

Conversations with A Western Guru

The Termination of the Golden Age
Of the Ego and the
Beginning of Spiritual Awareness

Murshida Ivy O. Duce
and Dr. James Mackie

Volume I Number 1

February 25, 1981



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**Searchlight
Publications**

Searchlight Seminars
999 Leland Drive, Lafayette, CA 94549

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Printed in the United States of America.

10-100-100



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Introduction

There is a time in life when goals are clear and values are precisely defined; when success is characterized by approval from others, and is measured in money, fame, and power; when happiness is experienced in proportion to the freedom which one has to pursue pleasure and obtain physical comfort. This is the time which, in this set of conversations, Murshida Ivy O. Duce and Dr. James Mackie describe as "The Golden Age of the Ego."

But there also comes a time in the lives of those who will eventually become spiritual students when the certainty and precision of ego-based life begins to give way. What was clear is no longer so clear. What was pleasurable no longer affords enjoyment. What once rang with importance and value does not seem to have much meaning. At such a time, one's external behavior in fulfilling roles and responsibilities may or may not reveal the chaos and ferment of the inner life. But that hardly matters, for meaning and significance have withdrawn from life and life's activities. In their stead certain questions emerge which begin to preoccupy consciousness. Who am I? What is Real? How can I find Truth? What is life all about? Where is God?

At first, it may seem that no one knows the answers to such questions. There are always, of course, some who propose answers—psychologists, philosophers, clerics, professors, family members, friends—but the seeker suspects that no one **really knows**. In spite of (or perhaps because of) the proposed answers, the questions reassert themselves in consciousness with ever greater force.

After the final ripening of this stage of spiritual searching, when these ultimate questions refuse to be silenced and one despairs that **anyone** can answer the ultimate questions about life and consciousness, one eventually discovers that we have not, indeed, been left to our own chaos, confusion, and disorientation. On the contrary, there is help. Just as parents naturally assist their children in adapting to the external forms of life, just as teachers

supervise the social and intellectual maturation of their students, just as counselors aid in the processes of attaining psychological stability, so it is in the sphere of spiritual learning and unfolding. There are individuals who, having truly mastered the learning of the spiritual levels of their own being, are available for spiritual counsel and guidance. In some spiritual traditions, such figures are known as gurus. In other traditions, they are called murshids.

It is one of life's greatest joys and privileges to associate with such figures. They have lived all of the processes of personal life, so they understand the twists and turns of our confusion. They have threaded their way through the unfolding of consciousness, so they radiate love in complete purity and unimaginable abundance. They have realized the meaning and significance of life in its many dimensions, so their knowledge and guidance can lighten the distress and uncertainty of those of us who still see through a glass darkly.

The western world is largely unfamiliar with such figures. For most Westerners, the term "guru" conjures up vague images derived from hearsay, exotic teaching stories from other cultures, and media stereotypes. But a true guru is not an exotic figure only marginally connected with practical living. Quite the opposite: an authentic guru is someone (to use Meher Baba's words) who has realized at all levels that, "to penetrate into the essence of all being and significance and to release the fragrance of that inner attainment for the guidance and benefit of others, by expressing, in the world of forms, truth, love, purity and beauty—is the sole game which has intrinsic and absolute worth."

The western world is now privileged to have such a figure serving its spiritual needs. She is Ivy Oneita Duce, Murshida of Sufism Reoriented. Murshida Duce brings to her role as a guru the distillation of practical learning refined during eighty-six years of the most intense activity in a variety of mutually enhancing roles:

As a private citizen, she was married for thirty-five years to James Terry Duce, a geologist and oil-company executive who helped establish American oil interests in the Middle East. While fulfilling all her other responsibilities, she attended to and accomplished the role

of homemaker as wife, mother, and now grandmother.

As a world citizen, she was trained both in the arts and in law, and worked in publishing and international banking. Because of her husband's work, she was often called to serve as either hostess or guest in the highest diplomatic and political circles, both in the United States and abroad.

As a spiritual seeker, she searched deeply into a variety of spiritual systems. Her studies led her to become a student of the ancient Sufi tradition, and then a disciple of the most compelling spiritual figure of our time, Avatar Meher Baba.

As a scholar, she has made a number of highly significant contributions to the field of contemporary spiritual literature. Author of two books, *What Am I Doing Here?* and *How a Master Works*, Murshida Duce was chosen by Meher Baba to edit and publish four of his works, including his two most important texts, *Discourses* and *God Speaks*. Taken together, these volumes comprise the most systematic and lucid reformulation of spiritual principles now available.

As a spiritual teacher, confirmed in her role by Meher Baba, Murshida Duce uses the matrix of her own richly diverse experience of western culture to accomplish the work inspired and directed by her own spiritual master. For it was Meher Baba's wish that spirituality should be comprehensively expressed and fully, if silently, lived in the western culture of today. To this end, Murshida Duce prepares her students in the arts of daily work and play, so that in every activity and interaction they may demonstrate the simplicity, grace, and harmony of life lived in accordance with the broadest principles of love and understanding.

This volume is the first in a series of conversations with Murshida Duce on themes of spiritual living, understanding, and experience. The subject for this particular volume, "The Termination of the Golden Age of the Ego," was selected because it helps focus attention on that crucial period when affirmation of worldly values gives way to aspiration for spiritual understanding. The discussion includes questions on the relationship between psychology and spirituality, on the role of religion, on everyday life as the proving ground of spirituality, on cults, on the threat of

nuclear war, on science, and on love, all of which are especially timely for those of us who are becoming aware that life lived under the domination of the ego is not life lived at its best.

Joining Murshida Duce in these discussions is Dr. James Mackie, one of her students and a preceptor (assistant teacher) of Sufism Reoriented. Educated as a social scientist, Dr. Mackie spent many years designing and administering innovative programs for troubled children handicapped by blindness, deafness, emotional trauma, and mental retardation. During the last decade of his academic career, he trained psychologists and psychiatrists as psychotherapists, and served as psychiatric editor for scientific journals and medical publishers.

As the text makes clear, spiritual life is not a fuzzy, amorphous state of dissociated awareness leading one away from the responsibilities of practical life. It is, rather, a phase of life governed by very specific processes which demand active participation with others. Its foundation is a knowing which is always personal, always earned, always used to inform personal conduct. Its growth is always difficult, always intimate. Its propelling and synthesizing force is Love. Meher Baba has summarized its course:

The sojourn of the soul is a thrilling divine romance in which the lover, who in the beginning is conscious of nothing but emptiness, frustration, superficiality, and the gnawing chains of bondage, gradually attains an increasingly fuller and freer expression of love, and ultimately disappears and merges in the divine Beloved to realize the unity of the Lover and the Beloved in the supreme and eternal fact of God as Infinite Love.

Such, then, is the flavor of consciousness when one has moved beyond "The Golden Age of the Ego." Such is the flavor of these conversations with Murshida Duce and Dr. Mackie, as condensed by Dr. Mackie at the request of Murshida Duce.

*Pascal Kaplan,
Editor*

A First Look At Psychology, Spirituality, And Intuition

On the surface, it often looks as though spirituality and psychology are working at cross-purposes. For example, psychology sees strengthening the ego as its task, while spiritual literature recommends dissolution of the ego. Do psychologists and spiritual Teachers mean the same thing by the term "ego"? If so, why do they have different views of it?

Avatar Meher Baba once described this spiritual age in which we live as "psychological and intuitive." He referred especially to the western world, and he meant that there would be vital interest here in understanding both the breadth and the limitations of psychological forces which underlie human behavior. He also meant that fresh attention would be directed to understanding the way spiritual principles first interact with, then cross-fertilize, then finally separate from psychological principles.

The forces which initiate human growth at a spiritual level are not well understood by professional psychologists. In fact, there is not even an accepted vocabulary for such forces. The range of inner spiritual feelings which could offer a basis for such a vocabulary are outside the boundaries of human experience framed by the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry. This occurs because **this octave of inner life is usually outside the personal experience of professionals in these fields and also outside the experience of their clients.**

These central inner feelings form the basis of a wholly different and often unimagined realm of knowing. This domain of human knowing comprises the subject matter of spiritual teaching. Since its terms, principles, and experiences are all founded on the dynamics of love, spiritual teachings have always focused exclu-

sively on levels, qualities, and dimensions of higher love.

In recent years, an increasing number of psychologists have tried to extend the limits of their discipline to include the subject matter of love. But since such subject matter is both intellectually abstruse and concretely practical, these attempts have met with limited success. The subject matter of love cannot be understood and the force of love cannot initiate an entirely new phase of growth unless love itself is lived. That is, love must inform all thought, all feeling, all action, all social conduct. When love is given encompassing expression in all arenas of action in the real world, perception of the real world changes. When this process gains enough momentum to establish a new fulcrum of life, inner dimensions grow and expand. At this stage of learning, orderly changes of growth and internal dynamics which balance that growth can no longer be described adequately by psychological principles. Now we are dealing with the spiritual dynamics of growth based exclusively, as they must be, on a life of love.

The word "psychology," as it is used currently by professionals, refers to personal dimensions of life which collectively describe the ego or the personality, its integration, its levels, and its own separate and distinct boundaries of selfhood. The motivating force of the personal ego is directed towards four goals: to defend against forces which threaten it; to extend its own power and personal mastery; to stabilize itself; and to insure its own survival.

The natural mode of thought for a spiritual Teacher is intuition. Although a full exploration of this pattern of thought is beyond the limits of our discussion, it can be described briefly as an accelerated, condensed mode of knowing. As such it proceeds with electric speed and accuracy, but at a very high level — a level far beyond words and the usual canons of logical thought. It is instantaneous, piercingly correct knowing, possible only because it is entirely free from egoistic restraints of psychological dynamics. Spiritual students also find that much of their learning becomes intuitive. Although always reducible to some approximation in words (narration or poetry), it is most easily and broadly com-

municated in a form of artistic expression which celebrates the integration of simplicity, grace, and harmony. The product of that integration we call "beauty."

Beauty in its fullest refinement is radiant beyond description and representation in any one form. It radiates and is regenerated in all temporary materializations of life. It is Divine. It is God. It is the Real Self. It is the Real Ego. It lies behind the fragments of Him which have been shattered and cast out in a joyous, near-endless proliferation of separate forms, frozen for this moment of existence in the matter of time and space. From these forms, at this time, and within this space, we are to learn.

