my case as a statement about the silence breaking. My mind now went into a full whirl and I felt this had been set up or potentiated by what had first happened to me when I went into the tomb. Was I to drop the whole riddle, and finally accept that Baba had broken his silence, or rather was always breaking his silence? That message seemed to be coming through to me loud and clear. At some point during the previous week when someone had asked Eruch his opinion about the silence breaking, Eruch pointed to a statement of Baba's that was up on the wall in Mandali Hall: "It is not through words that I give what I have to give. In the silence of your perfect surrender, my love which

is always silent can flow to you--to be your always to keep and to share with those who seek me. When the word of my love breaks out of its silence and speaks in your hearts, telling you who I really am, you will now that this is the Real Word you have always been longing to hear."[3]

This was another one of those statements of Baba indicating that the silence breaking is an always present condition. At another time someone had asked Eruch whether it was a mistake to believe that Baba was still to break his silence, and Eruch said that he didn't think it was a mistake, adding, "It is better to believe in something than to believe in nothing."

All of this along with the rest of my experience here now came together in what felt like a big whirlwind and I seemed to be spinning. I stayed teetering like this until we got on the bus to travel the twelve or so bumpy miles back to the residential dormitory where we were staying. The ride seemed to occur in an infinite time, a time that was out of time. On the ride I wrote in the diary I had been keeping of my trip, "Today Meher Baba has broken his silence for me--Revealed that it has been broken continuously but I have not seen it for these 11 years. Initiated into the life of eternity."

Back in America I felt that I was entering a new stage of my life. Over the next several months my thinking seemed to be moving in a new channel. There was a sense of the infinite or the eternal that now was palpable to me. The

experience at the tomb, of the inner and the outer both being included within the all-embracing presence of Reality, and then the sense of the infinite, I saw as one related phenomenon. In a word, it could be seen as my discovery of the Absolute. Previously, the word absolute would have connoted to me absolutism, or authoritarianism and fanaticism. But now I saw that these were falsifications of what the Absolute was, emotional distortions that used the language of the absolute to impose a personal agenda of power and authority. But to get rid of the Absolute because of these aberrations was to throw away a sense of Reality and Truth, in their highest form, and settle for a relativism that was narrow and limiting. Truth, Reality, The Absolute, God -- these were all equivalents of that which was all embracing, the cosmic container, so to speak, and they themselves could not be just a part of or contained in anything else. Eternity couldn't be a part of time, such as something that occurs at the end of time, as at the end of a succession of moments. Instead, it had to contain time, all of time, and thus eternity needed to be seen as existing now, running parallel to time, but on another level or plane.

I was then able to understand a statement of Baba's that had puzzled me ever since I had first heard it. Someone had once asked Baba why God-realization, or true Self-realization takes so long. Baba answered by saying it doesn't take long; it takes no time at all. I couldn't fathom this then, but now it became clear. God-realization takes no

time at all because it takes one outside of time where time doesn't exist. There are two states; time and eternity. One is either in time or in eternity. When in time you are in time forever, so to speak. There is no end to it--within its own succession. But when you go outside of time then time is no more, as if it had never been. In that case one moves vertically, out from the horizontal line of time, to use this imagery, and this movement along the vertical therefore has no time and thus can take no time.

I also had an insight into the classic Zen riddle of one hand clapping, which was quite different from any interpretation of it that I had heard before. I spontaneously saw this riddle as one line in a dialog that had occurred between a spiritual master and a disciple. They were discussing actions, and the disciple was asking about how to act, or, what is right action? As reply the master asks the disciple the question, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" The disciple answers, "Nothing, no sound." The master then says, "Exactly, you must clap with both hands to make a sound." Instantly, the message is clear. If you do something do it with both hands, that is, wholeheartedly. Right action, thus, is action you do and can do wholeheartedly.

Baba was showing me that he was quite the Zen master, and also showing me that no matter what the questions were, if the search for answers is approached wholeheartedly, then the answers would come. I was to find out that this was a message for all of us.

Chapter 4

Another one of Baba's mandali is Bhau Kalchuri. For the latter part of Baba's life one of the responsibilities Bhau had was serving as night watchman for Baba while Baba slept, which was a sleep like none other. Baba seemed to be deeply, soundly asleep and yet fully conscious at the same time. Bhau describes his experience of this in his, <u>While The World Slept</u>:

> Whenever I went for nightwatch, Baba always stated three instructions. They were: "Don't make any noise. Don't move. And keep awake." One night in Satara, Baba repeated these injunctions about four or five times. Then he told me to go and sit outside. I went out, closed the door behind me, and sat like a statue on the chair.
>
> Usually, throughout the night, Baba would clap every fifteen or twenty minutes, and the night watchman would open the door, go inside and attend to him. But that night Baba did not clap. Not after fifteen minutes, not after half an hour, not after one hour, not even after two hours! And there were plenty of mosquitoes furiously pestering me! I became stiff from rigidly sitting in one position, but I kept comforting myself with the thought that Baba would clap and I would get some relief.
>
> Finally I heard Baba snoring loudly. I thought, "Ah,

> at last, here is my chance. I must at least change my position. He is sleeping soundly and won't hear me."
>
> Very gently, without making the slightest sound, I started to lift my leg. The instant I began lifting it, Baba clapped and I went inside. Baba asked, "Why did you move?" I was wonderstruck. I hadn't made any noise. The door and windows were tightly shut. He was snoring. How could he have known?
>
> Baba gazed at me and explained: "You moved thinking I was asleep. But remember, my eyes roam the entire universe even in sleep! When I can see so far, can I not see you who are so near o me? My sleep is conscious sleep. I am always awake."[1]

At times during these nightwatches, Baba would call Bhau to him and give him certain instructions about writing that Baba wanted Bhau to do, which has since resulted in numerous works of poetry and prose, including a multi-volume biography of Baba's life that is almost a day by day account. In 1967 Baba had given Bhau a few "points" about his Manifestation presumeably to be used towards some further purpose. On the evening of January 24th, 1969, again on nightwatch, Baba said to Bhau that he wanted him to write a book about his Public Manifestation. Now this was a curious request since, as we have seen, no one really knew what Baba's Manifestation was. Bhau expected that Baba would give him the information he needed. Without a further word about this, it was a week later that Baba died. It wasn't until 1977, using the

points that Baba had given him previously, plus substantial doses of intuition, that Bhau finally felt able to begin writing that book. It was published in 1985, when I first read it, and it was called, Avatar of the Age Meher Baba Manifesting. In it Bhau gives Baba's original points--

> My abode is infinite . . . it is formless . . . But there are seven doors in my abode . . . each door remains closed to all those bound in illusion . . . The aim of involution is to open these seven doors to experience my infinity.
>
> The first door is extremely difficult to open . . . All the kingdoms of evolution stand at this door . . . Humanity has its back at this door . . . all faces are turned toward illusion . . . Humanity is the nearest kingdom to this door.
>
> I come to open these seven doors . . . I work to cut a hole in the first door . . . That door leads to the first plane . . . This cutting is my work during my lifetime.[2]

Elsewhere Baba elaborates that the seven doors correspond to what has been known throughout classical mysticism as the seven planes of advancing consciousness. Advancing consciousness is consciousness that now has to undergo involution, since its evolution has been completed through what we generally know of as the Darwinian process.* According to mystical doctrine, the

reference to God creating the universe in seven days and then resting on the seventh day, is really a symbolic reference to the fact that there are seven planes of consciousness and that full and infinite consciousness, or God consciousness, exists on the seventh plane, and that it is on this plane that God "rests." There is also the traditional reference to "seventh heaven." It is for this reason that seven is such a significant number in so many areas, such as in music where an octave consists of seven tones plus a return to the first tone, and in the colors of the spectrum where the spectrum can be said to either consist of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violent and purple, or the first six with the combined "color," white light, being the seventh.

The seven planes of consciousness are described as advanced because ordinary human consciousness or physical world (or gross) consciousness exists before the first plane. The first plane is actually the opening from the physical world to the spiritual world, and in the mystical literature the first plane is called the astral or the subtle. As Baba says in those points he dictated to Bhau, the first door is extremely difficult to open. Once opened, the rest of the journey through the doors or planes is easier. I can speculate that the reason that this first door presents such formidable difficulties is that it demarcates the great divide between the material and the spiritual. If one is stuck in the material world, there may seem to be no way of knowing that there really is anything else, that is a spiritual world or reality.

This is almost precisely the "official" doctrine of modern

thought, which is known as scientific materialism. The labeling of this doctrine as official was done by the 20th Century British philosopher Gilbert Ryle.[3] Although the complete "official" doctrine, outside of the halls of rigorous scientific analysis, does allow a place for the mind as well as the body, the insubstantial mind exists in a very weak position in relation to the very substantial body, very much as a "ghost in a machine" to use Ryle's evocative phrase.[4] And we know that in the 20th Century, behaviorism ruled out the existence of mind altogether, beginning with John B. Watson in 1913 (the same year that Babajan kissed Merwan on the forehead), proclaiming that the concept of mind ought to be consigned to the dust heap of history along with the primatives' belief in invisible "spirits" that animated the winds, rain, and other mysteries of nature. For behaviorism, and other related modern materialistic doctrines, the idea that there is a mind or spirit that moves the human body is the last remaining vestige of primitive animism or spiritism in modern thought. The late 20th Century behaviorist B.F. Skinner also insisted that we apply the same reasoning to the idea of a "self" as well.[4] All of these were spiritistic and fallacious notions. The behaving person or organism was a phsico-chemical system, a machine just like any other machine of nature, although very complex. Nature itself was a giant machine, the machine of machines. Thus, according to Behaviorism there is not even a There is no need for a ghost in the machine. We can see that the economic doctrine of self as body and the behaviorist doctrine are all of one piece, which is the deep belief system of the modern world.

The origins of this belief system are traced to the 17th Century French thinker, Rene Descartes. Descartes lived in a time when mathematics was becoming a preeminent and impressive discipline, and Galileo was discovering truths through experimentation and demonstration. Despite being a student in one of the best French schools, Descartes found the presentation of scholastic philosophy, the integration of Aristotlianism and Christianity, dissatisfying. It lacked the certainty and logical rigor of mathematical proof as well as the certain sensory evidence of empirical research. So Descartes sought to find certain knowledge in philosophy, just as it had been attained in mathematics and mechanics.

He began by what has become known as the method of doubt. He doubted all received knowledge and knowledge based on authority, and sought instead knowledge that he himself, by himself, could know for certain. He first attempted this with the evidence of the senses--"Firstly, then, I perceived that I had a head, hands, feet, and other members composing that body which I considered as part, or perhaps even as a whole, of myself."[4] But he concluded that the senses can be deceived, such as through illusions, dreams, and so forth, and he rejected the senses as the bedrock of certainty. Then he had a great insight. That which doubts must itself exist, and what is that but the capacity for thought. So, Descartes draws his famous conclusion that he exists as a thinking thing--"Cogito ergo Sum"--I think, therefore I am, and its corollary, "Res cogitans," I am a thinking thing.

But at this point in Descartes philosophy, it would be hard

to see how his conclusion that he is a thinking thing would eventually lead, several centuries later, to the actual elimination of mind from the conception of what a person is. The basis for this comes in the next step, and this is in the equally famous passage where Descartes concludes that his mind and body are two separate and distinct things--his dualism:

> I knew that I was a substance the whole essence or nature of which is to think, and that for its existence there is no need of any place, nor does it depend on any material thing: so that this "me," that is to say, the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from body, and is even more easy to know than is the latter; and even if body were not, the soul would not cease to be what it is.[4]

Although this was a most powerful distinction of epochal significance, and it led to the treatment of the body, and the physical world in which it existed as a machine--which is the key concept in the scientific analysis of nature--it also left a considerable philosophical problem. If the body and the mind are two very different things, the former a true thing with extension in space, and the latter, only a "thing" conceptually, with no extension in space, how did they interact or affect each other? Or did they even interact? The numerous answers to these questions over the centuries constitute one of the main topics of philosophy and is known as the mind-body or mind-brain problem.

The startling and radical answer of behaviorism was to cut through all of these various philosophical positions and often tedious reasoning to assert that the mind-body problem was a pseudo-problem; in the final analysis there was no mind, and therefore there is no need to try to determine how they interact. All we can experience are other bodies in action, and even if we were to admit the existence of our own mind, as Ryle says, the modern doctrine "has no good reason to believe that there exists other minds other than his own."[5]

So, in the extreme form of behaviorism modern thought presents its ultimate logic and the purest form of the materialistic belief system. Thus, the first door presents to the modern thinker a formidable barrier, a wall, that to pierce through one would seem to have to deny the hard evidence of the senses. This evidence tells us that we are bodies, and that each self, even if selves exist, is associated with each body. And yet, it is this door or wall that Baba said he has come to cut a whole through in his work as Avatar. Baba also made it clear, as we have seen, that any false walls that the modern world needs to pass through can not be breached by "dry intellectual doctrine," but only by actual experience. However, it was, presumeably, this very reliance on experience that led to the overthrow of the old spiritual doctrines and the establishment of the materialist doctrines.

If not for what was still to occur, I would have taken Baba's statement about cutting a hole in the first door as a general and symbolic statement about his work. And this, in fact,

is how I took this statement when I first read it in 1985. Also, to me it had the slight suggestion for me that it referred to occult experience which I found confusing, since Baba always said that occult and paranormal phenomena had little real spiritual significance, and in fact could easily lead to a sidetracking from real spirituality. Real spirituality for Baba was always a matter of the heart--of love, service, integrity and commitment, rather than of extraordinary phenomena.

The question always remained, however, of how Baba was going to accomplish his world wide mission of "bringing to the hungry and weary world a fresh dispensation of the eternal and only Truth."[6] It certainly was not going to be by starting a new Baba religion. The world already had enough religions, or shall we say more than enough, and Baba said that his work instead "was to revitalize all religions and cults and bring them together like beads on one string." I believe we already see the beginning of this revitalization going on in the infusion of energy that is occurring among the various religions. My experience, which was about to come, of a unique revitalization of Zen showed me that the hole in the first door is other than only a symbolic reference. I also saw how the cutting of this hole was perfectly natural and not paranormal, and could be "seen" by anyone and this seeing could be conveyed quite easily through the medium of ordinary language, such as in a book.

The experiences that I had up to this point had not accomplished this. I had had an experience of the absolute, although that wasn't uppermost in my mind at the time, as to its, significance. For me it was primarily a personal experience that

that helped affirm for me who Baba is, and the philosophical insight that I may have gained from it, which I have attempted to convey, was quite secondary.

As of yet, I saw little or no connection between the everyday experience of reality, and that sudden glimpse of the absolute, the latter a result of my own personal struggle over a number of years, that in itself was nothing that could be directly passed on. So I could say that I knew illusion's wall very well, as all of us do--the sense that the only reality is material and that who we are are physical bodies. I also knew something of the other side, which was the infinite and eternal, or the absolute. But I saw no ready way to go from one to the other, and felt that I somehow was pulled <u>over</u> the wall rather than shown a way through it, or shown anything that could be called a "hole" in the wall. So that term only was a metaphor for me up to that point, to the extent I paid any attention to it.

What happened next, which began in 1985, revealed to me that there was such a hole, a hole that I or anyone else could have ready access to.

The hole originally comes out of someone else's experience, who was not a Baba lover. When he found the hole, he was initially and for quite a while mystified by it, and wondered why such an obvious entrance into the absolute should have been

recognized by him and no one else. That alone seemed to discredit its validity. The he came across Zen, and he realized that what he had found was a unique modern form of what Zen masters had tried to convey with their various methods over the centuries.

It is not surprising that Zen would be the perfect framework for this discovery, because Zen, after all, is no framework at all. Zen is a doctrine to end doctrine, and in a very real sense it can be said that there is no Zen. Or, real Zen is no Zen. Allen Watts expressed this well in his late 50's essay, which attempted to present the kernel of Zen as distinguished from its various cultural husks, such as in official Japanese buddhist culture where individuals are awarded certificates attesting that they have had satori, or in American hip society with its chic spiritual posturing. His essay was titled, Beat Zen, Square Zen, and Zen.[6]

So while I am talking about what is to come as a "Zen experience," this is ultimately a contradiction, and what it really is is just experience. Just experience, no Zen. In being just experience it becomes the perfect match or antidote to the stance of Western scientific materialism, which achieves its authoritative status by its claim to be based on experience. We should remind ourselves here that the word experiment is only a variant on the word experience. So the strength of science and Zen share the same basis. If

illusion's wall has been presumeably built up by the result of direct experience, a hole in it would have to be revealed also by direct experience. Maybe even more direct.

So what follows now is a journey and experience, that by its most remarkable nature, both you and I can share together. As a matter of fact, I think it will have little value for you unless you have this experience yourself. It is, furthermore, an experience whose value lies only in one's willingness to use it, and whose value grows with use. It is simple and natural. As a matter of fact, nothing could be more so, and that is its very meaning and strength. It is also either quiet and unspectacular or perhaps loud and shattering, depending on one's preexisting belief structures and even mood. It has been both of things for me at different times and I suspect will continue to be so. So what is this "it?"

It began for me in 1985, the same year that Bhau's book on the manifestation came out. There was a radio program on Public Radio called New Dimensions that I had listened to, on and off, for several years. It comes out of San Francisco and is a presentation of interviews and discussion with leading thinkers and persons, particularly those with what we might generally call a "New Age" orientation or sensibility. Among some of the early guests on the program were two close disciples or Mandali of Meher Baba, Adi K. Irani and Ivy Duce.

On this particular day when I happened to be listening, the guest was a 76 year old Englishman named Douglas Harding. He was talking about an experience that he'd had quite a number of years

previously, that had transformed his life. He had since written several books stemming from it, and at times takes trips to other countries like the U.S. where he speaks about and tries to communicate this experience. The general name that he used for this experience was "headlessness."

As I listened to the radio program, I was very quickly struck by what he was saying. It seemed to me that I had never heard anything quite like this before. I quote here from a slightly edited version of the of the opening discussion of that program. Harding is talking to the interviewer, Michael Toms.

> Harding says, "Michael, messages are coming to me from other people about what I am out there for them--but that is my appearance--the doubt comes in when I start applying those messages from out there about me to what I am right here. I find that they do need doubting. I am simply not what I look like. I'm the exact opposite of what I look like. I am in my own experience here the exact opposite of what I happen to be to you over there. What I find here requires me to doubt everything I've been told. At naught inches from myself--to have a fresh look for the first time, out of gratitude for having occurred, and curiosity. And what I find right here lies an immense treasure. Here I don't find Douglas. Instead, here I find space for Michael. I find myself here to be space--for your face, your voice, your personality, the scene behind you. I'm busted wide open for you.
>
> In order to receive you I have to be totally different--like

a mirror. A mirror works because it doesn't have characteristics. The place I'm coming from is empty of eyes, teeth, whiskers, and all that stuff. Empty now for you. I guess we're trading faces now, aren't we? What I am here is very, very simple and embarrassingly obvious. What I am at this moment--I'm gone--Douglas is a memory. If I want to recall him all I have to do is get out a mirror, and there he is four feet away. But he isn't here. Here I experience myself as space for you. Talk about doubt. I was told we were face to face. Now I doubt that. I'm very happy to say that it's non-confrontational; it's non face to face. It's not symetrical. It's completely asymetrical. It's face over there to no face over here. . . It seems to me that that's what I need to live from, what I am instead of what I'm told I am. Instead of living from a lump of stuff--to live from this emptiness which is full of the world. You see, if there's something here--a Douglas thing here then I'm that thing. Stop. But, if there's no thing here, which is what I perceive really, why then I'm everything that's on offer."[6]

As I said, I had never heard anything quite like this before, and I wanted to know more. I wrote to the radio program and they gave me Harding's address in England. I wrote to him and, to my surprise, when he wrote back he said that he'd be soon coming to the States again, and that we could meet in Boston, and it was even possible that he could visit in Maine. And so, in

early 1986, Harding was my guest in Maine for a few days, and he gave a couple of workshops while he was there.

Before he came I was able to read several of his books. My sense of wonder and fascination with what he said on the New Dimensions radio program continued when I read his books, and I got a much clearer understanding of what he was talking about. I use the word understanding, but that sounds too intellectual. What happened was that I had the experience that he had, just as anyone can, and through his books, which presented his years of practice with that experience, I was able to gather further appreciation of its significance. However, at that point I did not connect it with what Baba said about a hole in the first door. Before going further, it may be interesting to note here what the English writer and Oxford don, C.S. Lewis, wrote in his introduction to one of Harding's books: "This book is, I believe, the first attempt to revise a movement of thought which has been going on since the beginning of philosophy."[7]

Harding's original experience, the experience of headlessness, goes back to so something that occurred when he was 33, and was in India hiking in the Himalayas. But, as he notes, being in the Himalayas ultimately has nothing to do with it, and one can just as well be in one's living room, as I was when I read his books. Though it may just be that the Himalayas gave him the initial boost that he needed. Those are very high mountains.

It was a still, clear day and Harding could look across misty blue valleys to those highest mountain ranges in the world,

their peaks snow covered against the vast open sky. He describes a particular quiet with an "odd kind of alert limpness or numbness" that came over him. Along with this all thinking, imagination and "mental chatter" seemed to cease. For once he had no words, and the past and future dropped away, and he found himself lodged in the Now. But this isn't, yet, the experience that is the critical one that this is all about. That comes next.

Looking downward at himself, Harding saw his brown hiking boots, leading up to his khaki trousers, up to his black leather belt, his khaki shirt, buttons up the middle of his chest, and then terminating in . . . what? Certainly not a head. He found he couldn't see his head. Instead of a head there was nothing, or space. But in that nothing, that space, where his head should have been he found everything, and very large everythings indeed--the mountains--themselves reaching up to the clear bright blue sky. As harding describes it, "I had lost a head and gained a world." He goes on, "It was a lucid moment in a confused life history. It was a ceasing to ignore something which I had always been too busy or too clever to see. It was naked, uncritical attention to what had all along been staring me in the face--my utter facelessnes."[8]

Now right where you are you can look down at your shoes and then slowly up your body until you get to what? Or look at this book you are holding in your hands. Let your eyes travel along your arms up to your shoulders, and then your body vanishes. It vanishes into what? Certainly not into a head, because then it wouldn't have vanished, but it vanishes into what we might as

we'll call space. And in that space is everything you have just seen, and everything else you can see: The room, out the window, the big tree outside. Everything else that is, except your head. Thus Harding claims, You don't have a head!

But this is nonsense, you may say, and you run to the nearest mirror to find your head. And there it is, of course, in the mirror. And you emphatically assert to Douglas Harding, or by proxy to me, "Hey listen, I have a head and it's right there." And you point to it in the mirror. Now if Douglas Harding or myself, or any one of your friends were right there with you they would see it with you there in the mirror <u>just where you see it</u>. You and we are seeing right <u>there</u> in the mirror, <u>but not Here</u> where you are. Here where you are is only Space, in which everything else exists: your friend's body, the room, the mirror, the reflection of your body and head in it. But surely, you press on, your friend can see your head on top of your shoulders, and she tells you so, and that's right where you thought it was. So you do have a head after all. Reassuring perhaps, but misleading. Deeply misleading. And Harding suggests that this socially engendered fundamental illusion is a major source of our ordinary distorted materialistic conception of reality.

Let us go back to Harding's radio interview. Others see your head on your shoulders and tell you that you have a head there. As a matter of fact, you can touch it, a soft, somewhat pliable, approximately 22 inches around mound of matter. And so you <u>conceive</u> or <u>imagine</u> that in the space on top of your shoulders is a head. What you have touched, though, is some very small region

of stuff within that Space, but not that Space itself. This imagining is so deep, so powerful, that you overlook the most obvious thing in the world--that what is Here, where you are, is no-thing, no-thing or Space. It is only through imagination that you replace all of that Space with a head.

This is what science does, as we will see. It mistakes imagination for perception. Thus, it goes on to claim that you experience the world in your head, or in some portion of your brain. But what this experience of headlessness, or Space, shows us is that for the world to be in your head (nay, the universe), your head must be much bigger than the 22 inches around that it measures to be, or the universe must be much smaller than you thought it was--small enough to be crammed into those 22 inches. The science picture, that you experience the world in your brain, is grossly misleading and ultimately ridiculous. You don't experience the world in your brain, but in Space, just where it seems to be--and this Space, furthermore, is not "out there" where science claims it is, but right Here where you imagined your head to be.

It strongly needs to be noted that none of this is speculation or imagination, but rather the most direct visual experience. As a matter of fact, this experience replaces speculation or imagination. We can say that it is as obvious as the nose on your face. But wait a minute. The nose on your face isn't obvious at all. You have to first see sit in the mirror on your face, and then by imagination put it Here. What is really obvious--so obvious that almost all of us have missed it--right

back to Descartes, as we will see--that right Here, where obvious is most obvious, is not a nose and not even a face for that nose, but openness for all else to exist--the sky, the mountains, this room, the mirror, your face in the mirror, the nose on your face in the mirror. As Harding said upon his great discovery, "I had lost a head, but I had gained a world."

Chapter 5

For over ten years that followed Harding's original experience, he tried to understand it in the context of the religions he was familiar with and the mystical traditions he knew in connection with them. It seemed to him that he saw what the mystics saw, but so few of them,if they were aware of it, referred to their headlessness. He was troubled by the apparent singularity of his experience, and it did indeed cause him to doubt its veracity and significance. He himself had been raised in a fundamentalist religious background in England, and he found that this certainly provided no support or encouragement for the validity of his insight. It was after he wrote his first book based on the experience, a brilliant, yet formidable and difficult work, with the somewhat Christian sounding title of, The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth, that Harding discovered Zen Buddhism, and with that his experience found its home.

This discovery was facilitated by The Buddhist Society of England, which, as we shall see had been largely responsible for the bringing of Zen to the West, and it was the Buddhist Society that in 1961 who published Harding's next book called, On Having No Head, with the subtitle, "A Contribution to Zen in the West." In a later edition the subtitle was changed to, "Zen and the Re-discovery of the Obvious."[1]

In Zen, Harding found that one of the patriarchs of Zen, Hui

neng (637-712) gave out a famous pieces of advice to a pupil who was looking for the Buddha essence. Hui neng implored him to stop all his cogitating and see: "See what your own face looks like--the face you had before you were born." Indeed, the famous Zen koan of the original face. Harding recognized that he had already found it. And he also knew that to find it is also to lose it, because it is nothing--no-thing. And all things exist, in fact, because of it. One of Hui neng's successors, Shui T'ou, said to a monk, "Do away with your mouth and let me hear what you can say?" The monk replied, "I have no such thing," to which Shui approvingly responded, "Then you may enter the gate." How does one speak if there is no mouth and indeed no head? It is from the Void that one's voice issues. So Huang Po writes, "It is all-pervading, spotless beauty; it is the self-existent and uncreated Absolute. Then how can it even be a matter for discussion that the real Buddha has no mouth and preaches no Dharma [Truth], or that real hearing requires no ears, for who could hear it? Ah, it is a jewel beyond price."[3] Harding realized that in headlessness he found a modern entrance into the Eastern experience of the Void, and we'll return later on to this idea of modern.

The Void or "sunyata" is perhaps the fundamental defining characteristic of what is referred to as the Eastern way of thinking, and is what has set it apart from the Western way of thinking. The purpose of all of Zen is no different from the purpose of all Eastern spirituality, and that is to give this experience of sunyata or kensho, translated into english as emptiness. Not that Eastern spirituality or any spirituality stops

there, but it can be seen as the beginning of the path of spiritual discovery which, as we shall see, is true self discovery.

The universality of this concept of emptiness in the East can be seen in one of the central presentations of doctrine in Indian philosophy, the Prajnaparamitahridaya Sutra. A sutra is a teaching, and in Indian philosophy most of the ancient teachings come in the form of Sutras. An english word, suture, meaning stitching, comes from this sanskrit word, so that a sutra can be seen as a stitching together of an idea. This bears a conceptual relationship to the word religion which also means as tying together: re-lignio.

In the name Prajnaparamita (prajna-paramita-hridaya), the root prajna can be translated as intuitive wisdom; paramita refers to a crossing over to another shore, and hridaya means heart. So the full name of the sutra can be translated as the heart of the teaching of the passage to intuitive wisdom. The sutra also has a short name of Heart Sutra, where the word heart means the heart of the teachings of the sutras.

This word heart is most apt since the whole sutra can be translated into these few words: Form is emptiness and emptiness is form. For many students of Eastern thought these seven words stand as most formidable koan in their own right, and it even floated through my mind as a puzzle on my trip to India in 1980. They were that for me until headlessness cracked it, as it did for Harding. This becomes clear as we understand in our own experience what Harding did when he said, "I had lost a head but I had gained a world."

While there is some debate in theology as to whether all religion has the same core, and this is carried over to the study of mysticism as well, from the standpoint of the mystic there is strong indication that at the core all is indeed one. Therefore, the idea of an Eastern spirituality and a Western spirituality as two basically different spiritualities is ultimately dissatisfying to the unity quality of mystical experience. Furthermore, by extension, the experience of unity also finds dissatisfaction with the split between Eastern and Western thought.

One of the remarkable things about headlessness, or what we will come to see as the hole in the first door, is that it brings all of these cultural differences together in what I believe we will find to be an integral new world culture. These are big words and big claims, but what less than this would be the task of the Avatar. In headlessness we will see very directly and very simply one way that this integration is accomplished.