Automatic deification and defense of one's personal ego is a necessary stage in this sweeping process of total human learning, but higher understanding cannot begin until that middle stage of human psychological learning is over. That middle stage is the subject matter of contemporary psychology. Were the ego or the personality not of crucial importance to the current understanding of humanity, the discipline of psychology would not have captured the imagination, attention, and respect of our society. Interest in the principles of psychology has steadily accelerated over the last four decades. During that period there has been a huge increase in the number of professionals trained to apply psychological principles to their therapeutic work with individual clients. Whole new disciplines and professions have evolved to meet this social need. The subject matter and the professional fields based on it are maturing. The field of psychology itself is ripening. **It would appear that humanity itself is at a stage of learning when its collective psychological ego demands expanded understanding.**

In sum, psychological principles are of consuming interest within the contemporary western culture in which we live. And there is at least a budding interest in principles of human growth which lie beyond the personal ego. For a few, this budding interest will flower into an overriding obsession. These few will be irresistibly drawn to an exciting, stimulating vortex of new learning and new growth. The product of this learning, which proceeds

step by step over hundreds of lives, is non-material. It lies beyond words, beyond form, and beyond the phenomena captured by semantics. It is based on internal processes of increasingly comprehensive knowing. It gradually transmutes any form of thought and feeling into an increasingly discriminating knowledge of love. At every step, this knowledge is validated by an unspoken commitment to everyday life lived fully and vigorously. Beauty and joy become the modes of expression. **Realization of God Himself is the Goal. That realization brings about a full identification with the only Real Ego. The Real Ego is God.**

Orthodox Religion And Its Relation To Spiritual Training

Some of the ideas you present seem central in the philosophies of most of the great religions. What, if any, is the difference between the approach to life offered by orthodox religions and the inner growth supported by a guru's teachings?

Many people are interested in these principles. In fact, most religions share some of these ideals. The founders of those religions lived the principles they taught. They tried to code in words some of the universal principles that informed the actions of their daily lives. But following the death of those founders, new movements based on a partial understanding of their lives were swept by an urge to establish themselves individually and separately. The new movements defined explicitly their distinctions from one another, and from other political, social, educational, and economic institutions. In so doing they developed and gradually strengthened their own social egos. **The movements became social extensions of the personal ego.** And within the social world in which they still exist, their design of growth mirrors the motivating principles of the personal ego. Such groups, large and small, defend against any threatening social force, extend their influence and power, stabilize this extension, and mobilize energy to insure their own survival.

There are exact parallels between the social forces which sustain and stabilize most orthodox religious systems and the personal expression of those forces which sustain and stabilize the personal ego. The organization of most religions is harmonious with the psychological principles reviewed earlier. Generally speaking, religious systems offer a view of divine purpose and moral conduct which is smoothly compatible with the organiza-

tion and maintenance of a range of personal egos. However, an individual who understands and fully lives the basic spiritual principles lived by the founder of any of the great religions finds that his own beliefs and values extend beyond the doctrine or ritual of any specific religion. That person's views encompass them all, for the same pulsating core is identified in each. The boundaries of separateness and individuality laid down by whimsical forces of history are overlooked as arbitrary and irrelevant.

Now to the point: **participation in organized religions is entirely appropriate and harmonious for people whose lives are still regulated by psychological principles.** But, for those forced from within to find an appropriate framework for the exploration and use of emergent spiritual energy, the organizational structure of an orthodox religion may offer few possibilities of guidance or support for increased spiritual learning. Most often such systems expel quickly any individual known to be gripped by the living reality of spiritual principles. Within the entire scope of western history, there are only four figures consumed by such principles who were able to survive, expand their knowing at spiritual levels of high illumination, and still find full expression for their lives within an established religion. Those four were Catherine of Siena, Augustine of Hippo, Teresa of Avila, and Francis of Assisi. The history of Islam is similarly skeletal. Though the Prophet Muhammad's influence supplied the impetus for richly generative spiritual growth, that growth occurred primarily among individuals outside the orthodoxy of Islam.

One takes a very pragmatic view of these things. Orthodox systems offer an institutional framework for the religious experience of that huge proportion of humanity still accomplishing its learning according to psychological principles. When those principles have finished bearing their important fruit, a rare few discover within themselves an entirely different potential. **As that potential forces itself into awareness, a process which may span several lifetimes, the individual gradually learns of the existence of other people so obsessed.** He also awakens, instantaneously, to a whole new realm of experience and deeply intimate knowledge.

The validity of this new knowledge is sealed by his most profound personal experience. He begins his search for a path to continue his inner journey. It must be his own. But at specific stages of his exploration over the terrain of life's potential, he is entitled to the guidance and support of a Teacher, one qualified by seasoned spiritual maturity and experience. The Teacher is directed by vibrant forces of divinity to help guide and support certain individuals in accomplishing their own learning. The process of spiritual learning consumes countless lifetimes, but gives to each of them increased fullness of understanding. These mounting increments of understanding bring satisfaction so complete that, in any life, all is offered with privileged devotion to the goal.

The Termination of the Golden Age Of the Ego, and the Beginning of Spiritual Awareness

From the comments you have made, it seems that spiritual and psychological growth may not really be opposed to one another. Indeed, you suggest that full psychological development is the prerequisite for any enduring spiritual growth.

This sequence of learning is important to have clearly in mind: **psychological learning must precede any authentic spiritual learning.** Until a person has worked tirelessly, even exhaustively, with psychological principles, he cannot know their potential. He cannot know the marvelous satisfaction of resolving a major psychological conflict. He cannot understand the pleasures of achieving a stabilized psychological balance that can usher in a life gelled in a solid, satisfying, and enduring way—"just the way it should be." If he has not completely tasted these experiences, he cannot possibly understand or even begin to sense the next phase of psychological learning.

To understand that next phase, it is useful to take an unfamiliar view of the personal ego. This view is standard in spiritual learning, but novel from the perspective of contemporary psychology. The perspective begins with the assumption that **the ego is a structure, a thing, a very specific form.** It has exact dimensions and functions. As in the case with any living form or material structure in creation, it has grown and stabilized to provide an opportunity for learning. When that learning is complete, the ego has served its purpose. It will be cracked, torn, ripped, and finally destroyed by the natural forces of new growth. This growth has been quickened to germination by the very success of the Golden Age of the Ego. The underlying forces are now ready to push themselves into expression in waves of new growth that are first

experienced as the psychological equivalents of biological birth. They come in powerful waves of contraction and expansion, heaving forth from the underside of life with great power. Therefore, the phase of psychological learning that follows its golden age will bring one face to face with anguishing, puzzling, and deeply distressing issues. In this next phase, the final phase of psychological learning, one is primed to learn:

the impermanence of human satisfactions based on psychological adaptation;

the eventual disintegration of any apparently successful psychological resolution; and

the necessity of eroding the very foundation of any completely stabilized psychological adjustment, once the potential for learning from that stabilized foundation has been fully realized.

Any full experience of love will undermine selfhood, strain the personality to the breaking point, and undermine the four goals of the ego: defense against threat, extension of mastery, self-stabilization, and insurance of survival. A life based exclusively on principles of love will seem an enigma to anyone whose frame of reference is psychological, because the central integrating force of all psychological thought, feeling, and action, the personal ego, will be dethroned, dismissed, and eventually dissolved.

The gradual wearing out of the personal ego, or personality, is inconceivable within the framework of current psychological thought. Yet the fundamental principles of all real spiritual growth are predicated on that dematerialization. No one can be considered as a candidate for a guru's circle unless that process has been set in motion, and set in motion entirely by natural circumstances of development. Moreover, a student leaves the circle as soon as internal processes of growth stop. Should the ego's struggle for survival successfully divert enough higher energy to sustain its own survival and growth, a student leaves the guru's circle, for it is impossible to understand spiritual principles unless

they are lived, and they cannot be lived in the service of the personal ego. Therefore, gurus' teachings can only inform living action based exclusively on love. In no way can those principles be evaluated or validated by an agile and deft mind honed to precision by the disciplines of philosophy and logic, or by the usual standards of scientific theory.

This does not mean that spiritual principles or teachings invite one to dull the mind or forsake the satisfactions of an increasingly refined discrimination of thought, feeling, and action. On the contrary, spiritual teachings speed such discrimination. However, from a spiritual perspective, this discrimination must be based on understanding. It cannot be used defensively. It cannot be used to stop the process of learning in order to defend a new or old realm of knowing. When that happens, psychological processes are again activated and spiritual growth is swiftly terminated. It stops immediately.

Spiritual growth is dependent upon activating, quickening, and enlivening the forces that nourish the membranes of the mind. It is entirely dependent upon amplified freedom, breadth, and flexibility of the mind. Increasingly its structure must provide the foundation for more encompassing understanding, as well as for more refined discrimination. To accomplish this growth, the mind must be nourished exclusively by the positive forces of love.

When Meher Baba characterized the spiritual forces currently igniting our age as "psychological and intuitive," he drew attention to these processes. That is, he drew attention to a transition which occurs after the goals of psychological processes have been fully achieved. When that occurs, when the fruit of the psychological process is fully ripe, when the dimensions of the personal ego have reached their evolutionary limit, internal growth processes can proceed in a novel and unimagined way. A whole new level of human potential can be activated. The first forceful thrusts of this growth will begin to destroy the ego, itself a shining product of earlier stages of difficult growth.

This new phase of growth has several characteristics. Its activation is internal. **Its lessons are entirely personal and intimate.** Its

challenges and demands outstrip in sheer difficulty any conceived or approached in psychological phases of growth. Its subject matter is Love. Its curriculum is called "spiritual learning." At certain phases of this learning, living Teachers are provided to help support, awaken, and guide these most demanding processes of human growth. The Teachers are empowered by God and recognized as so empowered by their students. They are known as spiritual Teachers, murshids, pirs, gurus, or masters of certain levels.

This final phase of psychological learning is neither recognized nor accepted in most theories of psychology, nor is it imagined by most psychotherapists. Here again, the field cannot recognize the evolutionary forces of human growth which will make it—the discipline of psychology—obsolete. Individuals who pass through these phases successfully are in no position to explain them to experts in psychological disciplines. By now these individuals have achieved a certain expertise about psychological processes that acknowledged experts have not even glimpsed. Those who have completed this stage of apprenticeship in life know and acknowledge the crucial human products of psychological phases of learning. But they also have, scorched into the bones of their living experience, the next sequence of learning: the internal erosion and destruction that follows relative mastery of life processes through full familiarity with psychological principles.

This phase of mastery offers personal validation to the authenticity and fundamental necessity of dealing comprehensively with psychological forces. Without completing this apprenticeship, an individual is not prepared and will not be able to marshal the strength and courage to begin spiritual learning. Comprehensive psychological experience paves the way for it, establishes the foundation for it, and, in the fullness of time and individual maturity, dissolves into it.

Following the Golden Age of the Ego, natural processes of growth will gradually (though sometimes abruptly) melt that structure of the lower mind which held in place a firm matrix. That matrix, or membrane, channeled the energy for life through structures of the mind to insure psychological learning. As this psycho-

logical screen dissolves, an individual's perception is at first blurred and uneven; a "visual adaptation" of sorts then occurs. He is able to see, know, and assess where he has been. As that happens, he begins to glimpse the radiant beauty and purpose of his experience in life. With that recognition comes an awakening surge of unspeakably deep knowing. Joy and relief mingle and overflow as the boulder of ignorance shouldered for more than a million lives is at last dislodged. At last he knows why living occurs. At last he knows where he is going. **His heart swells with thanks and gratitude that this knowing has occurred in this life span.** For he still has an intact body and mind. He is still incarnate. The years ahead offer full promise of living this knowledge on God's beloved earth. In those years he has the opportunity, perhaps never before given, of linking his life to the hitherto unimagined purposes and goals that now flood his awareness. Life on earth is known to be precious beyond reckoning. No moment of it can be wasted.

With this entirely individual awakening, he is ready to approach spiritual study. With this understanding, he may seek a Teacher.

A Spiritual Ecology: Everyday Life as God's Heartland of Growth

It is often thought that the pursuit of spiritual learning requires withdrawal from active participation in worldly activities. To what extent is that your own view?

People learn and are awakened to new learning only by experience of life itself. As unfamiliar terrain in life is explored, fresh fuel for learning is identified, gathered, and saved. But in itself that fuel has no value. It is not a commodity for barter. Each must gather his own supply, and once it is gathered, sorted, and aged, each individual must use up his own store, totally consuming it in the luminous blaze of new experience and new learning. An internal spark ignites the flame of this new learning.

One gathers this fuel from active engagement in everyday life. Without hard work in the woods and forests of everyday life, there can be no supply of fuel to fire new human growth. It is also true that the woods of life in the reality of the everyday world cannot be ravished, spoiled, and left barren. New nursery stock must be planted to replace the mature timber used up. Otherwise, one is not free to move forward. So, with spiritual learning there develops a holy respect for God's sacred world and all forms that are in it. Like our physical bodies, these forms are temporary shells of living energy. All forms of life collaborate in human learning. Those forms consumed in learning must be regenerated by the consumer, for the world of everyday reality must profit from our interaction with it. It is the heartland of human growth. Unless that is realized, understood, and honored, the human heart itself cannot expand. No spiritual growth is possible without that expansion.

The point of this excursion into metaphor of flame, fuel, and

forest is to suggest the dimensions of spiritual teaching and to frame the role of a spiritual Teacher. The Teacher is a guide or consultant in the process of achieving and participating in a life divine, to be accomplished by vigorous engagement in the everyday world. **Removal from the swirling, forceful currents of the mundane world cannot nourish the muscles of higher spirituality.** Under such circumstances they can waste, lose their needed limberness, fall flaccid as dead weight on the structure of a mind that must find its only nourishment through the forces of love re-circulating to and from the heart of the world. That heart beats its strongest stroke in the forceful pulsation of everyday life.

So love is the single nourishment that does not freeze the structure of spiritual teachings. Those teachings must be fluid, flowing, and as radiant as the living, ever-transmuted, and ever-transmuting forces of life they seek to support. That means that spiritual teachings are based on an understanding of principles. These principles, like the muscles of spirituality they seek to stimulate, are strong, interlocking, harmonious with one another. They flex, extend, and contract to sustain the dynamic equipoise needed at any one time in a rapidly growing internal anatomy. This anatomy must rebalance itself continuously for productive interaction with the external world.

Spiritual students deal with forces of growth in life which are totally unfamiliar to most of mankind. To earn the right to participate in those refined yet powerful forces of inner growth, they must first meet and solve, individually, the problems of growth faced by most of humankind. They are not excused from meeting the socially acknowledged standards of education, professional training, and productivity in work. Work in the world they must, with competence, skill, and a sense of privileged participation. They must also meet educational standards of their society. How else can they evaluate the standards of thought, the patterns of history, and the traditions of art and science as these are currently weighed and calibrated in the social structure in which they live? How else can they behave easily and securely in social roles which should equip them to work competently in any segment of

that social world?

It is this world of work, education, and social organization in which their everyday life is to be conducted. They must discharge a full range of duties within the temporary reality of this social and psychological world. Collectively these activities define for each individual his unique social role. He must be good at performing that role because, unlike nearly all of his companions in life, his personal identity, his ego, is in no way attached to the products of participation in that world or to its activities. He must perform well, think well, and behave well, because he knows his freedom for internal growth is only insured by using his full potential in the service of the world. If he cannot understand and master the standards of the social/psychological world in which he lives, how can he hope to free an energy supply that can support growth in the much more demanding sectors of inner growth?

This swift sketch of the social/psychological worlds of work, education, and interpersonal participation has been made to drive home a point about spiritual teaching and spiritual living or learning: **the advanced spiritual principles of this age cannot even be approached if responsibilities for full participation in everyday life are avoided.** Nor can the challenges of new spiritual learning be addressed until the challenges of full participation in the world are met.

Spiritual learning requires a spiraling amplification of the energy of life. That energy extends the dimensions of life and the octaves of meaning, and triggers quantum leaps in the systems of energy transformation at successive levels within the human mind. To balance successfully these dramatic internal changes, an individual's role must establish him solidly in an integrated pattern of mundane life. That integration provides the ballast, the essential anchor for an appropriate stance in life.

Modern Cults: Purveyors of Personal Elitism

There has been a dramatic increase in cult activity in America during the past few years. How does authentic spiritual training differ from the activities promoted by cults? Why would someone be attracted to a cult?

Under ordinary circumstances, authentic spiritual learning takes place in the social/psychological world in which an individual has membership for a lifetime. It takes place in the cultural environment of one's birth. Spiritual incarnations in the contemporary western world are conducted right here, within the actively changing, forcefully contrasting, and contrapuntal social harmonic which describes America. One does not abandon his society to find another in which the stabilized forms of an ancient, rigid culture have been set solidly with a recognized, often ritualized niche for spiritual aspirants. Abandoning one's culture often means abandoning one's training. Usually those who incarnate in the West for a life destined for spiritual unfolding have already completed countless lives of preparation in eastern incarnations. In one sense, the ancient, well-stabilized cultures of the East offer a more compatible basis for spiritual learning, for all include accepted social institutions for spiritual learning.

However, the inner dimensions of spiritual learning are universal. Therefore, spiritual unfolding can occur within any social network. There are special challenges to such training in western culture. Here in this new and rapidly changing country, we have almost no established tradition to confine spiritual principles, no restrictive mold, no set ecological niche for spiritual training. Moreover, we have a pattern of discriminating thought which

automatically challenges traditional authority based on pompous ritual, pretentious intellectuality, and earnestly proclaimed principles that serve only to disguise an abandonment of the discipline necessary for developing one's understanding, meeting one's interpersonal responsibilities, or polishing one's occupational skills. In this culture, primed to the quivering sensitivity of psychological defense patterns, we are quick to sense the pretensions of fundamentalist cults of both East and West. It is clear to any thoughtful observer that they often provide an escape from the rigors of a disciplined life. They offer in its stead the tinsel amusement of exotic terms, ancient lore, ritualized social structures, raw emotional force, and an inflated sense of personal elitism that exactly equals the force of real life responsibilities from which they have become a route of escape.

Many religions and all cults offer to their membership ego-enhancing services of this kind. They offer a range of different styles, or fashions of divinity, which can appropriately costume or enhance one or another kind of personal ego. Through participation in a carefully chosen group, people often find nourishment for certain dimensions of their own—sometimes weak and sometimes strongly over-developed—personal egos. Moreover, they have the apparent advantage of positioning divinity solidly on their side, so to speak. The organization itself can serve as a helpful social ally in the natural psychological processes of deifying the personal ego.

These egoistic characteristics of cults and religions are acutely familiar to every sensitive observer. The processes they foster stand in sharp contrast to those of spiritual training, for spiritual training is predicated on the dissolution of the ego. And no spiritual principle can be understood or lived if its propelling energy is focused on personal enhancement. Love stops when that occurs. Elevated energy cannot be deflected back upon the personal self, the ego. Divine energy is always sent out to life in radiating waves of service and understanding. To hold it back in a structure of selfhood is to stop the higher processes of recirculation and amplification of love. Spiritual training must side with internal

growth that can more effectively purify and nourish the membranes of the mind which speed that process. Authentic spiritual training cannot enhance a personal ego. Should there be any vestigial remains of a personal ego in the makeup of a spiritual student, the conditions of training provide for its disintegration. In summary, religions and cults often offer a haven for the expansion of the personal ego. Spiritual training undermines the very foundation of a personal ego.

The Nuclear Age: Our Springboard To a New Life

In considering the world situation, the picture that emerges looks awfully bleak. The world's economic system seems on the verge of collapse; wars break out almost monthly in some part of the world or another; and the threat of nuclear destruction hangs over all of our heads. How can such a destructive pattern be understood in light of the promise of a "New Age" and "New Humanity"? Finally, is there a parallel between current patterns in the world situation and the tasks of individual learning?