The Eastern concept of sunyata or Void is lacking in the West. Perhaps the closest seem to come to it on a formal basis is the mathematical concept of zero or nothing, and yet we certainly sense that the great and fundamental prominence in the East granted to emptiness can't be due just to what for us is literally nothing. The comparison of the two almost strikes us as some kind of joke. We may exclaim, "Isn't it amazing how the East makes such a big deal out of nothing! That's probably because compared to us they have nothing. If you have nothing, you'd better worship it."

But now we get a little more serious and scholarly. First of all, we recall that the concept of zero in mathematics came from

India where it is Believed to have been discovered prior to the Sixth Century AD. It was utilized in Arabia where algebra was first developed, and then arrived in Europe in the 13th Century. However, the West's use of zero restricts it to calculation, and defines it as nothing. In the East the zero has a different philosophical meaning--it is emptiness or capacity rather than nothingness, but it is because of this emptiness that all things exist. Perhaps the closest parallel to this concept in traditional Western thought is that God created the world ex nihilo (out of nothing).

Now we are ready to see the precise point where Western thought differs from Eastern. When Descartes referred to the evidence of his senses he said, as we had previously quoted, "Firstly then, I perceived that I had a head . . ." We now know this is definitely not true. When Descartes then went on to decide that he couldn't trust the evidence of his senses he did not realize that he had already gone astray when he perceived he had a head. What he did, which most of us have done, is imagine that he had a head where in reality (as given by the visual sense) Space is. What was a product of his imagination he mistakenly took as perception. Descartes developed the method of doubt, and would only rely on direct evidence for truth. But, as we discover with Harding, Descartes didn't go far enough. He didn't doubt as deeply as he needed to, and he relied on imagination rather than perception where his head was concerned, and missed what indeed is most perceptually obvious: right Here where we are, at zero inches from ourselves, is no object at all. What headlessness does then,

as does the sunyata or Void concept of Eastern thought, is actually take the scientific method to its own consistent conclusion.

I have said that the Eastern concept of sunyata is lacking in the West, but we have its equivalent, and that is the absolute. For emptiness and absolute are two ways of talking about the same thing, the one is the Eastern view of it, and the other is the Western, almost precisely two oppositely placed views of the same thing. A further difference, besides this linguistic one or direction of vision, is that while emptiness is still a viable concept in Eastern thought, the vitality of the absolute in the West has long since waned. We don't experience the absolute and we don't believe in it. However, we do believe in something else, but we have not yet come to see that this something else, when rightly understood, is none other than the absolute. That something else is Space.

To discover by direct perception headlessness, is to discover Space. It is in that Space that we find everything else--that is, all things. Since all those things, such as this wall, this table, and your hand have positions relative to each other, so that we might say that the wall is "there" and your hand is "here," all these relative positions, those theres and heres, all exist within the Space that one discovers through headlessness.

This space is the Eastern Void, the sunyata, and it is Absolute since it is the non-changing, always present 'framework' by which all other spatial relativities are established. Thus it is that the Heart Sutra says, form is emptiness, and emptiness is

form. Things exist by virtue of this Space, and it is only by the existence of things that this Space manifests itself and is known.

You may have noted that I have capitalized the word Space when I use it as an absolute, and this is to distinguish it from our conception of space as something physical. I have also done this previously with the words Here and here.

Besides the work of Descartes, the other great progenitor who established the Western intellectual tradition, which eventually culminated in scientific and philosophical materialism, was Isaac Newton (1642-1727). In order to develop his physics, Newton raised space and time to the level of absolutes, so that from Newton onward, space was conceived as something physical and an Absolute, as was time an absolute. Even though Newton, like Descartes before

him, was a spiritual man with spiritual interests, and spent the last part of his life investigating theology and various spiritistic concepts, by making physical space an absolute he effectively eliminated spirit or anything non-material as being Absolute. Later Einstein showed the fallacy of making space and time absolutes through his Relativity Theory. Einstein, however, chose another physical phenomena, the speed of light, for his Absolute.

In the East, the non-material has always been the Absolute, and that has been called sunyata, mu, kensho, nirvana, and other terms. What we can now see is that this Absolute of sunyata is also Space and, furthermore and more significantly, Space is consciousness. This recognition overturns all of our foundational concepts, and in so doing finally breaks down the walls of essential Western dualism.

This dualism is more basic than that based on Descartes philosophical musings, and is described as the split between subject and object. This is experienced as I am here and the world is there. This separation between self and world accounts for much of the sense of alienation from the world that is so endemic to modern Western culture. When we say that I am here, what we implicitly mean is that I am here where my body is, so that my body defines here. The world, then, is all other bodies and things, and since they can't be here, they are there. So the modern view is that I as body am here, and the world as other bodies are there. But, as headlessness or sunyata shows us, as we will see, this appearance is really an illusion, an appearance and

not reality. Direct experience, replacing imagination gives us the reality.

To help "see" this or experience it, let us first take a hint from Descartes. We know that consciousness, if it exists, is certainly not a thing, just as he said. That is, it is not an object and doesn't take up space; not being an object, it can't move in space when our body moves in space. So right away there is some kind of problem because our conscious does appear to move in space when our body moves.

The behaviorists go further. If consciousness is in the body, they ask, where is it? Perform a delicate operation on the body if you will. With careful laser surgery open the cranium and look into the brain. Do you find any consciousness? No you don't. All you find in the body or brain is matter--heart, lungs, brain, but no consciousness. Behind all physical surfaces are just other surfaces, nothing else. Thus the behaviorists conclude that consciousness doesn't exist. This is a very tight and logical conclusion. Yet, some other philosophers and thinkers find this kind of conclusion almost literally crazy.

So William Barrett writes in his Death of the Soul: From Descartes to the Computer the following little reflective anecdote: Imagine, he says, that you are talking to a friend during a long relaxed evening, and that at some point late in the conversation your attention begins to stray somewhat and in a mood of detachment you begin staring at his face and body as objects. You see his lips move as he talks, his eyes gleam as eyes do, his hands moving, and so forth, just as usual. But now the question

taking shape for you places these ordinary phenomena in a strange light, and you wonder, Is there really a mind or consciousness behind this physical appearance? Barrett comments, "we all have such moments of passing schizophrenia." He goes on to point out that this passing schizophrenia is now "buttressed by a solemn body of theory. In our modern world there are philosophers and psychologists who maintain that this human consciousness of ours is an item that can be dispensed with in our theoretical explanations. The theories sometimes differ in their varying degrees of dogmatism or subtlety, but in the end they come to the same thing."[5] This same thing is the non-existence of consciousness.

Headlessness and sunyata accomplish the marvelous feat of showing us that the behaviorists and a humanist such as Barrett are both right (as well as where they are wrong), and in this insight reconciles their radical opposition. This reconciliation can itself be seen as even more radical than their opposition in that it goes to the root of the matter, and in so doing produces the cure for the modern world alienation that we spoke of.

The humanist is wrong, and the behaviorists are right in that out there in things, be they bodies or brains, there is no consciousness. But the behaviorists make the drastic mistake of confining themselves to looking in only one direction, outwards. When one looks the other way, inward, one finds that Here is where consciousness is, and all consciousness is Here. When Barrett has his late evening inquirer question whether there is consciousness behind his friend's physical appearance, the answer really is no.

By trying to locate consciousness 'behind' someone's physical appearance, Barrett betrays his implicit belief that consciousness is somehow in the brain (behind the visage). Barrett is certainly correct in that there is consciousness, but he tries to locate in the wrong place, and the behaviorists have caught him and all others in the mainstream Western tradition in this mistake, born of duality. Consciousness is not behind someone's physical appearance, but rather in front of their appearance. How far in front? All the way Here to where you are.

When we look inward we look into headlessness or Space. This Space is identical to consciousness. The Here, where consciousness is, is Absolute, which means in spatial terms that it is everywhere. That is, all wheres are contained in Here. Bhau Kulchuri refers to this Here as the "infinite point."[6] It may help us to think of this in terms of the metaphor of container and contained. In materialistic terms we are bodies and our bodies are contained in physical space. But in terms of emptiness we are consciousness and all bodies are contained in consciousness. It is critical to note that this is not a reversion to philosophical idealism. This is pointed out by the Japanese philosopher Hosaku Matsuo: "When Buddhism refers to such concepts as the 'mind' or 'consciousness-only' it would be a grave mistake to compare them in terms of Western philosophical correlates, such as idealism or mentalism."[7] The reasons for this are profound, as follows.

D.T. Suzuki has written of The Zen Doctrine of No Mind, which is how he describes the teachings of Zen patriarch, Hui-Neng.[8] Conversely, and seemingly in direct contradiction to this, the Zen

master Huang-Po has written that "there is only one mind."[9] So we have no mind and one mind. Which one is it? What we notice that is common about these two statements is that in both cases they don't refer to multiple or plural minds, such as my mind and your mind mutually existing. Furthermore, from our previous discussion we already can see that the mind is not contained in the brain or in the head as a little packet of stuff, one mind to each head, so that when these heads go walking around minds don't go moving around with them. The amazing conclusion then, is that mind is everywhere and one, just as Space is everywhere and one. Now we can see that there is a perfect correspondence between the two apparently opposite Zen statements. When Suzuki talks about the doctrine of no-mind, he is referring to no individual and separate mind, as in one mind separate from another. When Huang-Po says there is only one mind, he also means that there is no individual or separate mind, but One Mind as in One Consciousness and One Space. If minds were separate, what would they be separated by? Physical space? How can space separate that which isn't itself spatial? No, it is rather that Mind is Space itself (and now again we use our capitalization for Mind). Since there is only one Space, we must then say that there is only one Mind. This is despite our deeply culturally rooted sense that there are separate minds, one mind to a body. Thus, we will talk about Mind and mind, and see how the former creates the latter. It is from the perspective of one mind in one body that Western thought formed its mentalism or idealism. Even though it was groping toward the Eastern experience of Mind as void, by not being able to recognize that there is only

One Mind, Western idealism couldn't help but become a form of solipsism, i.e., I alone exist. Sunyata, on the contrary, carries quite a different meaning; I alone, as ego, don't exist. Consciousness exists and consciousness is one. All I's, that is all I and you, are conceptions formed by and within consciousness. There are not separate consciousnesses.

All this became clarified for me when I met with Douglas Harding. I picked him up at Logan Airport in Boston and we drove up to Maine. In the car he was telling me how we misconceive, or rather misperceive movement. "Look at the road rushing by," he said. "We think we are moving along it through space. But in fact it is <u>it</u> that is moving through us. As you drive down this highway try to see yourself being still, absolutely motionless, and the highway moving through you." Again, a little jolt. And then I said something to him about my Space and his Space, and that the highway is rushing through both our spaces. To which he said, "Why do you say 'my' space and 'your' space?" I answered, "Well, because there are two of us, so two spaces." And then he brought me the necessary breakthrough by piercing a construction in imagination that I hadn't realized I was still carrying. He said, "There's only one Space." "Just one space?" I repeated, uncomprehendingly. "Yes," he asserted patiently, "there's only one space and that's Space." I went on, "But I have a hole where my head should be and you have a hole where your head should be." "But you don't see a hole here" he said, pointing to his head. "You see a lump of stuff that's a head. The only hole exists where you are, and that's not a hole, because there's nothing for it to

be a hole *in*. There's no Space for it to be a Space in. On the contrary, all holes that you find are holes appearing in *it*."

With that I realized that I had been carrying around another imaginative picture, but subtley enough so that despite my headless experience up to that point I hadn't realized that in a fundamental way I was still conceptualizing and not seeing. My imaginative picture was one of each of us being a space on our shoulders walking around, kind of like an image of a honeycomb. But now again with a bit of a crash, which is the way these thing sometimes come--an "explosion"--I now realized (another apt word) that Space of course must be boundless. There is no frame around our space, something about the size of a cutout around our head that we are walking around with. Headlessness is just a gate into infinite Space. As a matter of fact, using a classic Zen image, we can see it as a "gateless gate," gateless because the gate exists only in imagination and not in reality. So when we pass through the gate, the gate of being a physically enclosed being, we do so by realizing that this gate only existed in imagination, our imagination that we had a head. Now we discover--no head--but the infinite Space that we are, in which all things exist.

There is just Space, and its infinite and boundless, and although it is always Here it is no more mine than it is yours. This is so close to Newtonian absolute space--which is why that has been such a valuable concept in Western thought--but the unbridgeable difference between the two is that Space is not out there and physical, with us in it (always as bodies), but Space is Here with all bodies, including our own, in it.

I had been captured by the subtle conceptual snare that the edge of my vision was the frame around Space, but this is false. This frame changes all the time as I move. As we rode along, it was not that space was moving through me and not through Harding. But Here where Space is there is not me or Harding. But only One. And all of space is moving through that One.

Along with the illusion that we are in our head, and thus in our body, instead of boundless and everywhere where consciousness reaches, comes the illusion that it is we who move through physical space rather than space that moves through us.

This can be seen as the deepest and unrecognized aspect of what is rather commonly known as the movement illusion. An everyday example is being in a car at a traffic light. You are waiting at a red light and suddenly you feel your car going backward and you reflexively step on the brake. Then you realize that it is not you that has been moving, but the car alongside you has moved forward and that has produced the illusion that it is your car that moved. The same kind of experience can be had on a train. Two trains moving alongside of each other at a station and the train you're in appears to be slowing down or even going backwards, but what really is happening is that the train alongside yours is speeding up.

The meaning of this kind of experience, as Einstein has explained, is that movement is relative and not absolute. In order to determine what it is that moves we fix on a reference point and experience that as stationary and all else is seen as moving in relation to it. So with the illusion of our car moving

backward at the stop light we have fixed on the vehicle next to us as the reference point and experience ourselves as moving in relation to it. On a much larger physical scale, this is the relativism that Copernicus overturned when he showed that the sun does not move around the earth, as it appears to, but it is rather that earth moves around the sun. This was a revolutionary and controversial discovery in its time and shocked humankind with the realization that appearance may not be reality. We will see how this discrepancy between appearance and reality as we deal with headlessness or Space.

In order to break through the deepest movement illusion, it is worthwhile to actually get up and do this next exercise. It is also worthwhile to keep practicing it, especially when walking outdoors. We have had a forecast of this experience when I talked about driving with Harding up to Maine.

As you walk across the room try to shift your perception and yourself as being still and the room as what is moving. This is to see yourself as being stationary and room moving through you. In the original book on gestalt therapy this exercise was offered as one in making a figure/ground reversal and freeing up perceptual habits and patterns.[9] However, what we are able to know through headlessness is that this is more than an exercise, but in fact is a correction of our very deep and fundamentally illusory perception about movement.

As one experiences this, being the still Space and all else is moving through you as that still Space, you may become confused by the fact that your legs are walking, as it were, and so you

really are moving after all, aren't you? The answer is no, and in fact the elucidation of this answer can be quite jolting, and provide its own satori. The elucidation is that by walking you are not moving through space, but rather that walking is the way you move space through you. This earth is a ball, and your body with its legs is a figure on that ball. By moving your legs in a walking movement what you are doing is rotating that ball through Space, that is through you. The same applies to any vehicle of movement, be it a car, a plane, or whatever. All of these are instruments or tools of moving space through you.

One thing this realization does is allow you to appreciate or realize, as Harding has pointed out, that your movement is not local and limited, but universal. So, as you appear to move it is really you moving the universe through yourself at the "place" where you find yourself to be. Thus, all movement is movement of the whole universe and the universe "interfaces" you locally.

All along we have thought we were moving when our body moved because we identified with pour body. Thus we saw ourselves as a body moving through a fixed landscape, which is Newton's absolute space. Now we find through headlessness that we are not the body (though we "have" bodies) but instead we are Space, or absolute consciousness, which is the only thing that does not move, and that it is in fact the landscape that we propel through us by the act of walking, by our physical vehicle (our bodies). This is not to imagine, but to see, really see, and we suspect, along with Harding, that it is the way that children originally see. That is

why walking is such a delight to them. It is not that they have control over their bodies, which they are hardly cognizant of as bodies, but that they have some control of the whole universe, and what a joy it is to make it move. Much more fun than opening a hand and watch a little ball drop.

As you proceed through this book, it is helpful to keep practicing the headless exercise to remind yourself who (or what) you really are. If you don't, it is quite easy to slip into just conceptualization and take what is written here as abstract words or philosophy, and then it loses all meaning. Its meaning lies in its being experience.

We now see that the headless exercise can be practiced in essentially two ways, either still or moving. Practiced still, either sitting or standing, is to look at yourself. Start with your lower body and then slowly move your gaze upward until you come to your--what? Until you come to Space, where all things exist, including what you just saw. The exercise, again, is one of losing a head and gaining the world. Nay, the universe.

To practice it while moving is to yourself as fixed and to see all else as moving through you. At first, this will seem like merely a perceptual trick, and quite unnatural. However, when practiced over time it will become more and more real, and then you will come to see that the ordinary way of seeing movement--it is you that move through something called space--is really the trick, a trick that lies at the root socially conditioned deception that we are our bodies.

This deception is so intrinsic to all of our social being

that we should expect to find it most intimately built into our language, which is the bearer of our social being, and the basis of our conception about what is real. Just above, I relied on this linguistically based illusion to help generate the power of the headless exercise. I said look at "yourself" and I proceeded to have you look at your body, just the way anyone does when they tell you to look at yourself. This language usage is pervasive, e.g., "Look at yourself in the mirror." What is being referred to here is the body, and not really the self at all, but our deep and unconsciously held belief system equates the body to the self. The fact is that you can never see yourself in a mirror. The only place you can "see" yourself is Here where you are. And what is it that you see when you Here where you are? It is emptiness for all else. You are not a body, but capacity for all bodies.

This socially and linguistically based deception operates most significantly and most harmfully around the issue of death. We talk about burying "someone," rather than the reality of burying their body. And only their body, as we shall see in the next chapter. We can now catch the deception on such expressions as occur in the macabrely humorous song about death as follows: "Did you ever see a hearse go by and think someday that you will die? They'll put you in a big black box and cover you over with dirt and rocks . . ." It is not "you," however, that is put in the box, but your body. Thus, it is also not "you" that dies. How this most common, most basic, most essential word, "you," is used has been a source of great unconsciously practiced deception. When the truth is realized we are able to say, along with the poet, "Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?"

Chapter 6

Through headlessness we have found that conscious is a most remarkable thing. All of it exists where each of us is. From the standpoint of the logic of the physical world this is totally paradoxical, to put it mildly. But consciousness, as it really is, does not follow the rules of physical logic and we have made the mistake in the West for hundreds of years of trying to squeeze it into the structure of physical things. The logic of physical things is based on bodies and their separability, but the logic of consciousness is based on wholeness.

When I am addressing you, I can help you 'locate' consciousness by saying that all consciousness is where you are. You can do the same when you are addressing me. One thing this means is that as persons (or "souls") we are not localizable in physical space where we are localizable as bodies. Where then are we located as persons? Only in consciousness. And where is this consciousness? It is everywhere, or rather all <u>wheres</u> are in it. That's why it is Space.

This Space, this consciousness, is found where you are. You are a self, and thus it is because of the self that consciousness exists. But I am a self too, and since we have already made the claim that there is only one consciousness, is it also the case that there is only one self? It must be. Then how is it that there seems to be your self and others, such as me?

The answer given by Meher Baba is "imagination," which, as we have seen already, is how all duality gets created. Imagination refers to the special property of consciousness, which can also be described as conceptualization. It is imagination that places a head on your shoulders, whereas when based on immediate perception your shoulders don't lead up to a fleshy round enclosed dome but to Space. It is also imagination that projects consciousness as a little packet into the head of anyone who happens to be in your line of sight. This imagination, or conceptual ability, is a very special quality of human beings. It is the basis of their intelligence and their creativity. But this very strength of the human being, as we have now seen, has also been its blind spot. And blind spot is a most apt expression that's more than a metaphor.

The biological blind spot is the place in the retina of the eye where the optic nerves go back to the brain. This spot on the retina has no receptive cells and any object that falls within its radius cannot be seen. It is very relevant to our discussion here to know that it is ordinarily difficult to recognize that one has a blind spot. The reason is that consciousness has the tendency to "fill in" this blind spot with a continuation of the objects that are seen around it. Most basic psychology texts show the simple procedure that can be used to overcome this filling in effect and find the blind spot. This is the experience of seeing an object disappear in it, that is to see nothing where previously one saw an object. It would seem then that this tendency of consciousness on the microscopic biological level, of imaginatively filling in

emptiness, has the corresponding tendency on the ultimate macroscopic level of filling in Space by imagining a head in its place.

So it is by imagination or conceptualization that Self creates you and me, or selves. However, the visual pull of associating a self with a body is so strong that we can much more easily recognize that selves exist in consciousness, and not in physical space, when we get away from vision. Think then of talking to a friend on the telephone. Now you are just communicating with a voice, and that other voice has total existence only as voice when you rely on immediate perception only. But lets go further and even eliminate the sensory experience of voice such as happens when you write your friend a letter. Now the communication is almost purely self to self, mind to mind, with little or no perception of an other physical appearance at all. All you have physically are black marks on paper, such as with this book, and it is only through meaning, which is all mind, that these marks become an other. People have even fallen in love, as pen pals, and have never even met the physical appearance of the other.

Again, it is only there that bodies exist, as is all matter there. All consciousness, on the other hand, is Here. But isn't my own body here, you may ask, yet once again? our past conditioning being so deeply embedded. Headlessness is the key exercise to break through this conditioning.

The face is that your body is there just like all other bodies. Here where you <u>think</u> your body is you really only find a

half body, as it were--a body with no head. All other bodies have heads, but Here your body doesn't. Here you are Atlas with the whole world existing on your shoulders as it is depicted in the mythical image. To find your body with a head like all other bodies you have to see it there, in a mirror or in a photograph.

The situation is asymetrical, as Douglas Harding has recognized. You stand here as headless body in relation to all other bodies with heads, and it is only through imagination that you place a head on top of your body Here. Thus, it is only in imagination that you confront others face to face. In reality it is face to no face. You are an emptiness for all faces (including your own in a mirror), and that emptiness is what Zen has called your "original face." Thus, in reality, there really is never a confrontation between yourself and others, and it is only imagination that makes it so. In reality there is only reception. As emptiness you are pure capacity, capacity for all else.

Now I would ask you to try another, very simple, exercise, and I think again this is only really effective if you actually do it. Extend your arm out in front of you at "head" level with your hand in a fist. Now slowly bring this fist in toward you.

OK, end of exercise.

Now note that your fist was away from you in space and slowly came closer to you. So the fist was actually there and came closer to you Here. Parts of your body then, at least, can move in space in relation to you. What this shows is that your half-body itself is there and not Here. That is why I used the word here with a small h in the second paragraph, second sentence above when I

referred to your body. It is only consciousness--Space--that is Here. When you look down at your legs, say, it is only there that they exist and not Here, although again there is the deeply ingrained tendency to see the body as Here. As a matter of fact, in physical or relative space your body is the closest object to you. You can continue the exercise above by moving your fist all the way to you. You find that it hits a barrier (your head) and remains in front of you in a blurry form, and this is the closest to the real you (not your body) that any object can get. But this Here, let us recognize, is not a point located in the center of your skull--that would just be an imaginative construction--but is really an infinite point that is everywhere. Or rather that all wheres are contained Here. Your hand, your leg, and anyone else's hands, legs, and bodies are always Here.

The here in physical space, in contrast, is relative, not absolute, and thus is quite plastic and changeable. When we ask whether extraterestrials will one day land here, the "here" refers to the planet. When we write to our friend in England and ask when he will come here, this "here" is our country. When we pat our leg and say, "Here, Fido," to our dog, this "here" is our body. When we tell the dentist where it hurts and point our tooth, this "here" is a place in our mouth (but not our original mouth--to deal with that would take an original dentist). Thus, the here that refers to our body is just part of the world of relative heres, and not the Absolute Here.

The analysis that we made above, that words on a page are only ink on paper in their strictly physical form, and that only

in their meaning do they becoming words, is a good way to see something further which has been floating around the edges of our discussion so far: Appearance is there, and meaning is Here. Since the meaning of something is its reality, we can then further realize that appearance is there and reality is Here. We can also put it conversely. There is where appearance is; Here is where reality is. This is the clarification and the answer to another long-standing philosophical issue, the relationship between appearance and reality. The contemporary philosopher Arthur Danto essentially defines the whole task of philosophy in just these terms. He says, "A problem is not genuinely a philosophical problem unless it is possible to imagine that its solution will consist of showing how appearance has been taken for reality."10 What we find through Zen headlessness is that all appearance is there, all reality is Here.

Headlessness shows us the solution to this problem on the deepest level. It shows us that we as persons exist in two 'places'. My appearance, which is my body and its actions and artifacts, such as writing, is there, and my reality, which is my conscious being, is Here, where you are. The same for you of course. Your appearance is there and your reality is Here. So I am in two places for you. As body I am there, and as being or soul I am Here where you are. Your real self, which is consciousness in its undemarcated infinity--which the Tao refers to as "the uncarved block"--contains the reality of both me and you. To put it in slightly different language, ego and alter ego are both contained in Self. This is equivalent to saying that self and other are both

contained in Self. We use capitalization again to indicate the absolute, the consciousness which is always Here where you are.

Why do I say that consciousness is always Here where you are rather than saying it is always Here where I am, because both would be true? I say it that way out of courtesy. This is the meaning of the Indian namaste, where one makes a slight bow with hands folded in the direction of the other, to the God within them. I could say it the other way, but that would be disrespectful to you, and my disrespect could mislead you. It could mislead you to think that I am everything and that you are nothing. Now by acknowledging that the infinity is with you I am also running the risk that you will think that you are everything and that I am nothing. But even if you think that, I don't have to. The truth is that each of us is All, but in the relation between persons one pays homage to reality by giving appearance its due.

There is a further point here. The paradoxical truth is that the other is actually closer to our real selves, our Self, than we ourselves are as egos. Thus, when we acknowledge the other as everything--all reality--we are actually acknowledging our real self rather than our false ego. The paradox of this makes it very hard to see, so we'll elaborate on it further as we go.

The critical faculty is empathy. What we discover by realizing that it is only the other's appearance that is there and that his or her reality is Here, is that others as conscious beings can only exist for us through our empathy and compassion. Without that they are merely flesh covered dolls, only stuff

filled with stuff, electro-bio-mechanical contrivances of nature, just as the behaviorist and materialistic scientist said they were. All consciousness is Here and not there.

This discovery enables us to understand selfishness and self-interest, and even in their most virulent form. The perverse application of this principle allows human beings to become cruel to others, even to the degree of becoming a torturer or a cold-blooded killer. In a more socially acceptable and perhaps necessary form this phenomenon operates in war time. It has been described to me by someone with battle involved military experience that after the first killing the rest can become much easier. The soldier approaches the first killing with fear and his normal level of empathy (apart from what was conditioned out of him by his military training). But after the killing the fear may remain but the soldier on some level of consciousness learns that without empathy the other only exists as an object and his death need need cause one no pain or suffering. Eventually this soldier may go on what is sometimes described as a killing spree. He can with great energy, and with only the attribute of personal courage go on knocking off one enemy soldier after another like shooting gallery ducks, or better yet, like computer screen digitalized enemy images, and even be a candidate for eventual award of great national accolade and honor.

This is not to say that military honor is not justified, and that courage is not a noble virtue, especially when one is risking his or her own life in the defense of one's country. It is also, of course, not to say that radical behaviorists become

cold-blooded killers. Fortunately, they still retain warm-blooded empathy for others even though their scientific theory would find it absurd. What it does say is that the other only exists as a feeling being through ones own feelings, and this is what compassion is.

The Bhagavad Gita itself, the Song of God, with which we began this book, is built around Krishna explaining to Arjuna how he can cultivate the spiritually proper attitude of detachment as he goes about his necessary killing as a soldier. In Krishna's explanation lies the revelations of the real self, and its eternal undying existence. This teaching of the Gita can be taken out of its presumed mythological trappings and be illustrated for us on a very real battlefield with a very real military hero who, in a completely natural and non-self conscious way, enacts as Arjuna, but now in Christian form, the truth of these teachings.

Our Arjuna is Sergeant Alvin York of World War I fame. York was an unsophisticated man of simple mountain faith who was drafted into the army from the mountains of Tennessee. He prayed deeply beforehand on the question of whether it was right for him to go to war. There was even the false rumor that he had been a conscientious objector. He kept a diary during the war which described his experience and exploits.

In the Argonne Forest in France, when he reached the main battlefield, he said, "I'm telling you the woods were shot all to pieces and the ground was all torn up with shells. We went out on the main road and lined up and started for the front, and the Germans were shelling the road, and the airplanes was humming over

our heads, and we were stumbling over dead horses and dead men, and the shells were bursting all around us.

And then it was I could see the power of God helped men if they would only trust him. Oh, it was there I could look up and say:

> O Jesus, the great rock of foundation
> Whereon my feet were set with sovereign grace.
> Through shells or death with all their agitation
> Thou wilt protect me if I will only trust in
> Thy grace.
> Bless Thy holy name."

He and his unit along with a number of other units became engaged in very visible person to person battle in trenches and foxholes, with planes overhead and artillery shells landing and killing soldiers all around him. York writes: "But God would never be cruel enough to create a cyclone as terrible as that Argonne battle. Only man would ever think of doing an awful thing like that. It looked like 'the abomination of desolation' must look like. And all through the long night those big guns flashed and growled just like the lightening and the thunder when it storms in the mountains at home.