Avatar Meher Baba indicated that during our current era the entire world would experience a quickening, an acceleration in the pace of life. He described a trajectory of accelerating energy that has not yet reached its peak. In its wake it would stimulate growth and change in all major dimensions of life. Specifically, Meher Baba outlined a number of global conditions which would contribute to this process:

the tremendous increase in the pool of energy resources which could stimulate growth and new life;

the problems faced in containing that energy — now so powerful that most forms of life could be destroyed were it not contained;

the necessity of establishing consensual agreement among major nations the world over for limiting the potential for destruction; and

the clarification of as yet uncertain political boundaries through contained warfare and a parallel consolidation of cultural boundaries through the tightening up of the

internal organization of domestic political systems.

We now witness everywhere the effects of these pressures. Social organizations the world over are changing in identifiable designs. In areas of the world where political boundaries are uncertain, there are attempts to end the uncertainty with relatively well-contained warfare. Nations everywhere seek to mobilize their strength and search in desperation for a supply of raw energy ample enough to support themselves and still provide a reserve that can insure an advantage in defense or competition with other nations.

Yet in all international conflicts there is worldwide recognition of a boundary of restraint beyond which no major country dare step. That boundary, emblazoned in blood red, has been established in response to the undisputed recognition that every major nation now has in its arsenal nuclear mechanisms that could destroy most forms of life on earth. Should any nation use these weapons to extend its power and influence, within hours it too would be destroyed.

So a limit has been recognized in the amount of destructive energy that any nation may use in extending and stabilizing its national ego. The major nations of the world now conduct their business with one another according to a brand-new awareness. They know that in yielding to the impulse to destroy the life of another nation they will destroy their own. It is recognized the world over that nearly boundless resources of energy, defined here in terms of subatomic nuclear power, are available for use. But, as yet unfamiliar with the potential of such power and energy, political systems worldwide (which reflect, at a political level, mankind's current level of growth) have only begun to consider the incredible positive growth the release of such energy could encourage.

We can identify a three-step process: first, nations recognize the destructive value of nuclear energy; then, to insure their own survival, they recognize the need to change their modes of mutual assault and competition for individual growth and su-

premacy; and, with the recognition that such enormous energy must be contained, there is at least the possibility of channeling it in positive ways. In sum, that same energy can now be used to ease conflict and disharmony and to encourage domestic growth within individual nations. It offers rich potential for extending and enhancing processes of internal growth.

This admittedly over-general characterization of the world situation can serve to illustrate several important points. **The first, and most important for humanity at large, is the recognition that we all enjoy the inestimable privilege of being alive at a moment when the energy set loose for growth on this planet has reached a rare crescendo of vibrancy.**

Second, this energy potential washes the globe and affects all life in known and in unknown ways. Separate cultural and national groupings will establish clear distinctions through the individual blueprints by which they succeed in harnessing productively these new resources.

Third, fresh realization of this potential initially thrusts its way into worldwide awareness as a threat. The existence of an ever-flowing wellspring of subatomic power that could be used to support expanded life, therefore expanded learning, was interpreted exclusively as a threat: "It could destroy life—all of it!"

Had we time, it would be possible to marshal more empirical evidence from contemporary science to support this generalization: contemporary western science has discovered an unimagined range of basic energy which could be used to reinforce and extend the economic and material subsistence of life. In recent years, the potential for new forms of energy release has increased at rates that dizzy the most restrained scientific observer. An avalanche of supporting information (fully compatible with information from physics) could be drawn from the biological sciences. As one of many examples from a totally unrelated field, consider the current resurgent interest in understanding and treating cancer. Simply stated, cancer is a disease characterized by life force proliferating itself in the overstimulation and production of living tissue. The overstimulation of growth cannot be contained

or organized appropriately by the structure of the physiological system. So the products of overstimulated life force run rampant. In so doing they become lethal to the structure of the physical body. Life force so strong that it bursts the boundaries of its existing forms will destroy the form itself.

Cancer: The Life Force Bursts Out

You have just said that cancer is life force proliferating itself in the overstimulation and production of living tissue. But cancer is a catastrophic illness which very often proves fatal. Why should the life force turn against itself and destroy physical life?

The etiological seed which germinates to become cancer is usually planted lifetimes before the emergence of that disorder. Those early seeds must be initially consolidated in subtle/psychological form, long before they emerge in the physical world. Most often the seeds are formed by the pressure of tremendous life force seeking emotional and ideational expression through the organization of the personal ego. But the specific blend of emotional and ideational energy pushing for expression is inconsistent with the aims and intention of the personal ego, at least those in central awareness. Therefore the energy is instantaneously blocked, forced underground so to speak, and repressed. Since it is vibrant life force strongly primed for expression, it can be sealed off, blocked from direct expression, only by a very strong membrane which is diverted from the structure of the personal ego. When this occurs the ego itself loses some of its flexibility. The pressure used to hold back the emergent force must be equal to or greater than the force of energy seeking to find expression.

Up to a point, the ego can hold it back. But, as this process continues over a single life or over a series of closely related lives, an energy reservoir can build. The membrane of the ego damming and diverting life energy becomes thicker. Finally, there can be no possibility of finding productive expression and growth for this dammed-up energy. Therefore, in a later life, the reservoir of subtle energy finds expression at a physical level. Over a series of

lifetimes, the membrane of the ego which initially acted to counterbalance and hold back the forces of life propelled for expression became increasingly resilient. Finally, the dam or membrane becomes impervious to any subtle/psychological energy. That means that the energy cannot be used for growth through learning at a subtle/psychological level. At this point the reservoir has reached its limit. So has the dam. In a future life the energy will find expression in a different dimension entirely. Now it will be expressed at a physical level. **The energy, initially blocked and amassed as prana in subtle/psychological realms, is finally released in physical processes.** As it is released physically, a needed balance is achieved in the mind's economic level. Psychological subtle energy which could not be used in the process of balanced human learning is finally dissipated in the physical process currently called cancer. The form of the personal ego in the lifetime in which the cancer was germinated and the forms of the personal egos in successive lives in which the dam was strengthened and the depth of the energy reservoir deepened may be unrelated to the structure of the personal ego which experiences the disease of cancer. Therefore, it will not be possible to find a valid correlation between kinds of cancer and dimensions of personality. The personality in control when the cancer was germinated is a figure from history. The physical form he identified as himself died hundreds, sometimes thousands, of years ago.

Although we cannot pursue now a detailed discussion of the etiology of physical disease, a few general principles should be suggested. Cancer can offer a good example. The term "cancer" covers a broad range of disorders grouped within the medical specialty of oncology. Within that field there exists a complex and rapidly changing system of classification, each depending in part upon the physiological system invaded, the character of the tissue destroyed, the design of growth of the carcinogenic tissue, and the sensitivity of that tissue to chemical or radiant therapeutic agents which might divert, halt, or reduce its rate of growth.

Focusing for the moment on the strictly physical correlates of the disease, it is well-known that there are toxic chemical agents which predispose living biological tissue to become cancerous. Experimental studies on cancer have routinely used as subjects sub-human mammals or even non-mammalian vertebrates. It has been well demonstrated that the physical disorder can and does occur among living animals which have no complex system of consciousness regulating their susceptibility to invasion from cancer. Of course this is true to some degree for all physical diseases which afflict the physical body. Few are restricted to human beings.

From the perspective offered by spiritual training there is no incompatibility between principles which describe the physical pattern of the disease—its etiology, developmental pattern, and therapy—and the metaphysical states of consciousness which predispose a human being to specific physical vulnerabilities. Nor does a spiritual perspective suggest that physical therapies should be forsaken. On the contrary, the current laws of evolution which determine the form of the tissue of consciousness and those which determine the form of physical tissue suggest that the principles of western physical medicine are very useful. Spiritual perspectives of physical disease do specify the metaphysical states which predispose a human being to certain diseases.

We cannot consider the principles of such states here. However, it is important to point out that these metaphysical states carry with them no set value judgments. For example, physical disease cannot be understood as divine retribution loosed on man to punish him for past sins. Instead, a spiritual understanding is based on the fact that all human learning proceeds in discrete units. Individual lives bring with them an individual perspective, and often should be carried out with a vigorous but contained focus. That means they are often relatively extreme. Sometimes living should be extreme. These extreme patterns will produce electrical disbalance in the fibers of consciousness which contain the life force gathered, reorganized, and held in new balance as a product of that life. It is this reorganization of living energy

(prana) of a certain level that will produce electrical tension along the fibers which interconnect the membranes of the mind. They resemble their physical counterparts, the neuronal network which integrates the physical structure of the central nervous system. The membranes of the central nervous system are held in balance by electrical energy. The fibers which relay energy transmissions between levels of consciousness are also activated by electrical energy (known in ancient spiritual systems as fohat), though the laws which regulate its force and expression change at different levels of the mind.

These generalizations underline the fact that learning will bring about new levels of organization, new internal pressures, and new disbalances of living energy in the mind. The propelling force of these collective forces will thrust life forward into still more refined and articulated experiences of learning. In this middle stage of creation, surrounded as we are in a veritable sea of evolving and interacting living forces, there are bound to be disbalances. They occur because growth processes themselves must be focused. Periodically, the necessary disbalances need to be equalized. One way this equalization occurs is through a burning-off process of consciousness. Among human beings, these burning-off processes occur in very lawful ways which are always individually programmed, and always designed to balance specific programs of learning in life. They are expressed physically as vulnerabilities to certain diseases. Of course the agents of those physical diseases are themselves living systems of life, themselves evolving forms of primitive biological life. In changing the structures of our physical body through physical disease, they are sometimes performing a most important service. They rebalance the force of energy gathered from past learning, and prepare the physical body for a new alignment with larger consciousness so that it can better accomplish the work of life. The purpose of that work is always new learning.

The Sources Of Maya In Human Experience

The ideas which you have been presenting will probably sound fairly familiar to those who are acquainted with ancient and oriental spiritual systems. It is curious, however, that there should be so much receptivity to these mystical ideas in the technological West at this time. How do you account for this receptivity?