And, oh my, we had to pass the wounded. And some of them were on stretchers going back to the dressing stations, and some of them were lying around, moaning and twitching. And the dead were all along the road. And it was wet and cold. And it all made me think of the Bible and the story of the Anti-Christ and Armageddon.

And I'm telling you the little log cabin in Wolf Valley in old Tennessee seemed a long way off.

That night the orders came for us to take Hill 223. The zero hour was set for 6 o'clock, which was just before daylight. We were to go over the top, take the hill, and advance across the valley to the ridges on the other side, and take them and press on to the Decauville Railroad, which was our objective. It was a very important railroad for the Germans. And the Lost Battalion was in there somewhere, needing help most awful bad!"

York then tells what happened as his unit tried to make their advance, "The advance was stopped and we were ordered to dig in. I don't believe our whole battalion, or even our whole division, could have taken those machine guns by a straight-forward attack. The Germans got us, and they got us right smart. They just stopped us dead in our tracks. It was hilly country with plenty of brush, and they had plenty of machine guns intrenched along those commanding ridges. And I'm telling you they were shooting straight. Our boys just went down like the long grass before the mowing machine at home. And, to make matters worse, something had happened to our artillery and we had no barrage.

So our attack just faded out. And there we were, lying down, about halfway across, and no barrage, and those German machine guns and big shells getting us hard."

York and sixteen others made the attempt to go around the left flank of the German line, and somehow found themselves able to slip in and go far behind this German front fortified line. He goes on, "We opened up in skirmishing order and, flitting from

brush to brush, quickly crossed over the hill and down into the gully behind. Then we suddenly swung around behind them. The first Germans we saw were two men with Red Cross bands on their arms. They jumped out of the brush in front of us and bolted like two scared rabbits.

We called to them to surrender, and one of our boys fired and missed. And they kept on going. And we kept right after them. We wanted to capture them before they gave the alarm. We were now well behind the German trench and in the rear of the machine guns that were holding up our big advance. . . So by this time some of the Germans from on the hill was shooting at us. Well, I was giving them the best I had, and by this time the had got their machine guns turned around and fired on us. So they killed 6 and wounded 3 of us. So that just left 8, and then we got into it right by this time. So we had a hard battle for a little while--

I don't know whether it was the German major, but one of them yelled out something in German that we couldn't understand. And then the machine guns on top swung around and opened fire on us. There were about thirty of them. They were commanding us from the hillside less than thirty yards away. They couldn't miss. And they didn't.

They killed all of Savage's squad; they got all of mine but two; they wounded Cutting and killed two of his squad; and Early's squad was well back in the brush on the extreme right and not yet under the direct fire of the machine guns, and so they escaped. All except Early. He went down with three bullets in his body. That left me in command. I was right out there in the open.

I don't know what the other boys were doing. They claim they didn't fire a shot. They said afterwards they were on the right guarding the prisoners. And the prisoners were lying down and the machine guns had to shoot over them to get to me. As soon as the machine guns opened fire on me, I began to exchange shots with them.

There were over thirty of them in continuous action, and all I could do was touch the Germans off just as fast as I could. I was sharp-shooting. I don't think I missed a shot. It was no time to miss.

In order to sight me or to swing their machine guns on me, the Germans had to show their heads above the trench, and every time I saw a head I just touched it off. All the time I kept yelling at them to come down. I didn't want to kill any more than I had to. But it was they or I. And I was giving them the best I had.

Suddenly a German officer and five men jumped out of the trench and charged me with fixed bayonets. I changed to the old automatic and just touched them off too. I touched off the sixth man first, then the fifth, then the fourth, then the third, and so on. I wanted them to keep coming.

I didn't want the rear ones to see me touching off the front ones. I was afraid they would drop down and pump a volley into me. . . . And I got hold of the German major, and he told me if I wouldn't kill any more of them he would make them quit firing. So I told him all right, if he would do it now. So he blew a little whistle, and they quit shooting and came down and gave up. I had

killed over twenty before the German major said he would make them give up. I covered him with my automatic and told if he didn't make them stop firing I would take off his head next. And he knew I meant it. He told me if I didn't kill him, and if I stopped shooting the others in the trench, he would make them surrender.

He blew a little whistle and they came down and began to gather around and throw down their guns and belts. All but one of them came off the hill with their hands up, and just before that one got to me he threw a little hand grenade which burst in the air in front of me.

I had to touch him off. The rest surrendered without any more trouble. There were nearly 100 of them. . . The major suggested we go down a gully, but I knew that was the wrong way. And I told him we were not going down any gully. We were going straight through the German front line trenches back to the American lines.

It was their second line that I had captured. We sure did get a long way behind the German trenches! And so I marched them straight at that old German front line trench. And some more machine guns swung around and began to spit at us. I told the major to blow his whistle or I would take off his head and theirs too. So he blew his whistle and they all surrendered--all except one. I made the major order him top surrender twice. But he wouldn't. And I had to touch him off. I hated to do it. But I couldn't afford to take any chances and so I had to let him have it. . .

So when I got back to my major's p.c. I had 132 prisoners. . .And the Lost Battalion was able to come out that night. We cut

the Germans off from their supplies when we cut that old railroad, and they withdrew and backed up."[11]

Now this is certainly not the account of a cold blooded killer; it is the account of a heroic God fearing soldier who did what he had to do, and the natural instinct of self-preservation was definitely operating. He also does not want to kill any more than he has to. But yet we can see how there need be little or no remorse or anguish in the act, and empathy need not stand in the soldier's way when he acts from the proper sense of duty and detachment. This is one of the lessons of the Gita.

What we should be able to see from the above narrative is that it is only through one's feeling that the other can take on reality as a fellow human being, and not as a physical body. So it is not that compassion puts one in touch with the feelings of another. It is rather that the other's feelings only take on existence through one's compassion. But this goes further. We said that the other is closer to one's real self than oneself is as ego. So it is the remarkable and paradoxical case that it is only through compassion that we eventually come to know who we really are.

In my own explorations of headlessness, following my acquaintance with Douglas Harding's experience, the matter of feeling was very important as I have described here. To realize that all consciousness is Here is to realize that both feeling and thought are all Here, as they are the phenomena specific to consciousness. My recognition of this was guided by Meher Baba's emphasis on the heart and on love as the matter of central

importance in what he came to bring: "Today the urgent need of mankind is not sects or organized religion, but LOVE. Divine love will conquer hate and fear. It will not depend on other justifications, but will justify itself. I have come to awaken in man this divine love."[12] I also knew that Baba had said specifically that the mind has two functions, and they are thinking and feeling, and that what we commonly call heart is really this second function of the mind.[13] So I felt confident in my experience that all feeling was Here was the ultimately significant element that arose out of headlessness. To say that all consciousness is Here is to say that all feeling is here, and that is why compassion is so essential. Without it, as we have just discussed, others don't exist as souls, but only as stuff. Thus, I was very disconcerted when I read in Harding that feelings were only "a pollution" of the pure emptiness of Space, and were really external and not Here at all. For Harding, Space was always pure voidness, and anything that could be said to be its properties, such as thought and feeling, was only a defilement of its pure emptiness. Something was wrong, and I had to ask myself whether my belief that Harding's work was an opening, if not <u>the</u> opening, in illusion's wall was mistaken?

Chapter 7

Harding's rejection of feeling as a quality of consciousness or Space occurs as follows. He says, in a 1974 publication, that we are misled by the reference to feelings (and even thoughts) in such phrases as I love, I fear, I worry, and I think, etc. They lead us to believe "in a central pool or cesspool of thoughts and feelings, flooding and polluting my interior." Instead, Harding says, "when I attend to this Spot and try to experience right here, worry, thoughts, fear, love, and so on, I experience Nothing." Harding then claims that all experience has external reference, so that when we say, "I am frightened of him," what we really mean is that "He is frightening," and when we say "I love her," what we are really saying is that "she is lovely." He goes on: "All qualities adhere to their objects, leaving the Subject here shot of them, intrinsically mindless, free, detached, cool."[1]

Too cool, I thought, although his logic seemed compelling. Similarly, he writes, "The 1st Person, as such, has neither a psyche nor a psychology, but is simple Awareness without a shadow of anything to call its own. Here, I let go of everything. All that I tried to clutch to myself is unloaded upon the world."[2] So I was troubled. The great realization that came to me through headlessness, that all feeling is Here, would now seem to be rejected by Harding. There is nothing Here.

The essence of Baba's message is love, and the work he has

done of cutting a hole in the first door of illusion is to bring an experience of this divine love to humanity. The illusion is that we only exist as bodies, and thus are separate from each other. In this same regard, as selves, then, we are also separate from each other, since the self is nothing other than the representation of the body. Alan Watts has perfectly caught the essence of this modern experience of self when he described it as "the skin encapsulated ego."[3] In Harding's Zen experience I saw the perfect experiential breakthrough out of that bodily encapsulation of the self--it was through the space that we ordinarily imagine is our head. The self was not bodily encapsulated at the head. When we used our direct sensory experience, which was the very method that science used to reach its modern world view that all is matter, we find a gap in this wall of matter, and it is the place where we thought our head was. It is a huge gap in which our consciousness escapes out of the imagined material prison to find itself as everywhere and, in fact, the ground of all forms and appearance.

From my own experience with headlessness, it seemed clear to me that Harding had discovered and brilliantly pointed the way to the hole in the material prison that Baba had worked in his lifetime to cut out. And yet, Harding seemed to deny the major fruit of that opening, the opening to the heart, which is the one heart in all. We are always the only one that feels, but we feel for all. What was wrong? Why did Harding deny this?

Harding's coolness, which is a head quality as opposed to the warmth of the heart quality, maybe had something to do with the

fact that it was headlessness, after all, that his experience revolved around. For me, headlessness led to the momentous discovery that all consciousness was Here where I was, and this meant that all feeling and thought was Here. It also meant, as I discussed in the previous chapter, that it is only though empathy or compassion that others can come into existence for oneself as similarly experiencing beings. Out there in the world of matter they are only bodies. All feeling and all experience is only Here. But yet, Harding, appeared to come to a conclusion that denied this very basis for compassion. For him, headlessness may really be restricted to matters of the head, and not extend themselves to matters of the heart.

There things stood right through Harding's visit with me. I didn't find him to be cold, as I might have expected, but perhaps somewhat dogmatic, as if he had somehow become 'fixed' on his experience and felt the need to be defensive about it. In my house he recognized a picture of Meher Baba and he produced a quote for me from Baba that he kept with him in a little book of quotes. So he knew about Baba. But he didn't seem to be aware of Baba's claim to be the Avatar. Despite the fact that he was spiritually brilliant, or maybe because of it, I had the sense that I couldn't or shouldn't engage him in a debate about the matter of feeling, and that if it were ever to be resolved it would not be directly through him. To some extent, I was to find that I was wrong about this.

In 1986 Harding published a new edition of On Having No Head, which I read in 1988.[4] The main body of the book was largely the

same as the earlier edition published by the Buddhist Society, with most of it word for word unchanged. But added to this was some new matter as a kind of follow up to the earlier edition. And here I came upon something that I found strange. In this new material he outlined a process of spiritual development that he called "The Eight stages of the Headless way." For example, in stage 5, "Practicing Headlessness," he says, "This two-way attention, cleansed of one-way intention [intention outward], is sufficient to liberate us from all ill."[4] But then getting to stage 7, we find Harding calling it "The Barrier." He says that despite all the insights and revolutionary discoveries, he found that "there remains an ache, an undefined longing." This resulted in "unaccounted for stress, perhaps some depression, a feeling of one's worthlessness and futility."[5] What was this all about, I wondered? How can Harding feel this way after what he had previously said. If all is void--cleansed, pure, and free from psyche, where is there any room for an ache?

The answer he gave to this implied question was startling to me in the face (or no face) of all that has gone on before. The problem, he said was the result of "one's personal and separative will or ego." [6] One's what? What will, what ego? For him, headlessness had supposedly eliminated the ego. I then was amazed to read Harding's explanation of this ego problem: "It's as if one's eye (perception) and head (thinking) had been opened and flooded with light, while one's heart and entrails remained at least partially closed and dark. As if one were half surrendered--the upper part completely, while the lower may be protesting like mad."[7]

My heart began to beat excitedly, and I looked over at a picture of Baba that was in front of me on my desk. Here Harding was acknowledging the very problem that I had felt in his work. Furthermore, he was coming to the recognition that this Void, which previously he had claimed had no defining qualities at all, other than pure awareness, now had two parts, an upper and a lower, and this was exactly the same as Baba's division of the mind into two parts, the head or intellect, and the heart or feeling. In Harding's next and final section of the eight stages of his path, which he calls, "The Breakthrough," he continued the recognition and implementation of what he had just acknowledged. He said that All along, even with his deep experience of headlessness, he had overlooked the fact that his will was still active, and I continued to be amazed as he expressed it this way, "Seeing that already one is Nothing and Everything--is a most valuable preparation for the discovery that at the deepest level one already <u>wills</u> Nothing and Everything. Here at last the split is mended; there is no wound dividing the Nothing that is so clearly <u>seen</u> from the Nothing that is now deeply <u>felt</u>--an unconditioned surrender of the will. Or to repeat the Buddha's phrase, as the end of craving."[8] Reading this I quietly shook as I felt all of this coming together at last, ever since I had come across Harding's work 4 years ago, and then subsequently became troubled by his rejection of feeling.

I could see, in comparing Harding's first version of his <u>On Having No Head</u> to this version of some 20 years later, that Harding still had had some significant personal work yet to

accomplish, which involved anguish and suffering, as all this work does, and this involved his recognition of the issue of feeling. Seeing Harding's attempt at correction I felt much more confirmed that his work had the significance I thought it did, even if Harding himself had not quite resolved the issue. When he says above that his "wound" was healed because the nothing that is so clearly seen is not separated from the nothing that is now deeply felt, this is still problematic. Feeling still seems to be lost. What does it mean to deeply feel nothing? It means to feel nothing. As we shall see shortly, it is not nothing that is felt when one surrenders the personal will, or ego, but the feeling that is the basis of compassion--love. The personal will is what blocks this. When you surrender the personal will it is not nothing that one finds, which would set Harding back to his original condition, but love. Harding himself is close to this, as we shall see, but it seems to remain a difficult and illusive matter for him. In this, he is not alone, and this very fact is the main purpose of the Avatar's mission.

In Harding's struggle with this, and in my own struggle with Harding's work, it seemed to me that I was given a personal experience by Meher Baba of how he had come to "revitalize all religions" and bring them together like "beads on one string," with the religion in this case being Buddhism, or more specifically Zen Buddhism, which is a very special religion since, as we have seen, it is the religion of no religion. Thus its revitalization provides us with a way of finding a hole in the material illusion that is specifically suited to the way in which

the illusion had been constructed by the modern mind in the first place. Historical research I did following this sense of confirmation, further amazed me to see just how tangibly Baba's hand could be seen in all this.