The ideas we have sketched thus far are neither novel nor innovative. Though the language is English and the cultural context is western, most of these ideas can be discerned behind the formulations of every major spiritual text, behind the themes of refined oriental art, behind the resplendent images of Hindu temple carving, behind the enigma of Zen koans, and behind the mystic images woven into the silken pile of Islamic prayer rugs. The elusive force or energy for life that establishes the dynamics for the contemporary discipline of psychology is well explored in antique spiritual literature. In fact, the entire discipline of modern psychology is really just another attempt—this time in western civilization and this time in the Twentieth Century—to discern, define, organize, and explain the energy for life which ancient Hindus called, in Sanskrit, “the first transformation of prana.”

Through this first transformation of prana, the human mind assigns emotional nuances and, therefore, amplified meaning to the otherwise neutral interactions that occur between people, and between people and the material forms which constitute a mutually agreed-upon reality. This assignment of amplified meaning, with its rational corollary of cause and effect, defines the most ancient process and product of the human mind. It is called maya. Maya, or the illusion of apparent reality, is the earliest shared product of man's most primitive perception and think-

ing. The successive patterns by which individuals gradually explore the full limits of maya require the organization of psychological energy around an executive system of selfhood, a system designed to insure that the deepest possible personal meaning is assigned to experience. That executive system, which develops over countless lifetimes, is called the ego. Its role is to link all the ranges of pranic energy to all the different forms of life, and explore all the possible interactions with them. In the course of his long apprenticeship in learning, **an individual must develop the full range of possible egos in order to experience fully all the permutations of first-level prana.** This first stage of full human learning precedes spiritual awakening.

So, psychological formulations specifying the dynamics of the personal ego or personality are not new. The principles that Sigmund Freud reintroduced into western thought were the subject matter of advanced spirituality countless epochs ago. There was a time in the distant past when refinement of the ego was the subject matter of advanced spirituality. It is still the subject matter of religions and of some "esoteric" cults. Indeed, that phase of development still characterizes most of humanity's organization of life force.

These ancient ideas, recast in contemporary terms, can seem freshly vital and resonant because there is, for the moment, a new space for freedom in western thought. Solidly placed keystones in the architecture of western thought have recently been dislodged. Arches of traditional thought, hallowed by western science, have collapsed and shattered. The seismic waves emanating from this collapse have gathered force. Their undulations have flexed the fixed systems of scientific tradition.

Western culture has distinguished itself by a demonstrated genius for technical understanding and deft manipulation of physical matter. Yet, in recent years, the apparently solid foundation of physical matter itself has been found to be illusory. Though there are several different lines of evidence to support this new interpretation of matter, our discussion will advance more quickly if we focus again on the atom and the subatomic

units which give it apparent reality.

Earlier we suggested that the energy released by freeing the force contained within an atom could be viewed as a threat to most systems of life on this planet. We also said that the same energy, harnessed productively, could offer a much-expanded base to support and sustain life and learning. Only a few decades ago, atoms were regarded as the irreducible and fundamental building blocks of all forms of matter. That view has now shifted. Atoms themselves are seen as temporary forms, held in provisional alignment and subject to the whim (sometimes understood but most often not) of the activity patterns of subatomic units. These units can be accurately described as trajectories of energy in rapid movement. This energy in motion may collect itself to take temporary form as a particle with an identifiable electrical charge. Such subatomic particles, coalescing in balanced patterns of raw physical energy to give apparent stability to an atom, are micro-cyclones of electrical energy, eternally changing, eternally in motion.

As currently understood in subatomic investigations, the baseline processes of life are fundamentally different from most human perceptions of them. From this scientific perspective, the illusion of physical form is imposed on the everyday world by our neurologically primitive perceptual system. Were we able to envision the world as it is now conceived within the disciplines of advanced physics, we would know all forms to be temporary consolidations of active, radiant, swirling, living energy, held for a moment of balance within a boundary. These boundaries support an illusion of constancy and permanence of form:

first, the illusion is solidified by the anatomy and physiology of human sensory organs;

second, the primary illusion (imposed by the sensory system) is extended by the more comprehensive perceptual processes of the human brain. According to patterns of preferred thought which it monitors, the ego here recognizes and identifies the form first "sensed" by

the sensory organs. It thus assigns preliminary meaning to the form; and,

third, this preliminary meaning of the (first sensed, then perceived) form is integrated into extended patterns of meaning according to the general modes of thought available to the ego in that lifetime.

Except in cases of disease, physical injury, or congenital defect, sensory organ systems among human beings show a limited range of variability. Human beings show much more variation in the second phase, the perceptual phase of identifying forms in the world. Here cultural differences are reflected clearly in the meaning assigned to form. There are clear differences assignable to age, gender, social background, education. But the third phase of the process demonstrates the almost miraculous potential of variability as individuals assign completely different meanings and values to forms which register exactly the same pattern of stimulation on each person's sensory organs. For in this third phase of identification, meaning is assigned according to the highly individual and dramatically changing values of the personal ego. Since the ego is designed for self-defense and self-enhancement, it responds to perceived forms in highly individual ways. The world of form is seen, felt, tasted, digested, and selectively ignored in very different ways, all of them regulated, balanced, valued, and integrated by the defensive structure of the personal ego. The ego will have reality its way.

In this phase, the difference of viewpoint of any sample of personal egos stuns the imagination. The most extreme range of totally arbitrary meaning, importance, and value is assigned—with the deepest possible personal conviction and certainty—to events and forms in the inner or external world. As long as the personal ego mediates perception and assigns meaning, only a selected range of forms will enter awareness. These, in turn, will be cast into fiercely defended categories of good or bad according to the prevailing need system of the ego.

But there comes a period in human growth when perception

and meaning need no longer be fixed according to this pattern. Once an individual has learned to blend the full range of emotional responses with the full range of conceptions available to the ego; once he has invested in each of those patterns the living conviction of absolute certainty and played out that conviction in the arena of everyday life; once he has explored the limits of every possible egoistic hope of fulfillment through an endless succession of specific blends of thought and feeling, and found each to lack permanence—then, and then only, he discovers that permanence itself is not an attribute of any form in creation.

This discovery can only be made while he is alive and equipped with a physical body. In any life it can only be made after the matrix of the ego is dissolved. Once that occurs, perceptual processes are increasingly freed. Vision and knowledge of the world are no longer restricted by the physical pattern of electrical stimulation of the sensory organs. Awareness is no longer constricted by the paralyzing limitations of provincial thought imposed by the personal ego. Instead, perception, awareness, and knowing are increasingly mediated by the structure of the higher mind. The higher mind is finally experienced as the living organ of love, and true knowing.

Light, Love, and The Refined Octaves Of Higher Knowing

You speak of the “higher mind” as an organ of knowing. Is it possible to describe the character of that higher knowing?

When awareness and knowing are based upon direct electrical stimulation of the structure of the higher mind, one’s entirely personal and intimate experience confirms soaring new principles of life. These principles confirm in direct experience:

that subatomic theory describes increasingly profound levels of reality;

that material forms are the product of primitive though widely shared illusions;

that illusions are imposed automatically by the structures of the lower mind—some of these structures are physical, others psychological;

that within and behind the temporary boundaries imposed by apparent form are waves of harmonic energy actively alive, aswirl with vigor;

that the waves of this divine energy-in-movement can be experienced as living currents which bathe, stimulate, and nourish the structure of the higher mind;

that as these currents stimulate the higher mind directly, they produce exquisitely beautiful higher sensations and comprehensive ranges of knowing;

that all life is in movement, though separate bands of energy give rise to separate forms which can be distinguished in rich harmonic ranges;

that the Light associated with Illumined Knowing results from the continuous work of an activated higher mind: burning and freeing the boundaries of form by igniting with the force of its own fire any structure mature enough to respond to its flame of love;

that Light is matter freed to become energy and motion at accelerated levels of vibrancy;

that all apparent form is Light, frozen for the moment into thick chunks of ore. These are intended to be examined, felt, studied, manipulated, and finally used with such zealous dedication that the friction of use will wear them away and free from within them their latent fire and liquid gold;

that as forms are appropriately freed by successive stages of human knowing, the universe becomes an ever more radiant blaze of light. At the same time, the structure of the mind becomes an ever-more-sensitive organ of awareness for perceiving;

that the structure of the mind registers these ranges of vibrancy in increasingly refined octaves of feeling and knowing;

that the capacity to dissolve the separateness and individuality imposed by temporary barriers of form at any level depends upon being able to use one's whole physical body as a lens to transmit the Light from the entire mind. The mind is now a flaming torch of love, kindled and rekindled from the fuel amassed in working

service to the world;

that this flaming force of love, alone of all divine inventions, can dissolve barriers imposed by the provisional forms and phenomena of all realms of creation;

that all levels of higher awareness are sustained by free-flowing energy previously locked in form, but now released because the potential for learning from that form has been fully realized;

that such free energy, previously locked in the confines of temporary matter, is rapidly vibrant and is experienced in awareness as effulgent radiance, Light; and

that this Light, the raw stuff of enduring knowing, registers itself on all levels of the human mind. The sensed, the perceived, and the real experience it generates is love. .

Buddha's Wheel of Life: The Winding and Unwinding Of Divine Energy

Throughout our discussion, you have spoken of two phases or divisions of human learning: the psychological learning of the personal ego and the spiritual learning of the higher mind. You have also suggested that both these phases of learning proceed according to clearly regulated processes of internal growth. Could you elaborate further on the broad principles or mechanisms which govern the development of human consciousness?

This three-phase process—sensation, perception, intellectual integration—of validating the reality of illusory forces of the world is under the control of an unending lineage of personal egos. Each ego inherits the throne of selfhood in a different life. Each one explores, through undisputed right of inheritance, another different, but always sharply restricted, domain of personal knowing. **The rights of succession and the domain of rulership are guaranteed by a basic law of learning.** This law insures that each individual will learn all possible ways of integrating life energy, and have a full opportunity to deal with all possible styles of interaction with other humans. In addition, it insures that each will experience a full range of interactions with the non-human realms of life that support it—material forms from the worlds of biology and physics. **This basic law of learning that insures a full apprenticeship in the evolution of human experience is known in ancient systems as the law of karma.** In contemporary language we would call it the meticulously precise program of complete learning which guides the sweep of total life experience.

That program insures mastery of every possible subdivision in the total matrix of life which can be discriminated and identified by human perception. Since human perception is sharply re-

stricted by the structures of the personal ego for at least the first half of this total program of life, the pattern by which karma unfolds is psychological; that is, it is integrated, sequenced, and paced by a succession of personal egos. Each life is given vivid meaning by the psychological forces which characterize the structure of the ego in that life.

Meher Baba referred to the psychological phase of human learning as the winding phase of human growth. He also called it the evolutionary phase of human growth. The next phase of learning, the spiritual phase, he called the period of human involution. The involutionary period is also known as the unwinding phase of human growth.

On the surface, “winding” and “unwinding” can seem novel and puzzling terms to use in distinguishing between the two major sequences of human learning. However to the eye and mind of a spiritual Teacher they have concrete and exact relevance. That is why all advanced spiritual systems have always used nearly identical phrases or terms, even though no such terms have ever been used in religions. Before Meher Baba decided to extend the range of higher spiritual principles so that they could be made available broadly to all people, the terms and processes they describe were known only to spiritual students. This was not the result of a conspiracy to deny valid information to all but the elite. Instead it was an exclusively pragmatic consideration.

At certain stages of learning, spiritual students themselves become aware of processes of winding and unwinding on which all the complex, subtle, and most refined processes of human thought and feeling are based. They are obliged to become aware of them because such processes are universal, and because any authentic expansion or unfolding of consciousness lays bare these processes to individual experience. So uniform and so essential are these principles that gurus are identified and defined according to their expert knowledge and skill in the subject matter of winding and unwinding. Many people who assume the role of guru or spiritual Teacher do not know this subject matter. They are not even aware that these processes exist, and of course they

have not mastered them. They cannot be of service to real spiritual aspirants who are unwinding or approaching the involutory stages of growth. With this background, we can add a footnote to our discussion about cults, because cult leaders, by definition, are not masters of this subject matter. Therefore they will attract people who are not ready to participate in the unwinding process or the involutory stages of human growth.

The first stages of the unwinding process will initiate the destruction of the personal ego and will begin to prepare an individual for the first steps of involutory learning. Unwinding brings about entirely new conditions of consciousness. **Currents of energy which previously brought nourishment to the lower mind and the personal ego, now change their direction of flow.** The currents of divine energy which nourish the structure of the higher mind flow in the reverse direction from those which bring about the evolution of the lower mind and its succession of personal egos. "Evolution," as Meher Baba used the term, characterizes human learning during the prolonged stages of psychological learning. **In this evolutionary stage of learning, the full potential of the lower mind is gradually actualized,** over several million years of living and learning, through the evolution of an exhaustive succession of personal egos.

At some point, the structure of the lower mind will finally reach its potential; in the life in which this occurs, the personal ego will dissolve. When that happens, the fibrous barrier separating the lower mind from the higher mind is dissolved. The involutory stage of learning begins.

Now there is no structure to hold and amplify the currents of divine energy which nourish and sustain the personal ego and the lower mind. Therefore, the stage of human growth which Meher Baba called evolution is over. Now currents of divine energy which nourish the higher mind (or, to use different words, higher consciousness) become accessible to awareness, accessible for the first time. **Those currents, the divine waves of higher knowing which enliven the higher mind, flow in a different direction from those which nourish the lower mind.** Buddha drew attention to

this fundamental difference in stages of learning. He said that during the first stage of learning, the wheel of life turns to bring about the evolution of physical form. Here he referred to the personal ego as well as to the physical forms which currently define the subject matter of evolutionary biology. But when the second stage of learning is initiated, Buddha said that the wheel of life reverses. The divine currents of energy which nourish life now change direction. **Buddha and Meher Baba both used the term "reoriented" to describe this fundamental change in the currents of life energy that nourish growth. Before spiritual learning can really be initiated, those currents of basic life processes must be reoriented.**

When the wheel of life begins to reverse, a process of back-and-forthing which may span several lifetimes, individuals begin to experience the first signs of an emergent new life within themselves. As the reversal gains momentum and constancy, a totally new phase of learning is initiated. When life processes become re-oriented, when the direction of divine energy radiating through the human mind has steadied in its course enough to dissolve the personal ego in a specific life,

**there results an amplification of
spiritual awareness**

so profound that the structure of the ego in that life dissolves;

so palpable in its potential for new life that the unimagined internal anguish and physical strain of a life based on love can be supported;

so vibrant in its new meaning that any internal or external boundary of life blocking its growth will be loosened, then melted by a blast of full love;

so forceful that it can completely silence the almost entirely random defensive action of man's most loosely

connected and least vital organ—the human tongue;

so consuming in its silent internal satisfaction that the whole action pattern of the human body follows a rhythm of love, support, and stimulation of new growth;

so automatic that the whole of a human life is offered unthinkingly and with a sense of deep privilege to those processes which are called spiritual principles;

when these conditions of awareness flood from the explosive fullness of a human heart, when this flood begins to wash the cement-hard residue blocking the circulatory structures which lead to activation and gradual unfolding of the human mind; when the pleasure of participation in silent actions of love wash entirely from the mind any concern with defensive contracts of reciprocal obligation;

when these conditions of awareness
and silent action can be met, one is
ready to participate in the New Life.

Full participants in this New Life are entitled to the guidance of an incarnate guru at selected phases of their learning. That collectivity whose full energy for life can be directed to strengthening and supporting new designs of life to support these conditions of awareness and these patterns of automatic action may be called **The New Humanity**. That group is small. Meher Baba said that the time and place for its expansion was set. For us, the time is now. For us, the place is America.

The Structure of the Personal Ego Viewed from a Psychological Perspective

In our discussion to this point you have characterized two types of human learning. The first involves the psychological processes of the personal ego or personality. Many professionals in psychology refer to the personality or the ego as having a structure. What is meant by "the structure of the personality"?

Principles of contemporary psychology have gained wide acceptance because of their practical validity. Intelligent, capable, and productive people find that psychological models of emotional dynamics provide a useful framework for understanding personal conflicts and for deepening their appreciation of companions in life. As analytic tools for exploring interactions with other human beings, these principles find their fullest application in psychotherapeutic encounters with trained professionals. But the principles first vividly encountered in psychotherapy can find general application in a broad range of human interactions. Both their usefulness and their practical validity can be monitored and assessed personally, as individuals face and resolve unanticipated challenges to growth which occur continuously in every active life. Success and respect accorded to disciplines of applied psychology rest on this solid base of personally determined validity.

Since spiritual growth must proceed from a foundation of psychological maturity, spiritual Teachers fully endorse the work of skillful therapists and psychotherapists. A therapeutic perspective that focuses the dilemmas of internal conflict by a courageous exploration of inner feelings and that encourages the individual to accept responsibility for squarely meeting life's challenges serves to reinforce an essential framework of independence for anyone who pursues spiritual training. Attempts to devalue or escape psy-

chological forces will not build a sense of competence or buttress the inner strength necessary for any spiritual learning. Fears, challenges, and conflicts are the subject matter of duality. Unless one learns well the ABCs of duality, the postgraduate literature of comprehensive learning and living cannot be deciphered. One's vision has not developed enough acuity to perceive an expanded literature of life.

A pattern of learning which shows itself in the million-year sweeps of psychological learning is duplicated in the microcosm of every individual incarnation. Spiritual awakening in any life comes after a sturdy ego has developed. As any child develops and grows, he must receive support for full development of a sense of mastery, caution, adventure. He must experience the conflicts of the dualistic world of good and bad, success and failure, work and play, sexuality and romantic love. He must be encouraged to lose himself in the challenges of academic learning, to master the rules of conduct honored in his world, and to identify and polish the unique abilities that he can contribute to the world of work.

These internal and external abilities are organized through the development of a stable, individual personality. Through the maturation of a flexible, full, and capable personal ego, one anchors himself in time and place, masters the tools of his social environment, and senses the first flowering of deep intimacy in loving relationships. **Should he be destined for any spiritual learning in that life, it follows after, not in place of, psychological learning.** Without an initial anchoring of the kind we have outlined, an individual cannot be adequately prepared to make the continuous contribution to the world which we noted as necessary for "gathering the fuel to fire spiritual learning."

A spiritual perspective places high value on achieving competence in everyday life. That competence is typically initiated by identification with **the Achievement Motive**, a basic force fully alive in American society. An early identification with goals of mastery and achievement is often forged through formation of the personal ego. Indeed, a western guru may place more

emphasis on the crucial importance of childhood development than would a child psychologist; for the work of a spiritual Teacher requires a more articulated, more precise understanding of the dimensions of the personal ego than is necessary in any other field of human guidance or counsel. For that reason, a spiritual Teacher places even more importance on a clear identification of the ego's structure than does a professional trained in psychology or psychiatry. A spiritual Teacher is also able to determine the structure of a personal ego with a surer sense of direct validity and reliability than is currently possible among professional therapists.

Professional therapists are trained to consider the personality as a metaphysical construct. They infer its dimensions, infer the relative strength of those dimensions, and infer its organization. These inferences are based on information from an individual's background, observation of behavior, and a range of standardized tests, based primarily on styles of perception and on general information about the world. Of course, a skilled clinician or therapist integrates subtle nuances of behavior and uses his own sensitivity as a subjective but often useful diagnostic instrument. But the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry are disadvantaged by a limitation of scientific technology which makes it impossible for professionals to observe directly the structure of a personality.

From a stern scientific perspective, the ego's structure, on which the entire success of their field is based, exists, if at all, in thin air. Despite the enormous popularity and success of the idea of a personal ego, professionals remain open to criticism that they may have imagined the whole phenomenon. If it is a structure it must be constructed of something, some matter of some kind. If it contains energy at different levels of organization, there must be some circulatory systems within it. If it grows, it must get bigger or thicker. If it can become diseased, it must have membranes which reflect health or illness. And if it is a living, growing structure of life, it must have some way of gathering nutritional energy, transforming that nutritional energy so that it can sustain

membranes of life, and eliminating waste products.