The Buddhist Society was begun in London in the late 1920's, primarily by a Christmas Humphreys, to help bring an appreciation and understanding of Eastern thought, and Buddhism in particular, to the Western world. It was Humphreys, in fact, along with the Society that served as the host in the West for D.T. Suzuki and aided in the publication of his works in English, and Humphreys wrote almost all the introductions to Suzuki's books, as well as numerous popular books of his own on Buddhism and Zen.[N] Alan Watts was an Englishman, who had served as an editor of the Buddhist Society journal, The Middle Way, before he left in 1938 to take a job in the United States as a teacher of Eastern religion. It was clear, then, that the London Buddhist Society was a central link between Zen and the West, and that Christmas Humphreys was the major Westerner that formed that link.

In his autobiography, Christmas Humphreys tells how he came to be a Buddhist.[N] He had been raised as a confirmed and "deeply practicing Christian," and was attending college in 1917 when he found out that his beloved older brother had just been killed in the war. This was a shock to him and his religious belief in a protective and loving God. This disillusionment led him into a new and intense search for the meaning of life and existence which was answered in his discovery of Buddhism. There he found an alternative view to that of an Almighty yet Personal God who

created and controlled the universe. In the Buddhist scriptures he read of an "unborn, unoriginated unformed" that can be called by many names, but the best he felt was the Eastern, "THAT," the Nameless. This appealed to him as a great improvement on God. He then writes, "All that lives is alive with the one life of which the universe is the manifestation in form. I am still discovering the vast implications of this fact. If indeed 'life is one' then men are truly brothers. I needed to go no further. Clearly there could be nothing dead, save as that particular form of the one life."[N] He also found that there was no evidence in history of a Buddhist war, nor of a Buddhist persecution, and that alone "should endear it to all reasonable-minded men."[N]

Shortly thereafter Humphreys joined the Theosophical Society, which had been founded by Madame H.P. Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott in 1875, under the principle that "There is no religion but Truth." However, he soon became uncomfortable with its stuffy traditionalism and first formed a "Youth Lodge" in 1923, which after a few years formally separated from its parent organization and became first the Buddhist Lodge and then the Buddhist Society.

In 1931 Meher Baba visited the West for the first time, sailing out of Bombay on the ship Rajputana. Previously Baba had sent a cable to an Englishman, Meredith Starr, who had spent some time with him in India: "Love is calling me to the West."[N] As it turned out, Mohandas K. Gandhi was also traveling on that same ship on his way to the Round Table Conference in London to discuss Indian independence with the British. Gandhi had known of Baba and asked to see him on board, and they met, with Gandhi asking Baba

about spirituality, Indian independence, and various other topics. This meeting of Gandhi with Baba, occurring just before his negotiations with the British in London, is little known.[N]

Largely by word of mouth, various people in England heard about Baba and wanted to meet him, and a retreat was also provided for him in Devonshire, two hundred and thirty miles away from London where people could meet and be with him. One of these was Kim Tolhurst, somewhat of a student of Buddhism, who was studying martial arts under a Japanese teacher. The teacher had met Baba in London and had urged his pupil to also meet him. Tolhurst described her meeting with Baba as follows:

> Meredith wrote back that he felt I was ready for whatever the ashram retreat had to offer and vaguely mentioned that a Master was coming. Anyway, I went absolutely unprepared for what was going to happen. There was enormous excitement the night Baba arrived, though I didn't see him or any of the others with him.
>
> The next evening, Meredith said to me, "Shri Meher Baba has arrived and I would like you to go and see him." Well, I went upstairs to his little room, which resembled a monastic cell because its stone walls were very thick. Baba was seated on a cot robed in white. I don't know what happened--I shall never know what happened. All I know is that I found myself on my knees at Baba's feet, crying as I think I have never cried before.
>
> The tears were streaming down my face. I don't think I

was unhappy; I don't think I was happy. Perhaps the tears seemed to wash away all that had happened to me in the past, all that I had regretted. I was empty in a sense, yet filled with lightness and new dawn--fresh life. I felt clean and light.

I don't know how long this weeping lasted; I couldn't tell you. It was timeless. Baba dictated on the board, which I heard Chanji interpret, "She is to stay near me." Somebody picked me up. I was put to bed and fell into a deep slumber. I can't explain what happened. It was a long, long time ago, but it is an impression which has remained very deep.

I always loved Jesus Christ and it seemed to me that Baba was like the Jesus I had known as a child in the paintings depicting him. I felt this tremendous love, this tremendous compassion. Although there was a great deal to criticize in me and even be stern about (I most certainly had not always been as good or nice a person as I should have been), in his eyes there was nothing but understanding and compassion and no condemnation at all. I think it was that that won me over to him. However sensual one had been, however, undutiful, ungrateful or careless--whatever one's faults were that he saw--it seemed as if he saw what one might become and drew this out."

With her interest in Buddhism, Tolhurst knew Christmas

Humphreys, and she told him about Baba and arranged for Humphreys to meet him when Baba went back to London. In an article in the Buddhist Society journal, some ten years later in 1941, under the title, "The Man of Love," Humphreys, described his meeting. He concludes his account by saying, "If there were more Meher Babas in the world to-day war would end for want of causes. This man of love sets all men an example."[n]

Kim Tolhurst became a disciple of Meher Baba, but Christmas Humphreys remained a committed Buddhist and the President of the Society. That was as it should be. Although most people who met Meher Baba were deeply affected by the encounter, not everyone recognized him as the Avatar or became his disciple, and my own belief is that not everyone was meant to. A contact with Baba, both physically when he was in the body and as well as afterwards, has its affect and achieves what it needs to for the work of transforming both that individual and society, although that transformation need not involve a direct acceptance of Meher Baba as the Avatar. As Baba has emphasized, what he comes to bring is Love, Love Divine, and that is the work, and not whether one personally recognizes who he is or not. Besides, as I think we will see in the case of Christmas Humphreys and Zen Buddhism, it is sometimes more useful to the work of ultimate social transformation that Baba not be recognized.

In his autobiography, published in 1978, some four years before his death, Humphreys again writes about his meeting in 1931 with Meher Baba, referring to him as one of the several "great men" whom he had met in his lifetime. Humphreys writes:

> [Baba's] view was that emotions in the West are like a veritable jungle of untamed animals, and they must be released in order that the mind may come to terms with them. However the emotions are defined, they are one expression of the vast force of the human entity, and must be controlled even as the intellect must be trained and controlled before it becomes a first-class instrument. Meher Baba's emotion was love. I sat beside him cross-legged on a sofa and we talked on love, he through an alphabetical board, as he had taken a vow of silence. He literally radiated love. It was a physical sensation of warmth and I have never experienced anything like it. The effect on visitors varied from garrulous chatter to silence, from halting questions to halting tears. And what fascinated me, who am not an emotional person, is that the love was far above the emotional plane, nearer to the divine compassion which is the supreme quality of Mahayana Buddhism at its best. Would there were more who attempt to develop this one virtue, even though it be still an earthly, personal love, that has at least purged itself of the corrosive force of hate."[N]

Before going on to analyze this remarkable and revealing account, it is worth noting that the very next words after the above discussion of Meher Baba are these, "In the Society a new arrival was Alan Watts."

First of all, knowing something of Humphreys' leaving

Christianity for Buddhism, we may expect that encountering the Christ first hand may have been too much for him personally to accept. We also get a related and further clue in Humphreys' statement that he is "not an emotional person," and what he believed he was getting from Baba was an "emotional" experience, rather than the spiritual experience that it was. He comes very close, however, to recognizing what it was that was happening. He says, "the love was far above the emotional plane, nearer to the divine compassion which is the supreme quality of Mahayana Buddhism at its best." But yet, within the space of two more sentences he winds up almost denying the meaning of what he has just described: "would there were more who attempt to develop this one virtue, <u>even though it be still an earthly personal love</u>, that has at least purged itself of the corrosive force of hate."

But if Baba is the Avatar, not only is he the Christ, but he is also the Buddha, and how come Humphreys did not recognize him as that? For me the answer to this question involves the revitalization work with Buddhism that I believe Baba began doing with his contact with Humphreys.

Humphreys says that he is not an emotional person, and in this he may share the same British quality with the later associate of the London Buddhist Society, Douglas Harding. The West, in general, is known for its emphasis and development of the intellect. In a message given a year after Humphreys met him, when Baba first went to the U.S.in 1932, he dictated the following:

"The West looks at things only from the standpoint of reason and logic and is sceptical about things which baffle the

intellect. . . The benefits that shall accrue to different nations and countries when I bring about the spiritual upheaval will be largely by the amount of energy each one possesses. The greater the energy--however misapplied--the greater the response.

The Master merely diverts the current into the right channel. It will be one of my greatest miracles to bring together and blend the realistic West with the idealistic East, and the West at the zenith of its material and intellectual attainments and the East at the height of its spiritual manifestation in the shape of a Perfect Master will meet without shaming or looking down upon each other. I repeat--materialism and spirituality must go hand in hand. The balance of head and heart must be maintained. The Head for discrimination--the Heart for feeling, whereby it is possible to realize infinite consciousness in Art, Science, Nature, and in every phase of life."[N]

As we have seen previously, one of the avenues of appeal that Zen found in the West was the intellectual. Its method of the Koan, and its Buddhist designation of the goal of "enlightenment" all seemed to direct themselves the problems of the intellectual mind. But now we find a curious thing. This intellectual appeal of Zen to the West may also represent what its own weakness was, or had become, as a spiritual path.

In Humphreys' description of his meeting Meher Baba he said that the love he felt from Baba was near to "the divine compassion which is the supreme quality of Mahayana Buddhism at its best." Now Mahayana Buddhism, or Large Vessel Buddhism, is the branch of

Buddhism from which Zen eventually derived, and as all Buddhism does it teaches compassion. The Buddha is often known as The Compassionate Buddha.[N] Compassion, we must realize however, is certainly more a trait associated with the heart than with the head. Humphreys says that compassion is the supreme quality of Mahayana Buddhism at its best. Although, I don't believe Humphreys directly or consciously is telling us this, there is the implication that at less than its best, Buddhism may lose this quality of compassion, or the heart quality. If this is the case, then we can see that the problem that Douglas Harding ran into and that he had to struggle with was just the same issue.

In 1936, five years after he had met Meher Baba, Christmas Humphreys met D.T. Suzuki for the first time. Then in 1946, as a lawyer member of the British section of the International War Trials, he went to Japan and spent many close days with Suzuki there. Humphreys describes the very touching scene upon meeting Suzuki in Japan, who showed his shame at the current position of his country--"We met in silence, and then the old gentleman--he was already 76--in an immemorial gesture raised his sleeve before his face to hide his emotion." [N] It was after this time in Japan that Humphreys became Suzuki's agent and then put into the European market a dozen of Suzuki's works.

Suzuki's works, at least as they appear in English, certainly emphasize the Rinzai Koan tradition in Japanese Zen, and the breakthrough of Satori out of duality into a state that cannot really be described in other than Suzuki's own famous words, "This is it!" [N] There is little in this that refers to the heart or

feeling. However, Suzuki, being the genuinely spiritually advanced soul that he was, always was aware that Mahayana Buddhism had its biases and knew that a whole and balanced Zen Buddhism must equally blend head and heart, or shall we say, headlessness and heart. Suzuki writes, "Buddhism generally takes three forms of discipline: moral, contemplative, and intellectual; and of these the last seems to have been particularly emphasized by the Mahayanaists. . . While the Buddha apparently taught a well-balanced practice of Sila, Dhyana, and Prajna his followers became one-sided as is generally the case with all religious teachings and emphasized one point at the expense of the others. Mahayana in one sense can be said to have gone too far in its speculative flight, almost to the point of forgetting its ethical code."[N]

In discussing the Indian concept of Karma, Suzuki says that acting solely within the confines of one's karma is merely conditioned behavior or ignorance. He then notes that "In our practical life wherever there is Karma there is Ignorance and wherever there is Ignorance there is Karma. The two cannot be separated," and then he goes on, and the next sentence is quite specifically telling on this point, "But because of the <u>general intellectual tendency</u>* of Buddhism, Ignorance is mentioned first and spoken of as if Karma stands to it in the relation of dependence."[N] Therefore, Suzuki has tried to show that feeling very much belongs in Zen when properly understood, and in so doing supplies the ingredient that Douglas Harding still may not have completely acknowledged. Suzuki:

> When Zen people talk about not having any feeling whatever, that does not mean no feeling on the relative plane, but no feeling based on selfish interests. To have no pain, no desires, does not mean to become cold ashes; it means to have no feeling in connection with selfish ideas. So long as we are individuals, we cannot but be selfish to some extent but this selfishness is not separate from that which is more than self. When self stays as self and does not expand to something higher than itself, that is the relative self. But when self finds itself enveloped, a component in something which is much wider and deeper, then it is not merely the relative self. When that kind of self is realized enlightenment takes place.[N]

This last point, of self enveloped in something wider and deeper, we will return to in the next chapter. Suzuki's point about feeling in Zen is naturally not unique to him, but is found in classic Zen texts. For example, in Hui-Hai, who is known as "The Great Pearl" of Zen, we find the following exchange:

> When I spoke just now of absence of sensation I meant freedom from ordinary sensations, not from holy sensations.
>
> Q: How do they differ?