Ambitious theories in the field of psychology deal with these issues. They suggest very specific mechanisms and principles by which these processes occur. The technical language used in these treatises can persuade the reader that he is dealing with a field noteworthy for its advanced methods of observation and measurement. **Yet all the precise formulations can be undermined by posing two simple questions about the ego. Where does its energy come from? How do you know that those words and diagrams describe its structure?** Some professionals are deeply distressed by the fact that scientific psychology has no answers to these questions. If there are no answers to the questions, it becomes clear that the entire framework for their ideas is based on an **unidentifiable physical structure powered by an inferred system of energy.** The framework of ideas which supports the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry is wholly metaphysical.

Dissatisfaction with the metaphysical foundation of psychology has prompted some professionals to abandon the field of personality and to shift their focus of inquiry from internal dynamics to an analysis of external behavior. As they have demonstrated, human behavior, observed and measured in standard units, more easily meets accepted standards of objectivity. Fresh waves of behaviorism periodically wash through psychology and psychiatry, sweeping some vigorous, stern-minded young professionals to stable shores of objectivity that, when first seen on a near horizon, seemed to offer appealing refuge from frustration. Only a few made it to those shorelines. Those who did found themselves in a stark environment, where they could make precise measurements of limited dimensions of life. Few would join them to colonize. After a sojourn on such an island, nearly all returned. They are now better able to tolerate the elusive scientific uncertainties which characterize the study of the ego's internal dimensions, even if certain standards of scientific precision must be set aside to accomodate the flowing processes of psychological life.

Other groups of psychologists have tried to integrate the ego's

metapsychological systems with physical systems of the human body. Obviously, the physical body can be affected by psychological processes, and, in certain examples, the overpowering effect that psychological forces can exert in reshaping the physical body can be demonstrated and measured. Conversely, certain conditions of the physical body (among them brain injury and endocrine disbalance) offer reliable evidence that the personality can be affected by changes in the physiology or anatomy of the physical body. One specialty, psychosomatic medicine, takes as its subject matter the relationships between the ego's personality dynamics and the body's physiological dynamics.

In Twentieth Century America, all professional disciplines attempting an integration or whole understanding of human beings accept the existence of the ego as a practical reality. Current canons of scientific theory may suggest the structure to be dissatisfyingly metaphysical, an elaborate intellectual formulation held in the suspension of thin air. But nearly all psychological professionals, themselves trained as scientists, accept as a working reality the existence of a structured personality. **This personality is conceived as a coordinated system of life energy that integrates human feeling and ideas, that draws from separate levels of awareness, that is reciprocally integrated with the physical systems of the human body (especially the central nervous system), that is responsible for learning (be that conceived as intellectual, emotional, or social), and that is moderated by an executive system called the ego.** The ego's complex structure uses the entire sensory system of the physical body to draw continuous information from the external world. It also draws on the internal membranes of the physical body to evaluate, at any moment, its own internal states. These two sources of information establish a first-level basis for processing relatively stable patterns of thought and feeling. But the secondary level by which this baseline information from the sensory systems is organized into stable designs of thought, feeling, attitude is no longer physical.

Neither are the next successive levels of organizations tied directly to processes of the physical body. These deal with the

complexities of memory, the relationship of thought to language, the role of sexual energy in mediating attitudes and feelings, and consolidation of such important characteristics of the ego as gender identification and romantic preferences. Here, at this third level of ego organization, further removed from direct relationship with the body's physical systems, we consider dimensions of human emotions such as anger, delight, anxiety, frustration, anticipation, pleasure, fear, and conflict—the subjective feeling experienced when two modes of thought or feeling which are rationally opposed invade awareness simultaneously.

The ego's structure is conceived according to these palpable dimensions of living thought, feeling, and action. The function of the ego is to throw an organizational net over these subjective psychological dimensions of life. The flexible fibers of the net take shape, holding, containing, and defining the energy of life and providing circulatory channels by which energy can pass from one section to another. Some sections of the ego are conceived as separate from one another with tightly woven membranes separating one level from another. Other sections (membranes or structures) are more loosely separated. These membranes may be permeable. Fibers forming energy channels to and from certain structures of the ego are closely related to specific systems of the physical body—the bowels, the genitals, the intestines, the heart, the brain. Networks of circulating energy relate the dimensions of the ego to the structure of the physical body. This, then, is a broad outline of the structure of the ego. Its description in psychology is not uniform, for differing theories invent different vocabularies and arrange the tasks of the ego in different hierarchies. But all or any of them could be easily cast into the general outline we have sketched.

To summarize, our discussion begins with the widespread importance assigned in our culture to understanding psychological principles of the personal ego. Many able people are interested in such principles. They find exposure to them helpful in learning to better understand themselves or others. Spiritual Teachers, too, confirm the usefulness of such approaches in learning to meet

directly the personal challenges and conflicts that must be explored and resolved courageously if growth, independence, and personal responsibility are to be achieved. Professional therapists and spiritual Teachers also agree that children should receive full, loving, and sensitive support to foster a rich sense of inquiry, mastery, excitement, and purpose. These qualities are integrated through the formation of a personal ego. Professionals in applied psychology are sensitive to the metaphysical and, therefore, scientifically tenuous foundations of their key formulations. However, they find compelling validity to these formulations in their professional work. So do their clients. This validity supports a living faith in an invisible structure that currently can be clearly identified only in the framework of their collective intelligence. That collective professional intelligence bets its professional life on the reality of the personal ego.

The Structure of the Personal Ego Viewed from a Spiritual Perspective

You have said that a spiritual Teacher considers the personal ego as an actual structure as opposed to a metaphysical construct, and that a spiritual Teacher in some way can actually perceive that structure. Could you discuss the characteristics of the ego from this spiritual perspective? The ego obviously serves a function in psychological learning. Does it also play a role in spiritual learning?

You may recall from our earlier discussion that both Buddha and Meher Baba saw the personal ego as a temporary product of human evolution. After the human physical form is achieved, man's physical body is no longer subject to modification by those systematic forces behind life's forms which contemporary biologists classify as evolution. Broadly speaking, Buddha and Meher Baba agree with modern biology. **However, Buddha, Meher Baba, and every illumined being know that the personal ego is constructed of real, though non-physical, matter. They also know that the properties of this matter obey many of the same laws of growth modern biology applies to the evolution of living tissue in the material world.** The currents of energy that, in Buddha's terms, bring about the evolution of form in the physical world also regulate the evolution of form in some subtle dimensions of life that crosscut, interact, and initiate change in the physical world. Therefore, from the perspective of illumined vision, the changing structures of the personal ego are determined by principles of evolution. The form of the personal ego changes according to successive stages of vividly experienced living. These changes bring about new variations and complexities in structure. Although these processes of growth and change are directly observable (knowable) to the vision of a spiritual Teacher, they are

implicit in any understanding of the principles which establish the laws of karma. Belief in the laws of karma is predicated on the existence of living structures that change and refine their form over millions of years of individual evolutionary growth. These living structures are the real membranes of the personal ego.

In the last century, religious movements have occasionally attempted to meld into their teachings some principles of biological evolution and a painfully restricted understanding of the laws of karma. They have introduced gross and bungling simplifications of popular ideas of evolution which can be supported within the egoistic confines of a fundamentalistic morality. Within these theological systems, human beings are seen to become increasingly refined in thought and feeling over a succession of lives in which they accept the duties of charity, cheer, and generous acts, and sternly apply rules of good conduct. Notions of preferred physical build, muscle structure, configuration of facial form, and ethnic background are additional elements of the system which prescribes the external dimensions of a step by step progression up the gilded psychological rungs of a ladder propped unsteadily against the pink clouds of an elevated life. These systems are familiar to anyone who has examined the literature or brushed against the boundaries of many esoteric cults. These cults have taken select principles of authentic spirituality, entered them into restrictive systems of psychological thought that give temporary validity to formulations of heaven and hell, and imposed the dimensions of a popularly conceived heaven right here in the everyday world. These interpretations or easily identified variants of them are confirmed and validated by many people who equate psychic experience with spiritual learning. In point of fact the two are unrelated. **Popularly conceived notions of psychism are not only unrelated to spiritual learning, but spiritual learning is most often blocked or stopped until human consciousness has finished its exploration of that phenomena.**

Psychism is the flip side of psychological learning. It is not possible here to examine the ranges and forms of psychic experience, though we may be able to do so in another discussion. For

now it may be enough to suggest that the very same tissue of the ego which glues it to the material forms of Maya—the physical body, the material world, set systems of rational thought, hierarchies of set social groups—also enlivens and gives form to psychic phenomena. When the membranes of the ego are disconnected from the physical body at death, they give rise to a different segment of learning. These segments are in astral dimensions of existence.

The first half of any incarnation is experienced in the dimension accepted by science as the real world. As we have indicated, for most of humanity that phase of life is conducted according to psychological principles of learning regulated by the personal ego. The second half of the incarnation is experienced or lived in a separate domain of learning variously called heaven and hell, the spirit world, or the astral levels of life. For most of humanity, this phase of life, which is begun after separation from the physical body, is also conducted according to psychological principles regulated by the personal ego; for the astral worlds are also organized according to dualistic principles of the rational ego. All principles which underlie the organization of astral dimensions are psychological. Within such realms dualistic learning extends over the full range of goods and bads invented by the human ego. These domains therefore extend from the peaks of good established by heavens to the pits of bad established by hells.

When the membranes of the personal ego are firmly integrated with the physical body, an individual is apt to deny the existence of an afterlife and take no interest in it. **When the membranes of the ego are severed from the physical body, typically at death, the underside of those membranes, so to speak, establishes the experiential foundation for the reality of the astral world.** The energy from the underside of the egoic membranes then programs the quality of life that is experienced after separation from a physical body. This half of the incarnation is designed to round out and reinforce in positive ways the learning which has occurred during experience in God's real paradise, the everyday world.

If the membranes of the ego are damaged, artificially loosened

(by mantras, "spiritual exercises" etc.), separated because of the uncontrollable force of violent emotion or toxic effects of chemical agents, awareness may be open to phenomena regulated according to these principles of the flip side of psychological life. Experienced in the everyday world, they form the basis of most psychic or occult phenomena. Once, in mankind's most ancient past, the involitional stages of learning were open to only a tiny handful of men. At that time psychic phenomena were often linked with spiritual learning. That period has now passed and will not occur again in this system of creation. Now, spiritual learning has moved beyond the ancient principles of heaven and hell, for neither Heaven nor Hell can be experienced without the membranes of a personal ego to mediate the experience.