> Ordinary sensations are those involving duality of feeling. Holy sensations pertain to realization of the voidness of opposites.N

Here Hui-Hai, The Great Pearl, says that the realization of the voidness of opposites is one with "holy sensations." (as its put in this translation), and is not void of all feelings. In fact, it is The Great Pearl who has a specific term that refers to Douglas Harding's error, the error of believing that there are no qualities that describe the void, so that it is only emptiness. The Great Pearl refers to this as "illusory non-abiding." His translator and Zen scholar John Blofeld says that "The Great Pearl urged his listeners not to let their minds abide anywhere and at the same time to keep from illusory non-abiding." Blofeld elaborates, " We must beware of taking the Mahayana doctrine that everything is Sunya (void) to imply a mere nothingness or total cessation of everything, for Sunyata (the Absolute conceived of as perfect voidness) is identical with the Garbhadatu (the Absolute conceived of as the womb of all phenomena)."N

Why this non-abiding, or merely pure nothingness, is illusory is explained in his usual crystal clear way by Suzuki,
"But if emptiness is absolutely beyond all human attempts to take hold of in any sense whatever, it has no value for us; it does not come into the sphere of human interest; it is really non-existent, and we have nothing to do with it. But the truth is otherwise. Emptiness constantly falls within our reach; it is always with us and in us, and conditions all our knowledge, all our deeds, and is our life itself."N

In another place Suzuki explains how it falls within our reach, and is our life itself--our very yearning--and his explanation is exquisite:

> As a matter of fact the Mahayanists do not regard negation as the ultimate goal of their speculations; for with them negation is but a road to reach a higher form of affirmation, and they are aware of the fact that the human mind lives in affirmation, and not in negation. . . Buddhism is no more an agnostic system than a system of atheistic ethics. For in Suchness or Dharmakaya it finds the reason for existence, the true reality, the norm of morality, the source of love and goodness, the fountainhead of righteousness, absolute intelligence, and the starting point of karma--for Suchness, according to Mahayana thinkers is not a mere state of being, but it is energy, intelligence, and love. But as Suchness begins to take these attributes upon itself, it ceases to be transcendental Suchness; it is now conditioned Suchness.
>
> So long as it remained absolutely transcendental, allowing neither negation nor affirmation, it was beyond the ken of the human understanding, and could not very well become the object of our religious consciousness. But there was the awakening of a will in Suchness, and with this awakening we have conditional and self limiting Suchness in place of the absolutely unknowable. . . This is, as it seems to our limited intellect, an eternal process of

> Suchness, from affirmation to negation, and from negation to affirmation. To this mystery of mysteries, however, we fail to apply our rules of syllogism, we have simply to state the truth, apparently contradictory, that our religious consciousness finds in this mystery something unspeakably fascinating and indeed the justification of her own eternal yearning."N

So what I first took to be compelling logic in Harding's description of Sunyata as absolute emptiness with no qualities whatsoever, was really Harding's attempt to intellectually hold on to the idea that Sunyata must be empty on the feeling level, as it was on the conceptual level, despite the experiential fact that he had feelings all the time. Here, even for Harding, the human imaginative and conceptual faculty continued to impose itself on his direct experience--telling him he no longer should have feeling because emptiness meant emptiness of feelings. As we have seen, from other masters of the Zen tradition, emptiness only means emptiness of ego, but this means openess for something else. What is this something else? In Zen it is Suchness, or Garbhadatu, or Dharmakaya, the body of the Buddha. In the West we also have a name for it, I'll let Harding tell us what it is, as he does here in another statement about his later breakthrough: "In terms of our Western tradition, our breakthrough is our unconditional and ever-renewed surrender to God's will as perfectly revealed in our circumstances--to God's will clearly on show all around us and within us, in the shape of all that's going on right now."N

An interesting, and very Zen definition of the will of God--"all around us and within us, in the shape of all that's going on right now."

From Baba I know that as God is love, his will is also love. So to surrender one's will to God's will is nothing other than to surrender ones worldly or ego based feelings, such as anger, jealousy, pride, and lust, for what the Zen master called, "holy sensations." These are really one "sensation," which is not really a sensation at all, but divine love.

When Meher Baba said that he had come to revitalize religion, he did not mean that he had come to revitalize institutions, but that he had come to revitalize us. Naturally, as a result of our revitalization, what we participate in--our institutions, our culture, and our society will also become revitalized. We should be able to see now that a major work of this revitalization is the breaking of the belief that had an iron hold on the modern mind, that we are our bodies. This belief was generated out of the clash between religion and science that began with Copernicus, Galileo, Descartes, and then Newton, and marked the end of a religious era which we call the Middle Ages.

In this clash, science defeated religion by relying on the evidence of the senses and on reason over the dictates of doctrine and authority. In a way, it can be seen as the victory of truth over power. But as Zen, or true mysticism, shows us, the problem with science is that it doesn't go far enough. It doesn't follow the method of experience all the way to its ultimate discovery, but at a critical point stops short and instead creates an imaginative picture of persons as enclosed physical bodies living in a physical space. Having done this, it is then faced with the problem of what to do with consciousness, and winds up with its various solutions to the problem of the "ghost in the machine."

In his Discourses, dictated in the 1930's, Meher Baba had

exactly described this intimate connection between mysticism and experience: "Mysticism is often regarded as something anti-intellectual, obscure and confused, or impractical and unconnected with experience. In fact, true mysticism is none of these. There is nothing irrational in true mysticism when it is as it should be, a vision of Reality. It is a form of perception that is absolutely unclouded, and it is so practical that it can be lived every moment of life and expressed in everyday duties. Its connection with experience is so deep that, in one sense, it is the final understanding of all experience."[1]

With this experience and understanding there is the opportunity for what Meher Baba called "The New Humanity" to come into existence. This New Humanity must see science and spirituality as belonging together. Zen is the ideal vehicle for accomplishing this integration because, although we think of Zen as a phenomenon that has its place in the history of religion, it just as accurately can be seen as a development in what we might call the history of the intellect. Suzuki points this out. He asks rhetorically, "How did Zen come to use such extraordinary methods in its teaching?" He answers that "When we ask this question we have to trace the history of the human intellect, and when we have traced it to its very source we will understand that the methods of Zen were something inevitable in the development of our spiritual life."[2]

However, before it was able to fully fulfill its part in the process of the regeneration of humanity, Zen, and Buddhism through Zen, needed its own regeneration or revitalization. This needed to

involve, as we have seen, restoring heart to what had become biased toward the intellect. Not that Zen claimed to support the intellect, quite the opposite, But in its passage into the modern world, this little gem in God's universe, Zen, had also suffered its own special encrustation: While being a vehicle to counter the intellect, it had little to offer in the mental vacuum it so effectively was able to create. As we have seen, a method or doctrine that can overcome the spiritual deadlock of the intellect, but does so without putting heart in its place, ironically winds up as an intellectual doctrine. In the last chapter we saw that this has been essentially recognized and pointed out by Suzuki himself. Interestingly, when I spoke to Kim Tolhurst (now Grajera) about her relationship to Christmas Humphreys and his experience with Baba, she mentioned to me that one of the later statements Suzuki made was the remarkable comment that, "The most important thing is love."[3] I was then able to find the Trappist monk Thomas Merton quoting this in an account of Suzuki saying goodbye to him.[4] Merton's own inner response to Suzuki's remark was, "I must say that as a Christian I was most profoundly moved. Truly Prajna [insight] and Karuna [compassion] are one."[5]

So I believe it is the case that Baba began the work of revitalizing Zen by his contact with Humphreys, and then Humphreys' subsequent discipleship to Suzuki, and the influence of both Humphreys and Suzuki on Alan Watts. The penultimate work was Douglas Harding's insight and method of headlessness. The culmination was the finding in headlessness the profound experiential basis for compassion and oneness--all feeling is Here.

All along, Zen has played a key role in bringing Eastern thought into the West, with the eventual result to be, as Baba indicated, the birthing of a New Humanity that will integrate the respective and complementary strengths of the West and the East.

I also believe that our discussion has shown that Zen finds its own ultimate fulfillment in no longer so much being "Zen," but in being the way in which consciousness has evolved to further complete its own self-discovery. This can be seen in what has happened to the Koan through all this.

The traditional Zen method of the list of classical Koans presented to the aspirant for contemplation and meditation may still have its place, and will no doubt endure as a spiritual tradition, but I think the more real meaning of the Koan in the modern world is something rather different. As I found in my experience, and as Suzuki and other Zen people suggest, the Koan is ultimately none other than the questioning nature of the human mind brought to a climax. Thus, the Koan is not primarily a classical riddle or story, but whatever question an individual finds herself gripped with. Naturally, the big questions, the cosmological or spiritual ones are the most gripping Koans, the Koans really worth having. Not that we choose our Koans, it is rather that Koans choose us. Or, moreso, that our life poses us our Koans.

This concept of the identity of the Koan with the questions and mysteries posed by life is directly put forth by the contemporary Zen teacher Jiyu Kinnett in her marvelously titled book, Selling Water by the River.[6] "Dogen learned that Soto masters were not bound by any one system of teaching. Instead, they

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preferred to use kaleidoscopic teaching methods and to allow the Koan to develop naturally in the daily life of the trainee as his spiritual understanding ripened rather than force his growth through the unnatural tension created by a fixed system of Koans."[7]. She goes on, "Since there is no doubt that every living person has his own personal koan, which is a facet of the eternal koan, no stories of masters and disciples are included here."

This sense is caught by a Zen writer who was another member of the London Buddhist Society, W. J. Gabb. He says, "The symbol for Zen is usual life, and Zen as I understand it, use it and love it, is the address of the whole of my being to the circumstances of the particular situation in which I find myself. It is Zen itself that calls me forth and Zen itself responds."[8] Then he responds to the question, Who is my master?, with the answer, "I know him quite simply as my life."[9]

I believe that Gabb understands the master quite well. Meher Baba has dictated a message with the specific title, The Religion of Life, in which he says, "As Truth is the very negation of the ego-life, to which man desperately clings, he tries to escape from the deeper perceptions of his own Higher Self, ardently praying for Light in some form of Church, but resisting it in every day practical life, in numberless ways. . . The Religion of Life is not fettered by mechanically repeated formulae of the unenlightened, purblind and limited intellect. It is dynamically energized by the assimilation of Truth, grasped through lucid and unerring intuition, which never falters and never fails, because it has emerged out of the fusion of head and heart, intellect and love."[10]

Meher Baba no longer being alive or "in the body," is now alive only through life itself. Or, the physical life of Meher Baba now continues and is accessible to everyone through nothing other than the unfoldment of their own life: "Throughout eternity I have laid down principles and precepts, but mankind has ignored them. . .Because man has been deaf to the principles and precepts laid down by God in the past, in this present Avataric Form I observe silence. You have asked for and been given enough words--it is now time to live them. . . I repeat, I lay down no precepts. When I release the tide of Truth which I have come to give, men's daily lives will be the living precept."*[11]

When one's life intersects with the awareness of Meher Baba's existence and life, Baba himself seems to become the personal and eternal koan in one. Baba's whole life was koan-like. A close disciple wrote about him (in 1950), "For those who have been close to Baba during these 28 years of his life of 'the one in the many' nothing is important or unimportant by itself or of itself. It is for Baba to lend colour to a most colourless thing or to give no importance to any developments however great they may be in magnitude. It is just like Baba to spend hours in discussing about a thing like a cabbage or dismissing in a few words the question of the whole of creation by just saying that it is made up of nothing, is the outcome of nothing and is altogether nothing by itself."[12] The big questions, that naturally come out of the enigma of Baba's life, are: Who is he? What is the meaning of the breaking of his silence?

We find that Silence itself resonates back to the beginning of

Mahayana Buddhism, and then further back to the beginning of recorded spiritual discourse. Mahayana Buddhism was propagated in China in the early Fifth Century by a young Chinese monk, Seng-Chao. As Alan Watts gives the account, "Seng-Chao had been converted to Buddhism by reading the Vimalakirti Sutra--the story of a journeyman, Vimalkirti, who surpassed all the Buddha's disciples by answering a question as to the nature of the nondual reality with a thunderous silence--an example frequently followed by Zen masters."[13]

In his study of the concept of The Word in Hindu scripture, the French scholar of Hinduism, Andre Padoux, writes: "Brahman, even though being Word, Speech or Formula par excellence, is also mysterious, and owes its power to all of its unexpressed content, to its silence. Is not the concealed portion of the Word its best one? And yet this portion remains unexpressed: Word, perhaps, but silent."[14] In Meher Baba's life we seem to have the living embodiment of this silence, and perhaps the silent word. Thus, for some disciples, his dropping of his body in 1969 was the breaking of his silence as it was the breaking of the vessel that held the silence.

From a study of his life it appears that the way Meher Baba works as a spiritual master is the way life itself works, and vice-versa. One of these ways is that something that one has seen or heard that had little meaning or was insignificant at a latter time, when one is apparently ready, suddenly flashes into significance. This happens with the words that Meher Baba has dictated in the course of his 44 years of verbal silence. A

striking example of this for me followed my struggle with the issue of feeling in Douglas Harding's headlessness. A three word phrase of Baba's that I had read numerous times without paying it any particular attention suddenly took on a deep meaning for me and almost by ~~themselves~~ ITSELF clarified the whole matter of voidness, self, feeling, and self-realization that Harding and others have stumbled upon, and put the question to rest for me in a way that seemed conclusive. The context in which this small phrase appears is as follows, and I'll put the critical three word phrase in italics: "In the state of Liberation there is neither selfishness nor selflessness in the ordinary sense, but both of these are taken up and merged into the feeling of Selfness for all."[15]

This has become so powerfully meaningful to me, as I said. It implies that the Self which is All is actually the root of the self which is ego. That is why we can talk about a higher self and a lower self. Thus, liberation is not the attainment of a void state of selflessness but rather, to quote Baba in that key phrase, selfness for all. How then does one move from the ego or selfishness to Selfness for all? The answer is the ancient answer: through right action or good deeds. Baba again: "Selfishness extended and expressed in the form of good deeds becomes the instrument of its own destruction. The good is the main link between selfishness thriving and dying. Selfishness, which in the beginning is the father of evil tendencies, becomes through good deeds the hero of its own defeat."[16] From this statement we see that selflessness, which is the attempt to give up the ego, is actually only a transitional condition. Baba says, "When the evil

tendencies are completely replaced by good tendencies, selfishness is transformed into selflessness, that is, individual selfishness loses itself in universal interest."[15] We can see here again that selflessness is not emptiness, but rather "universal interest." Baba then continues: "From the good, the soul passes on to God. Selflessness is merged into universal Selfhood."[16] This for me is also the clearest way to explain why concern for another is closer to your real self than self-concern, that difficult point we have stated several times throughout this book. Baba further says, "When we love another it is like adding that life to your own."[16] And, "Real happiness lies in making others happy."[17]

This teaching is also quite directly reflected in Buddhism, but in a different setting than Zen. I have found it most explicitly stated in Tibetan Buddhism. Here is Geshe Namgyal Wangshen in Awakening the Mind of Enlightenment: "THE ACTUAL WAY OF EXCHANGING OURSELF WITH OTHERS: If we truly want to achieve the highest happiness for ourselves and the most effective state through which we will be able to liberate countless beings from the suffering of cyclic existence, then we must be able to exchange ourselves with others. This means to develop an open mind, so that gradually the attitude of cherishing ourself will decrease and we can develop a cherishing and loving mind towards all other beings. We can do this by realizing the fact that the self-cherishing mind is the source of all suffering and that cherishing others is the source of all happiness."[18]

In 1949 Baba began a period of his work that at the time was

as enigmatic as anything he had done. He asked the Mandali to dispose of almost all of the property and belongings in his name, and to enter with him into what was called "The New Life of Meher Baba and His Companions." Then he relinquished the role of the spiritual master in the classic guru-disciple tradition, and instead he became the seeker as an "elder brother" along with his companions. As the seeker, the perfect seeker, he demonstrated the attitude and approach to life that befit the spiritual aspirant. He described this New Life as one of "hopelessness and helplessness," in which they would rely "wholly and solely upon God." By this he meant that he and his companions would live without wishes, dreams, expectations, and hopes based on the future, but instead would live in the "active present" in complete faith in the existence and reality of the Divine.

In entering the New Life on October 16, 1949 Baba startled the Mandali by saying this prayer: "May God help Baba to definitely make this step, which he is taking to give up everything and to go away, irrevocable, so that from 16 October when he enters the new life, there will be no turning back."[19] This was the first prayer for help ever before heard from Baba to God during the previous twenty-eight years, and the Mandali were so taken aback that, as one of them said, "None of us could think of saying Amen." In this prayer Baba as one of the companions invoked the blessing of God as any ordinary person would.

The period of The New Life was concluded in 1952 with Baba being completely satisfied with the results, and Baba again emerged as the Avatar. During the New Life Baba and a selected group of 20

companions journeyed about India over a distance that eventually covered thousands of miles, with the bare minimum of possessions, often sleeping out in the open under trees, and usually begging for their food. Whatever the circumstances they found themselves in they were to avoid indulging in "moods," and to remain cheerful and detached.

All the other lovers of Meher Baba, both in the East and the West, were also to live the values and principles of the New Life in their own lives at home. The New Life had four sub-phases. They were 1)Begging, which meant begging for their subsistence; 2) Langoti (or loincloth) which meant the bare minimum of possessions; 3)Gypsy Life, which meant travelling around with no material aim or purpose, and 4) Labor Phase, which meant work and job. During the New Life a number of the companions were sent off to start a business, and to practice the business under the principle of complete honesty. It was expected that all other Lovers of Baba who were not among the direct companions would be essentially practicing in their own lives the Labor Phase.

During the period of the New Life Baba made it known that what he was establishing in consciousness would be available, not just then, but for all time. He said: "This New Life is endless, and even after my physical death it will be kept alive by those who live the life of complete renunciation of falsehood, lies, hatred, anger, greed and lust . . . This New Life will live by itself eternally, even if there is no one to live it."[20] Bhau Kulchuri has offered his interpretation of the meaning of the New Life. The first three phases of the New Life are the classic components of the

spiritual life of renunciation. During the New Life Baba himself carried out three phases of the New Life to perfection: Begging, Langoti, and the Gypsy Life. There is now no need for us to do these. What is left is the Labor Phase, which is for all of us, and is our natural everyday life. Baba's New Life spiritualizes our natural life, as long as we do it under the instructions for the New Life. As Bhau paraphrases Baba: "I'll do three phases of the New Life for you, and you do the labor phase for me."[21]

It appears then that through the New Life, Baba was showing us how our everyday life can become the New Life, a new life of spiritual realization, a spiritual path. This can be stated in terms of the now popular Zen description of the spiritual path: "Chop wood, carry water." This approach to spiritual realization accords with Baba's account of the nature of this particular cycle of history that his own advent initiates.

The conception of what history is about that is offered by the modern mind is not that of cycles, but of progress. This conception came into vogue during the Enlightenment and was reinforced by Darwin's theory in the late 1800's, and then the era of scientific and technological progress which gathered great speed during the 20th Century. It is the idea that history is essentially a straight line upward course of progress, which largely results from humankind's getting away from its traditional and superstitious religious beliefs, and taking what is conceived of as a rational and scientific mental outlook. The word outlook here is perhaps exactly fitting. This idea was formulated explicitly this way around 1840 by Auguste Comte, the French founder of sociology, and then it was absorbed into the modern mindset.

However, the 20th Century also has another character besides that of scientific progress. It is also the Century of unprecedented war, mass destruction and death, violence and cruelty on a colossal scale, and great and continuing ravaging and destruction of the natural world. It is the first time in our known history that humanity seems capable of destroying its own existence by its own hand. This led, first in the era of the 60's, to an increasingly large scale questioning of the now traditional Western concept of history as straight line progress. It is in the nature of the modern world that "tradition" is established very quickly, and a century of time is well more than enough to establish the deepest tradition of the modern.

The most well known alternative to this modern tradition, which is intimately associated with the West, is the much, much older tradition of classic Indian thought, which understands history as a cycle marked by four phases. These phases are called Yugas., or ages, and they proceed from the Sat Yuga, the age of spiritual enlightenment and peace, to the Kali Yuga, the age of spiritual ignorance and destruction. According to this tradition, we are now in the Kali Yuga, the last age of the cycle.[21] Less explicit in this conception, but quite consistent with it as we saw when we quoted from the Bhagavad Gita, is that the advent of the Avatar brings in the new yuga or new age.

In the West, in its ancient tradition going back to the Greeks, there is also a conception of history as a cycle with four ages, and these are named after metals so that the highest age is the Golden Age, and the lowest is the Iron Age. This conception may

have a common origin with the Indian. The terms East and West themselves can be placed in a cyclic conception. The East is the direction where the sun rises, starting the day, and the West is the place where the sun sets and the day draws to a close. Now since the earth is a globe, there really is no place that's geographically East and West. The sun "rises" and "sets" equally at all points of the globe. Therefore, it is claimed in the ancient tradition that the East and West are not ultimately places but states of consciousness and culture.[22] The East stands for spiritual culture, and the West for material culture. Golden Ages, or ages of peace and harmony, are ages where the determining note is spirituality, and ages of destruction and despair are ages where the determining note is material and materialism. According to the thema, the ascendancy of the West in world culture means that materialism has overrun spirituality, and that destruction reigns. The cycle of history comes to a close with the ascendancy of the West, and the coming into being of a new age means the reemergence in world culture of the East, or spirituality.

Meher Baba has also described history as a cycle, but instead of referring to the familiar Indian framework of four yugas, he instead places the current historical process within the lesser known to us Persian conception, which has two polar phases or ages. In a message given in 1944 Baba explained his advent within this framework. He titled the message, "Cheer and Hope for Suffering Humanity." In it he said,

However dark the clouds and whatever may be the poignancy of

pain and despair, one spiritual fact, embodying cheer and hope to suffering humanity, must not be lost sight of and which I am going to convey to you here today.

There are always two aspects of Divinity, perpetually and eternally active in the affairs of the world. The destructive aspect of Divinity as expressed in Persian [Shama-e-Jalal] means 'Self-Glorification' and the constructive aspect of Divinity is called in Persian 'Self-Beatitude' [Shama-e-Jamal]. The aspect of 'Self-Glorification' by God, when it gets palpably active, entails suffering and destruction on a colossal scale, as we see it today. The aspect of Divine 'Self-Beatitude' when it asserts itself, brings in its wake peace and plenty.

In the aspect of 'Self-Glorification,' Divinity repels itself through its own creation, and in the aspect of 'Self-Beatitude,' Divinity attracts or loves itself through its own creation. The former is a negative method and the latter is a positive method and both these methods ultimately are instruments of Divine Wisdom, to rouse humanity to its Divine Heritage, which is 'Self-Realization.'

Further, both the aspects of God referred to just now not only affect humanity individually and collectively, but its intensity and force is directly in proportion to each other and they assert themselves in cyclic waves. Now that the Destructive phase is about to weaken, the aspect of 'Divine Beatitude' is nearly due to come to the force; and to invite humanity to avail itself of this Blessedness to come is my Divine Mission in life.[23]

This dual aspect account of the historical cycle gives us the basis, I believe, of deeply understanding the significance of the Labor Phase mode of spirituality that Baba established in the New Life. Traditionally, spirituality involved a withdrawal from the world, and from the perspective of the life of the world, spiritual aspirants or seekers were ascetics and renunciates. In the West we find this in the monastic tradition, and in the East we see this in the Ashram and in the way of the Sanyasin. In both cultures, the one who sought God or Self-Realization did so by withdrawing from the world and living a separate and secluded life. But, in the New Life, as well as in his general teachings, Baba did not set this path out as the ideal way for the spiritual seeker in our time. Instead, he advocated and chalked out a spirituality that is active in the world and engaged with the full phenomena of everyday life--work, marriage and family--in brief, the Labor Phase.

We are now in a position to see that each of these two modes of spirituality, withdrawal from the world and engagement with the world, are modes that correspond respectively to each of the two phases of the historical cycle Baba has described. Most of our past history, and the spirituality we observed within that history, occurred within the phase of God's Self-Glorification, the negative phase of his repelling the world, and the bringing of chaos and darkness. We can surmise that within this world process there is no spiritual value to be gained by involvement in a world whose only and inevitable course is downward. The only stance that spiritually makes sense, so to speak, is to more or less get out and leave it alone. That is the essential character of the world in that cycle. Thus we have monasticism and Sanyasins, and the spiritual life of the cloister and seclusion.

However, when the historical cycle turns or is about to turn, we have a world that is moving spiritually upward, the positive method of God drawing his creation to him, and in such a world engagement with it, or the way of 'Labor,' becomes spiritually compelling. But the relationship between the two--the positive historical cycle and "Labor Phase" spirituality, is even more intrinsic than this. It is that by their engagement with the world, the work and lives of the spiritual aspirants themselves serves as the instrument for transforming the world. And in this historical period more and more people are spiritual aspirants.

It would also most likely be the case that in the general period of this transition between the two phases of the historical cycle, which reaches its focal point in the life of the Avatar, there is an overlap between the phases so that prominent aspects of both are present at the same time, so that it is not readily apparent whether a particular spiritual practice corresponds to the negative phase or the positive phase. Thus, in Zen, which is distinctly not an 'other-worldly' spirituality, and one that is quite at home with the phenomena of natural life--"When hungry, eat," (which is what you do after chopped wood and carried water), so that it is a spirituality that seems most suited for the new historical phase of Self-Beatitude, we also find the old elements of monastic and renunciate life. However, and the signs of this are increasingly evident, Zen is emerging from the Zendo and coming out into the world. When we add to this the element of Buddhist compassion, we definitely find in Zen an engaged spirituality for a New Humanity.

But this is not what is special about Zen. Most religions and

spiritual paths today are emerging from their seclusivensss and ritualism, appropriate to a receding historical era, and becoming active and engaged in the world, and this is consistent with Meher Baba's theme of revitalizing religion. He also said that he would bring them together like "beads on one string." The evidence for this is not yet as apparent.

I believe the string is Baba; he, as the Avatar of this emerging cycle of time, is the unifying thread that our world desperately needs. But this doesn't mean a Baba religion, as we have said. The religion will be life itself. It will be life that calls out to all religions, creeds, and beliefs, and asks them to join it in a cooperative endeavor to do no less than keep it, (LIFE,) as a possibility. The fact that for the first time in history we are threatened by our own hand with the annihilation of the human species itself is not an accident, and is certainly not incidental to the passage from Self-Glorification to Self-Beatitude. It would seem to be, indeed, the very core of the negative method of the repulsion of the creation, that the world is so violent, so threatening, and often so ugly. Where is God, the all loving and all powerful, in all of this? is the agonizing question that we all are pulled toward asking. The answer, I believe, will be in our own response to these conditions. It was said very strikingly in the following expression, whose author is unknown to me: "When I walked through the world today, I felt like screaming at God. Then I realized, that the world was God screaming at me."

The unique place of Zen today, the special bead that it is on the string, as it has been my purpose to show, is in its

culmination in Harding's experience of Headlessness, despite the fact that it is little known, even in Zen circles. Though Baba's hand was not directly connected with it, I have also tried to show how his influence operated, silently, in the background. The world may be God screaming at us, but God himself in her own ultimate essence is silent. Paradoxically, his silence is also her love. Baba has illustrated this with a beautiful little anecdote. He asks, "Why is it that people shout when they are angry with at each other? It is because in their anger they feel so distant from one another that they need to shout to cross that distance. And why is that lovers when they talk to each other do so in a whisper? Because they feel so close that a quiet whisper is all they need. And why is it that I am silent? Because I am, your real self, and there is no distance whatsoever between us."

I have talked about how Baba and life both seem to work. Baba has said that "I am closer to you than your own breath," as indeed he would be if he were our real self. And yet we are for the most part unaware of our breath. We are that much less aware of what is even closer to us--our real self. This is caught so ultimately in how hidden to us is our most immediate visual experience, overlooked by us for ages--our headlessness.

In this same way, various phrases of Baba, words that he has dictated here and there, suddenly take on great significance and meaning when we are ready. For the first time we are able to 'see it.' I have talked about this with the phrase, Selfness for all. Another was an extensive series of remarks Baba had made in silence over the years that

meant little to me (and most other "readers" of Baba) until they suddenly sprang to life as a clear foreshadowing of what Harding saw, and in this I found further confirmation that headlessness was indeed a part Baba's work. I'll list some of these statements, which all come from various sources and places--

> Just as the eye cannot see itself, the ego is unable to end its own existence.[24]

> Your eyes which are quite small, can see a vast panorama and all the objects contained in it, but they cannot see themselves. To see themselves a mirror is required. So, when the mirror of my Grace descends, your own True Self is revealed in an instant.[25]

> Only Dnyan (Self-knowledge) can make you realize that I am nearer to you than what you are to your own self. Nearest to your vision are your eyes, with which you see everything around you. Yet the eyes, that are instrumental in your seeing everything, do not see themselves. You have to hold a mirror before you in order to see your eyes. Thus to se your inner Self you have to hold the mirror of Dnyan before you. . .[26]

> The God you are in search of is not up in the sky. He is here--on this plane! I am <u>That</u>.

> I am in you, so search for me within yourself. I am not in any mosque, temple or church. You may claim that this is impossible--totally impossible. All right, then tell me do your eyes see yourself? They see the world, but they do not see you. For that you have to use a mirror.
>
> Similarly, through the mirror of love, you have to see yourself. And the person who has the mirror is the Perfect Master and no one else.[27]

Headlessness is nothing other than the personal discovery that the eye can't see itself, and in that simple discovery we find immense spiritual significance. We can now take this further. Just as we are misled by the use of the word "you," as we previously discussed, we are also misled by the word, "see." We say that the eye sees. But now we can realize that it is not the eye that sees at all. The eyes no more see than a camera "sees." We certainly do say that a camera sees, and we have the expression, "the seeing eye of the camera." And we say that the camera doesn't lie. This is not surprising. After all, a camera has a pupillary opening--its aperture, and it has a lens, so that it is built just like an eye. But it is not the camera that sees but we who see what the camera has recorded. The camera isn't conscious so it can't see. It is our consciousness that sees and not the camera. But this same understanding can be applied to the eye. The eye is also stuff, like the camera. It is consciousness by means of the eye that sees. The key word here is means. The eye, just like a camera, is a means, an instrument of seeing, but it is not what sees. It is only consciousness that sees.

Our language, such an intimate part of illusion's wall, continually obscures the truth. It claims that our body is our self, our mind is in our heads, and that it is the eye that sees. When we step through the hole in illusions's wall, as it has now become so easy to do, we know that it is not ourselves that we see over there in the mirror, but only our form, or our appearance. Here, where consciousness is, is no form, but Space in which all forms exist. And Here is only One.

> I intend when I speak to reveal the One Supreme Self which is in all. This accomplished, the idea of the self as a limited, separate entity, will disappear and with it will vanish self-interest. Cooperation will replace competition; certainty will replace fear; generosity will replace greed. Exploitation will disappear.[28]