Generally speaking, if the membranes of the ego are loosened from their integration with the physical body, focal concentration is removed from participation in the everyday world. **Since the everyday world of gross reality is the proving ground of learning, the divine terrain of God's experiments with perfection, and the only appropriate arena for linking individual effort with divine purpose, spiritual students are encouraged to connect with activity in the world so fully that even without the structure of an ego they will be able to maintain delight and joy in interaction with it.** It is the only place to gather fuel to fire more learning.

Now we can describe some properties of the subtle tissue which forms the personal ego. **The basic subtle armature from which the personal ego will develop and grow exists as a light, loose, skeletal tracery interpenetrating the child's physical body when he is born.** This tracery of matter, were it discernible to the eye, would resemble an almost translucent, flexible, loosely woven net. It serves rather like a blueprint to mark the relative limits and proportions of the membranes which could develop if the ego reaches the full potential of growth possible in that life.

The armature is light, loose, barely sketched, barely materialized in that subtle realm. As the child begins to experience the waves of energy in his internal and external world, experience is registered on that armature. Its fibers take a more distinct form.

Other threads emerge and wind gently, in a clockwise direction, around and through the living organs of the body. The threads are composed of subtle matter. They are called sanskaric threads. They closely resemble the silken threads spun to encase a butterfly in metamorphosis, for silk fibers are constructed like long, flexible continuous prisms. In cross-section, they duplicate prismatic lenses. Sanskaric threads display the same properties, though their construction provides for a range of prisms, sensitive to light in any dimension. Human experience can be registered or impressed into the threads via transformations of light. Light is here defined as subtle radiant energy. All energy of life has density and moves through space in the form of waves. All combinations of energy can be separated and coded by prisms sensitive to different spectrums of light. Thus all thought, all feeling, and all experience, given subjective reality by human consciousness, exist independently in the oceans of living force which surround all living forms at all times.

Light sensitive sanskaric threads code all spectrums of living energy and their changing combinations which occur in the child's total environment. That total environment includes his physical body and any events that register in his internal or external world. It includes all ranges of the subtle, or psychological, environment of his milieu and includes, also, ranges of subtle sensitivity which may seldom enter awareness.

As sanskaric threads develop and follow the pattern set by the armature already present at birth, experience in life is coded in membranes exquisitely sensitive to experience of any kind. The experience is coded according to the spectrums of light which characterize the waves of living energy caught at various angles by the planes of the child's three-dimensional physical form and multi-dimensional subtle armature.

Layers of sanskaric threads gradually reinforce the structure of the original armature. Electric fields are established between bands of threads or layers of threads separated by space. These electrical fields attract and hold patterns of living pranic energy which are increasingly articulated and differentiated. Certain

fields are reinforced by additional networks of threads. They intertwine, knot, bend, and finally weave tissue or identifiable membranes. Within the membranes, patterns of energy are differentiated spatially. This structure interpenetrates all sections of the human anatomy and all physiological systems. Its circulatory system provides an arterial structure for continuous circulation of blends of energy from the pranic ocean of life. Currents from the ocean of pranic life are caught, held, and circulated in distinct patterns within this complex net of life that forms the structure of the personal ego. The specific design of these sanskaric structures are determined precisely by principles of spiritual evolution.

A spiritual Teacher knows that evolutionary principles governing the form of all life are continuous up to a point. That point is reached with the culmination of the evolutionary phase of human consciousness. **When the last personal ego has been constructed from the last skein of sanskaric threads, the lower mind has reached its full potential.** The individual is no longer restricted to experience and learning determined by evolutionary forces of life. Evolution has completed its work. He is now ready to collaborate in the process of involution.

The structure of the ego is immediately perceivable, in every detail and refinement, to a spiritual Teacher. However, the structure of the ego is not the same thing as an aura. Nor is it the same thing as a spiritual body which might be observed by someone with a refined sense of psychic clairvoyance. An aura is a consolidation of low pranic luminence which radiates from the physical body. A spiritual body (or an astral body) is a pattern of luminence, again at low pranic levels, which duplicates the physical form of an individual. These phenomena, well known in religious and psychic literature, bear no direct relationship to the structure of the ego here under discussion. And, as we said earlier, the ability to see such phenomena by psychic clairvoyance bears no relationship to the higher vision of a spiritual Teacher. In fact, the sanskaric structure of the ego cannot be perceived by any refinement of psychic clairvoyance. **The cumulative knowledge of the astral world and the perceptual phenomena of that world in-**

cludes no information about sanskaras or sanskaric structures. These can only be known, perceived, and understood after the structure of the ego has dissolved. Detailed knowledge of sanskaras can be released to awareness only through the direct perceptual process of the higher mind. The membranes of the ego or the structures of the lower mind (which are formed from the sanskaric fibers of past egos) will block direct perception and detailed knowledge of the structure of sanskaras and the structure of the higher mind.

The important point to understand here is that a spiritual Teacher must see and know fully the sanskaric structure of the personality. That is not because the structure itself is of paramount importance. Instead it is because the fibrous layer of the ego establishes the outer covering of the structure of the lower mind. The lower mind, in turn, serves as the structural barrier to the higher mind. **A spiritual Teacher must be able to see and know these layers of consciousness in order to determine the level of total growth an individual has achieved in his entire experience in living over millions of incarnations.** That done, it is possible to determine why the component parts of the current ego developed and where the structure of the current ego fits into the total sweep of learning accomplished in life.

In a future discussion, it may be possible to explore the evolutionary principles which dictate the many specific forms the personal ego must take in order to process, to turn into vivid awareness and intimate personal experience, all currents of energy found in the ocean of divinity that surrounds and supports all life.

However, the worlds of the personal ego are divine. The sacred products of this phase of learning must be completely harvested and stored before there is a sufficient energy supply to support spiritual learning. The harvest in question is the learned experience coded in sanskaric fibers. Those fibers, elasticized and re-wound in tissue membranes, build the structures of the lower mind, which must be fleshed out completely before the next stage of learning can be accomplished.

This phase of learning, called by Meher Baba the unwinding

process of spiritual involution, proceeds along entirely different lines from the phase of learning we have discussed. The role played by sanskaric fibers is also entirely different in learning based on unwinding sanskaras. At another time we may have an opportunity to consider in detail these processes which describe the final phases of human learning.

Vitalization of Western Spirituality: Meher Baba's Work in America

Those of us who seek increased spiritual maturity while living within the cultural traditions of western civilization face many special problems. In what ways did Meher Baba—whom you repeatedly refer to as the architect of your own work—address himself to the special needs of spiritual living and learning in the West?

Though born in India of Persian parents, Meher Baba had an unparalleled understanding of western cultural tradition and deep affection for it. He felt that western character and the culture supporting it had now reached a point of development which could provide a foundation for special innovations to spiritual tradition itself. A genetic nucleus for the emergence of a vital new integration of spiritual living could now begin to take form on the fresh soil of this newly populated continent. This innovation could be accomplished by providing a framework for smoothly integrating the inner dimensions of advanced spiritual principles with the vigorous systems of life freshly designed in response to burgeoning patterns of cultural growth on this young continent.

Meher Baba himself electrified the spiritual genes which could bring this innovative form of advanced new life into being. During an incredibly intense, forceful, and active life as a World Teacher, he very thoroughly trained a few American disciples. He often selected individuals whose strength of character, independence, and sophistication in the world was matched only by the depth of their love for him and for the principles he sought to awaken in the hearts and minds of loved ones. He provided fresh formulations of ancient wisdom, in ways that quickened the currents of contemporary life by releasing from beneath them the vaulting pressure of enduring life force. **In clear and explicit terms, he**

framed for the first time in a western language the details of those spiritual dynamics which initiate human growth and power its evolution through changing designs of human consciousness, until it is strong enough to take and hold successive patterns of divine awareness.

Meher Baba's formulations of the growth of human consciousness and his exposition of successive stages leading to divine awareness and divine living may be unmatched in spiritual literature in their clarity, economy of style, and breadth. His ability to fully engage the structure and beauty of the English language to hold, reveal, caress, and unfold the potential dimensions of human knowing based on love heralds his role as master theoretician, master poet, and master of life processes.

In the years since Meher Baba's passing in 1969, his legacy to the world has steadily gathered momentum. In America the outline of that legacy takes clearer definition with each passing year. Here we speak the language in which he wrote his major treatises. Here his major works were edited and published. Here are located his major centers in the western world. And here that handful of American disciples to whom he entrusted major segments of his work carry out, in his name, the work he trained them to accomplish.

Meher Baba founded only two schools, one in India, the other in America. The first, an elementary school in India, was established in 1928 to offer a model of education for Indian and Middle Eastern children, restricted in life because of the rigid caste system then prevailing in one variation or another throughout much of Asia. That school was designed to offer a model of education that could dissolve caste restrictions, open a stimulating force of spirituality, and establish an atmosphere of open love, which could then be channeled to nourish growth and learning. Meher Baba designed that school as a model. Within a short time it had accomplished its purposes and he moved to other arenas of new work.

One area of educational work which occupied his attention for more than twenty years was the founding, design, and organiza-

tion of another school. This school was to be the most innovative educational project of his life. **Meher Baba wished to establish, for the first time in history, an authentic spiritual school in the West. Over the course of two decades he laid meticulous plans, selected a small faculty, outlined a curriculum of study, designed and endorsed a style of life for its students, and completed the training of the Teacher he designated as his only disciple authorized to teach his principles to spiritual students.** He named the school Sufism Reoriented. It, too, was to serve as a model, the first of its kind in the western world. Meher Baba explained that his years of work dedicated to laying the foundation and establishing the structure of Sufism Reoriented were necessary because he wished it to endure for hundreds of years as one of the few pure channels leading to God.

To insure its continuity over that period, he guaranteed that he would provide a succession of living, illumined saints to lead his spiritual school. The philosophical and spiritual traditions of the West include almost no knowledge of the levels of illumination which define a saint. Western tradition has been graced with only four known saints. Perhaps in a future discussion we can explore the qualities of consciousness and the qualities of everyday life that distinguish these rare beings.

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